

March 05, 2011

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Quote of the Month:

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[Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist No. 29* (January 9. 1788)]

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REFORMING PAKISTAN'S ELITIST ECONOMY

By Shakil Ahmad

[The writer is a member of the former Civil Service of Pakistan. The article first appeared in [The Nation](#) on February 18, 2011.]

A growing number of Pakistanis subscribe to the notion that our politics is best understood through the generalisation that nearly all political power is held by a relatively small and wealthy group sharing

similar values and interests. That mostly comes from relatively similar privileged backgrounds. Most of the top leaders in nearly all key sectors of society are recruited from the same social group.

Late Dr Mehboobul Haq had blamed 22 families in Pakistan for the concentration of wealth and resources. But now this group has expanded and may now exceed to several hundred families. These families have interlocking marital ties, enormous corporate and financial interests, and old school ties. They interact not only in the corporate board rooms, but also in gymkhanas, golf clubs, beauty and slimming parlours to name a few places of interest within the country. When it gets hot, or life becomes boring, there are foreign trips to be undertaken. There is so much excitement in the new arrivals at Antwerp, Belgium. Friends in the group may insist on a visit to the Casinos off the French Riviera. There are quiet lunches and dinners to facilitate coordination between the top leaders in business, government, civic organisations, educational and cultural establishments and the mass media.

This "power elite" can effectively dictate the main goals, if not always the practical means and details, for all really important government policy making by virtue of their control over the economic resources of the major business and financial organisations in the country. Their power is seen as based most fundamentally on their personal economic resources, and especially on their positions within the echelons of power. This elite does not really depend upon its ability to garner mass support through efforts to "represent" the interests of the common man. These few thousand movers and shakers, aligned with the guardians of our frontiers and their proxies, really run the country and determine the basic directions of public policy. They ensure protection of their financial, corporate interests, and the hold over their constituents in the rural areas.

They have no qualms about manipulation of the powerless masses to choose those candidates that would effectively further the elitist agenda. It is for this reason that Pakistan has seen little progress in education, health, women empowerment, land reforms and the imposition of tax on agricultural incomes. Indeed, this vicious agenda formulated for self-serving expedient interests has to change. The first dent has been made by the Supreme Court, which has asked for the list of industrial and agricultural loan defaulters - this with a view to enforce recovery from the sharks. There is hope that it will continue to take action in all those cases where wealth has been stashed abroad.

Reform of Pakistan's elitist economy involves the development and implementation of a long-term strategy stretching beyond the five-year tenure that elected governments enjoy. Pakistan needs to reprioritise its fiscal front in order to expand its fiscal space for development. The money should come from those who pay no taxes. Due to the influence of powerful feudals that grace the Assemblies, the federal government has argued that the imposition of any tax on agricultural income is a provincial subject and cannot, therefore, be legislated by the National Assembly. Yet in the case of levy of GST on services, which too is a provincial subject, the federal government did not hesitate to legislate. If RGST is imposed, it will not hurt the class that is not in the habit of paying taxes; but it is the poor classes that will have to pay the tax. Both the magnitude and the composition of federal spending in the last three years have undermined macroeconomic stability and sustainability, and these trends must change. There is no need to build parliamentary lodges in Islamabad, if the government cannot find the

resources for rebuilding schools destroyed by the Taliban. Perhaps, the resources for this purpose cannot be found because the children of the elite do not go to such schools.

The compression of development spending to accommodate runaway recurrent costs is neither consistent with fiscal sustainability, nor is an improvement in the external account, built on restrained imports needed for investment and capital development. Diversion of such funds presumably to fight the war on terror undermines the efforts such as Aghaaz-e-Haqoo-e-Balochistan. The propagandist approach has not befooled the people of Balochistan, who have looked upon the programme with loathing and contempt, especially as most of the promises remain unimplemented. The diversion of funds from the development budget for non-productive purposes denies the right of education to children. Those who wish to see Pakistan steeped in ignorance and poverty have to be ignored. The state has to take drastic measures to improve the quality of education and facilities for scientific and technical education. NAVTEC has been a disaster from the time it was established by our commando President General (retired) Pervez Musharraf; it should be wound up. If law and order is maintained at all times, which is the primary duty of the state, and soft loans are provided for income generating schemes, economic activities will begin once again throughout the country. The rate of unemployment will decline and social unrest will abate. [Courtesy The Nation]

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EDUCATIONAL AUTONOMY

By Prof Laeeq A Khan

[This article first appeared in [Pakistan Observer](#) on February 12, 2011.]

The Government of Punjab has decided to give autonomy to 26 colleges in the Punjab. The teachers and students of these Colleges along with some of the politically based student bodies are on the streets protesting against this autonomy. It was agonizing to watch on different channels of television, police lathi charge and tear gassing of the demonstrators. Although public memory is normally very short yet I hope that the people at large in Pakistan have not forgotten the Education Policy of the people's Government in 1972, when the Political Party in power had nationalized all private educational institutions in Pakistan. The educational institutions included even the Primary School run by the Municipal Administrations, District Boards, and other philanthropic organizations.

At that time if you had asked anybody to name the best college in Multan, he would have named Emerson College, Multan; the best college in Sialkot was Murray College; the most prominent college in Rawalpindi was Gordon College; Zamindara College, Gujrat was also amongst the good College; Lahore, of course, had a large number of good college such as Forman Christian College; Islamia College, Railway Road; Islamia College, Civil Lines; Islamia College for Women, Cooper Road; Dayal Singh College; MAO College; Talim-ul-Islam College; MAO College etc. All these institutions were run by independent Boards of Government and were completely autonomous in their administration. Since 1960, the Government of Punjab has already given autonomy to 10 college and 09 school/ public institutes. These include Cadet College, Hassanabdal; Lawrence College, Ghora Gally; Government College, Lahore; Lahore College for Women; Kennard College for Women, Lahore; Government Nawaz

Sharif College for Women, Lahore, Queen Marry College, Lahore; Government College Dhobi Ghat, Faisalabad; Government College, Kahuta; and Government Institution of Technology. The schools included Government Central Model School, Lahore; Government Lady Anderson Girls School, Sialkot; Pakpattan; Government Model High School, Bhakkar; Government Boys High School, D.G. Khan; Government Denny's School, Rawalpindi; Government Institute for the Blind, Lahore; and Government Sunrise Institute for the Blind, Lahore.

When Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto announced the nationalization for all these and other educational institutions, this action was opposed by the teachers, in particular for two reasons. By merging with the government cadre of teachers, a large majority of teachers working in these private educational institutions lost their seniority. Secondly, because of the exception of Islamia Collage, the rest of the institutions were individual setups and therefore, the teachers working in these institutions could not be transferred from those institutions. However, the members of the Board of Governors of these institutions kept an eye on the faculty and demanded maximum output from them. No private academies run by the teachers of these institutions or private tuitions were allowed. The situation has considerably changed after Nationalization. A large number of faculty members of these institutions are running their private academies in the evening or running their own tuition centers. They are subservient to the whims of the District Education Officers who can transfer them to far flung areas of the Province, if he so wishes. Also, the quality of education in the Government Institutions has deteriorated in most of the Government educational institutions because of the lack of competition with the private sector. Nationalization of private educational institutions diverted the contributions from various philanthropists to other sectors than education. The funds for all the private institutions named above were provided by the philanthropists or public at large. Fees constituted a very small part of the Board Funds, which includes grants in aid made by the Government, loans obtained from Government, loans raised by the Board, foreign aid obtained by the Board, fees and other sums received by the Board etc. In addition, the local educated persons were recruited as the faculty of these institutions. The fee structure of these private run institutions was nominal.

It will not be out of place to mention that there are 62 Universities in the Public sector and about 70 in the private sector. All these Universities including the public sector Universities are run by independent Boards of Governors called the Syndicates / Executives Councils / Boards of Trustees / Boards of Governors. In spite of there being autonomous, the fee structures of these institutions does not have much difference. Some of the colleges have been allowed by the Government to award degrees whereas the rest of the colleges have to seek affiliation with different Universities, so that degree could be awarded by those Universities to their students. Each University, in turn, have a number of conditions for affiliation of different colleges which include a well stocked Library, fully equipped laboratories and prescribed qualifications for the faculty. The Punjab Government has taken advantage of "The Punjab Government Educational and Training Institutions Ordinance, 1960" which is the offshoot of West Pakistan Ordinance XI of 1960. According to this Ordinance the Board of Governors is supposed to have nine members to be appointed by the Governor of the Punjab and one of these members will be the Chairman of the Board, again to be nominated by the Governor of Punjab. The Principal of the College shall be the Secretary of the Board. In fact, the ordinance needs certain amendments particularly regarding the Chairmanship of the Board. Like the Universities in Pakistan, the Principal of Colleges should be the Ex-officio Chairman of the Board on the pattern of the

Universities where the Vice chancellor is the Chairman of the Syndicate / Executive Council / Board of Trustees / Board of Governors. The Principals of autonomous Colleges should only be BPS-20 or above Grade employees of the Education Department. The official members should be appointed by designations and should not be below the rank of a Joint Secretary in the Provincial Education Department. The conditions for recruitment and determination of the terms and conditions of service of the members of the staff of the institution and other officers and servants of the Board should not be lower than those prescribed by the Government for its Institutions.

In view of what has been stated above, the students of the Educational Institutions being offered autonomy should not get exploited by their teachers but should consider the autonomy of their Institution with an open mind. [Courtesy Pakistan Observer]

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[Letters to FreePakistan](#)

RE: THE RIGHT TO WORK
[Abdur Rahman Mian]

Please accept my gratitude for publishing: "The Right to Work." Mr. CECIL B. DeMILLE be praised for his everlasting illustration of the right to work, aka; LIFE. Our third generation Media Mughals tucked this pristine piece, on page 18, sub-titled: Business & Finance Review! They must have some of their own peculiar PRIORITIES? Enigmatic? Yes. Or outright guile? However, I am thankful to you good folks for making a sincere effort. Aramaic expresses this thus: BERACK HISHAM (God bless you)

P.S. The above compliment I had tendered before I saw your page. Your good offices have commented about the BLACK COAT "REVOLUTION" AND SOLICITED SUPPORT! Sorry Sir, I know "it" was fully funded and choreographed? Please re-visit.

KASHMIRI'S STRUGGLE
[Gangly Khan, Mandi Bahauddin]

Ex-servicemen of Mandi Bahauddin in a meeting arranged under auspices of Pakistan Ex-Servicemen Society expressed their solidarity with Kashmiri brothers in their just struggle for freedom. "Freedom movements always succeed and sacrifices of freedom fighters never go waste" Said Sher Muhammad Gondal, District president of the society. Major Nasir Javed Senior Vice President of the society while addressing the meeting said, "Kashmiris are destined to win the battle for freedom, sooner or later, this is my firm belief: he further added. However he regretted that Kashmir issue remained victim of mishandling at the hands of political players. Some leaders on both sides of the divide were not serious to resolve Kashmir issue probably for their own interests. He urged rulers to accelerate their efforts to resolve this issue since its resolution was necessary for restoring peace in subcontinent. He said ex-servicemen will give their blood for Kashmir cause whenever they were called upon.

ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

[Col. Riaz Jafri (Retd), Rawalpindi]

Federal Minister Syed Khushid Shah informed the house that due to poor law and order situation and power and gas crisis in the country many industrialists have been forced to shift their industries abroad to countries like Bangladesh where apart from other conducive conditions for the industry the taxes are also lower by 18 per cent. A banker friend told me sometime back that about 18 big industrialists of Faisalabad had shifted their plants to Bangladesh and Jordan as it was no more viable for them to operate in Pakistan. This trend is alarming to say the least. There is already unemployment in the country and the labour is facing acute hardship due to forced shut downs and no work. No foreign investment is coming nor is expected in the near future. On the top of it if the existing industry also closes down or shifted abroad it will create a vicious circle of still more unemployment and further losses of jobs. Are our rulers alive to such an economic collapse towards which the country is heading? Apparently not, or else they would have taken measures on the war footing to arrest the situation. Instead they are busy in foreign tours, conflicting with the higher judiciary, quibbling on petty matters among themselves, indicting Moonas Ilahis and Qadir Gillanis or thinking for the mid term polls to save their souls. God save Pakistan from such petty minded selfish pigmies who have no vision at all for the future of the country and the nation, ameen.

PROTEST AGAINST THE STEALING OF AMENITY LAND BY POLITICIANS / POLITICIANS / BUREAUCRACY / LAND MAFIA - "THE SINDH PROTECTION AND PROHIBITION OF AMENITY PLOTS BILL 2009"

[Sameer Hamid Dodhy, Karachi]

Imagine that you visit the grave of your mother and find that the graveyard now houses a new chicken tikka restaurant which has encroached on your mother's grave. You visit the mausoleum of Quaid e Azam and find that land of the mausoleum hosts a new shopping mall. You go to a park with your children and find that it has been closed as a private contractor will be building a housing scheme on the land.

You wonder if this is a nightmare or some kind of sick and disgusting practical joke. It is indeed a deadly practical joke that our beloved lawmakers will inflict on our hapless public if the "The Sindh Protection and Prohibition of Amenity Plots Bill 2009" becomes law. The deceptively named bill essentially states that the MPA's can change the use of amenity land and the bill is back dated to all actions from 1994. What exactly is amenity land? It is land meant for parks, gardens, playgrounds, graveyards, roads, hospitals, schools, colleges, educational institutions, health institutions, reading rooms, libraries, community centres, treatment plants, places for religious worship.

This harmful and immoral bill means that any amenity land can be grabbed if the Sindh legislators state that it is for the "national interest." As the bill is retrospective from 1994 state land stolen by the land mafia will be provided legal cover (such is the power of the land mafia in Pakistan). The timing of the new bill is interesting as it will negate the order of the Supreme Court which has recently given the CDGK notice to bring all encroached /stolen amenity land to its original status.

You can read the whole text of the bill at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/49633180/Bill-No-7-of-2009>

Details of this proposed bill has also come in the news:

http://epaper.dawn.com/ArticleText.aspx?article=21_02_2011_113_002

Some friends living in other provinces may feel that this is a Karachi / Sindh problem only. About 20 years ago I had a relative from another province visit me who told me that the violence was a “Karachi based” phenomena. I told him that “Kalashnikov culture” was a cancer. If one part of the body is infected by cancer then eventually the whole body would get infected. Today is there any part of Pakistan where “Kalashnikov culture” and violence does not reign? If this bill becomes law in Sindh it will soon be replicated all over Pakistan – the politicians / bureaucracy along with land mafia are the same all over Pakistan.

Unless the citizens rise up and protest against this ploy to rob Sindh and especially Karachi of the amenity land the politicians / bureaucracy along with land mafia will make a lot of money while the ordinary man will suffer. To give an example – if the graveyard land is “converted” to commercial use – where will you bury your parents and where will your children bury you? Will the new fashion in Pakistan be to throw dead bodies of our loved ones in the garbage?

What can you as an ordinary citizen do?

Action 1: Tell your friends about this evil and mischievous law. Spread awareness.

Action 2: Write to all the newspapers on an individual and group basis and say that this harmful law will hurt the citizens and it must not be passed.

Action 3: If you have any contact with the Sindh legislators or politicians you must tell them that you disapprove of this wicked bill. It is my experience that many legislators do not realize the detailed substance of the proposed laws but just vote along party lines / party discipline.

The citizens of Pakistan should take heed of Albert Einstein saying, “The world is a dangerous place to live; not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it.”

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VEENA MALIK AS MINISTER
[Dr Irfan Zafar, Islamabad]

After witnessing a dialogue between a Mufti and Veena Malik of the ‘Bigg Boss’ reality show, pertaining to the issues of ‘morality’, I believe that the government should seriously consider appointing the talented lady as our Minister for Religious Affairs. [Daily Times]

ANOTHER MIRACLE

[Inspector Qabacha, Lahore]

Another miracle of the 21st century has taken place. The two Blackberry cell phones of BB lost three years ago have been found with all their data intact. Long live our detectives, long live kingdom of Zardari. [The Nation]

RAYMOND DAVIS INSTITUTE

[Dr Irfan Zafar, Islamabad]

Foreign office needs 15 days to ascertain if Raymond Davis enjoys diplomatic immunity or not; the fact which only needs half an hour to establish by even a junior level Government officer. There is a need for Higher Education Commission (HEC) to approve the establishment of "Raymond Davis Institute of Diplomatic Immunity" thus helping our Government Servants working in the Foreign office to get specialized training from this extraordinary individual. [The Express Tribune]

AROUND 170 MILLION MINISTERS

[Khalid Mustafa, Islamabad]

After reading different statements by our ministers on Raymond Davis case, I think any one from our around 170 million total population of Pakistan could be made minister. I consider Raymond Davis lucky as if he had been caught in Iran for the same crime then he would have been hanged, so far. [The Frontier Post]

DISHONESTY DAY

[Dr Irfan Zafar, Islamabad]

Honesty Day is celebrated every year on April 30 to encourage people to be honest. It is requested that instead of celebrating the Honesty Day, our Government should celebrate the "Dishonesty Day", keeping in view its relevance in the context of our own society. Celebration of this day will lead towards educating the masses to spread and propagate dishonesty at the grass-root levels.

[Pakistan Observer]

AJAB DEMOCRACY

[Syed Sayef Hussain, Karachi]

Pakistan is indeed a very unique country, where we are face to face with 'ajab democracy ki gajab kahani'! The American sharpshooter-cum-diplomat Raymond Davis is everywhere in the news in Pakistan today. There are hot press conferences, and press statements by concerned people. There is also a strong debate raging across the media. But highly conspicuously, the Pakistani Parliament is totally silent on this issue. It is as if there was no Parliament here! If public sentiment would only be expressed through the media, then what is the need of such a

parliament and the parliamentarians, at exorbitant cost to the national exchequer? This parliament claims superiority over any other state organ, but what for? Is this not 'ajab' democracy? [Business Recorder]

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Issue of the month: [Empowering the corrupt](#)

THE RULE OF LAW

[Muhammad Yaqoob Bhatti, Lahore]

Justice Tom Bingham, Britain's former senior Law Lord quotes in his book titled "Rule of Law" a statement of Alan Greenspan, the former Chairman of Federal Reserve Bank of the United States that he considered rule of law as the single most important contributor to economic growth. This is true in Pakistan too where rampant corruption has prevented optimum economic growth with only the torch bearer Supreme Court of Pakistan that is trying its best to curb the massive corruption that saps the economic growth. The sagas of corruption in the Steel Mills, Pakistan Railways NICL, PIA and many others are being dealt with only by the apex court. The economic progress of Pakistan thus depends squarely on the "Rule of Law" to be applied sternly and equally to all levels of people to steer the country towards the goal of achieving sustained economic growth that has become bane of Pakistan. [Pakistan Today]

PROOF OF CORRUPTION

[S T Hussain, Lahore]

According to a press report, the chief justice of the Supreme Court stated that if any member of the legal fraternity or a citizen of the country has any information regarding corruption in the higher courts or lower judiciary, he/she should share it with the Supreme Court along with proof. As a result of that, a prompt action will be taken against those involved in corruption. Everyone knows that finding proof of corruption is impossible since corruption in our society is not considered immoral anymore. Even in the judiciary, well-known lawyers are taking huge amounts of legal fees to defend corrupt clients. It is a common perception that one can buy justice in Pakistan. I think by entrusting the prime investigation agencies with a record of the judicial staff's properties can provide proof of their corruption and dishonesty. [Daily Times]

CHURCHILL'S PROPHETIC REMARKS

[Marya Mufti, Lahore]

Power will go to rascals, rogues, freebooters... All leaders will be of low caliber & men of straw...They'll have sweet tongues & silly hearts...They will fight amongst themselves for power & the two countries will be lost in political squabbles...A day would come when even air & water will be taxed." These are the words from the quotes of Sir Winston Churchill, the World War fame British Prime Minister, who expressed his optimism on his independent judicial system at the peak of war: "Are our courts dispensing justice", he asked, and the reply came

“yes”. “Then Britain will not be defeated”, he replied and his words became history. Isn’t today what the wisdom of Churchill foresaw 64 years ago about the newly born Pakistan, proved to be true? Certainly incredibly we have worked very hard to prove him right. Haven’t we?
[Pakistan Observer]

MASSIVE CORRUPTION
[BU Marwat, Peshawar]

Due to massive corruption in the Alternate Energy Development Board (AEDB), USAID refused to release fund worth Rs320 million for the 150MW Gharo windmill. Why? Because the AEDB blew Rs6 billion in eight years and produced zero MW! What a shame! We as a nation cannot make progress, no matter what. [The News]

MANY FACES OF CORRUPTION
[Mohammad Khan Sial, Karachi]

I was amazed to read clarification in English daily by Chaudhry Fawad Hussain, spokesman of APML claiming: “Pervez Musharraf is probably the only ruler of Pakistan who has not been accused of corruption.” (Feb 03). May I point out Mr Chaudhry the memory of people of Pakistan is no so short they forget the privatization of Pakistan Steel Mills as Supreme Court had also taken notice because it was given on peanut price. Ironically Hamayun Aktar was made minister of concerned portfolio for one day to sign on the deal. Further, corruption is not limited to the money. Open violations of the Constitution, removing and putting apex courts judges and their families in confinement for months, killing hundreds of people through bombardment, curtailing freedom of expression and not allowing autonomy to provinces etc., were some kind of corruption that General (R) Musharraf made during his 9-year long tenure.
[Pakistan Observer]

CORRUPTION: A SOCIAL MINDSET
[Iftikhar Shaheen Mirza, Islamabad]

The recent reports appearing in press show that malpractices, dishonesty and corruption are deeply rooted in our society. Rs.6 billion land scam of an MNA is an evidence that social turmoil is at its peak. Honesty and integrity is the name of a bird that has flown away from Pakistan. Every morning we see a new scam in newspapers about our lawmakers and leaders. These should be called, rather, law breakers. This time the “Gentleman” is from friendly opposition. Now we can say that we live in “Corruption free” society as corruption is free for all as was informed by a Minister sometimes ago who lost his minister-ship for the said revelation. In developed countries, opposition goes at par with government. Thanks God! We are not far behind from developed countries. [The Nation]

WHO STANDS TO BENEFIT?
[Shehri-CBE, Karachi]

Our elected representatives have once again bowled a googly to the citizens. Without discussions, without debates, and without consulting the public, they quietly and surreptitiously proposed Bill No 7 of 2009, 'The Sindh Protection and Prohibition of Amenity Plots Bill 2009'. This bill allows all public spaces which are part of the notified Master Plans of the city to be converted to any other use. For instance, a school plot could be converted to a commercial plaza, a plot for a sewage-treatment plant could be converted to a housing project, a graveyard to a high-rise, a green-belt to a political party's office, a park to a martyrs' colony, the list is endless.

Where will our children play? Where will our schools and hospitals be established? Where will we bury our dead? We also want to know how this bill will benefit the citizens, and who will benefit from the commercialised amenity plots. Have our honourable MPAs discovered a new town-planning method that eliminates the need for amenity plots? If yes, can they please share the methodology with ordinary citizens? The Supreme Court is waiting to hear from the city government on March 7, 2011 about what steps it has taken so far to redeem the already misused amenity spaces. The existing amenity spaces were planned over 30 years ago for a city population of five million. The population of Karachi is now 18 million. Aren't the existing amenity spaces already inadequate? This bill needs to be torn, burnt and flushed down and its proponents need to be asked the reasons for proposing this mischievous bill. [Pakistan Observer]

APPOINTMENTS WITHOUT LAWFUL AUTHORITY

[Nauman Asghar, Concerned Citizens of Pakistan]

It has been revealed in a recent press report that the new Punjab Governor has appointed four advisers and two consultants soon after holding charge when he has no such constitutional authority. The Concerned Citizens of Pakistan (CCP) has expressed concern over this move as it shows the powers that be are engaged only in furthering their partisan interests paying two hoot to the people's sufferings. Inflation has already broken the back of the salaried class and millions of people in Pakistan do not have access to two meals a day. The bloated Federal Cabinet is already a heavy drain on public expenditures. As per the press report, these appointments by the Punjab Governor have been made without any lawful authority. Is this not a mockery of 10-point agenda put forward by PML-N that seeks to reduce government expenditures? The CCP demands that the terms and references of these new appointments be brought into public. Moreover, the concerned citizens urge the government authorities to reset their priorities and learn lessons from the tide of uprising in Arab world. [The Nation]

MONSTER OF CORRUPTION

[Memooma Fatima, Lahore]

Nowadays corruption has become the biggest social issue in Pakistan. It is increasing day by day which is not good for the development of our country. It would be pertinent to say that our country may not be performing well in several fields but has progressed in corruption from the number 42 in 2009 to 34 in 2010. Billion of rupees are said to be wasted through corruption

which severely restricts the country's economic growth. The Transparency International's report said that corruption is the root cause of nearly all other social evils like extreme poverty, illiteracy, terrorism, extremism, shortage of electricity, soaring inflation and bad governance in Pakistan. According to Auditor General of Pakistan, massive irregularities have been found in five multimillion dollars projects of rental and independent power projects initiated by Pepco.

According to World Bank's Public Expenditure Report there is something wrong or illegal among tax officials. Strong businessmen don't pay tax. So, in this way Pakistan tax and public finance administration is also affected by corruption in a bad way. The foreign debt rose from \$40 bn in 1999 to \$46 bn in 2008 and \$53 during this year. This rise in debt has occurred only because of corruption. It has become very difficult to finish corruption in the country but still it is not impossible. Accountability of every department of Pakistan is necessary to remove corruption from the country. [Pakistan Today]

TAX EVASION

[Jameel Bhutto, Ex-member (tax policy) CBR]

Your report of February 9 titled "Govt plans crackdown against tax evaders, losing Rs796b annually" reminds me of all the tall claims made by successive governments with regard to tax collection. My long association with the erstwhile Central Board of Revenue proved that the corrupt and inefficient tax machinery can never catch the tax evaders because the latter are powerful enough to escape the clutches of the law. The so-called potential 700,000 taxpayers against whom the proposed crackdown is being launched will mostly turn out to be ordinary taxpayers who are not filing their tax returns but who are subjected to a number of withholding taxes on their presumed income.

A few hundred notorious tax evaders should be targeted in the first phase of the plan, by giving free hand to honest and efficient tax officers. Such officers can be assisted by well-reputed and non-aligned experts who do not seem to have ever been appointed by any commissioner of inland revenue, despite the enabling powers vested under section 222 of the Income Tax Ordinance, 2001. [The Express Tribune]

POOR PARLIAMENTARIANS

[Alizeh Haq, Islamabad]

How many of our parliamentarians were personally affected by the 2010 floods? How many of them are homeless or underprivileged? And above all, how many of them pay taxes? Yet they are eager to spend the taxpayers' money on their lavish indulgences. There are 358 family suites at present in the Parliament Lodges. However, there are 442 parliamentarians which means a deficit of 84 apartments. But there are also dozens of government houses in the ministers' enclave at the disposal of the ministers selected amongst the parliamentarians. More apartments are under construction for the state ministers, also from amongst the same 442 parliamentarians. Also, the parliamentarians use numerous other government accommodation

facilities like the rest houses, the provincial governments' houses etc. Can the Pakistani parliamentarians please spare the huge amount budgeted for their fancy apartments and let this money be used for building houses for the displaced flood victims? Or is that too big a sacrifice to expect from them? [The News]

CIVIL SERVICE: SUGGESTIONS TO CURB CORRUPTION

[Salman James, Lahore]

This refers to an ongoing debate in Dawn regarding underpaid civil servants and corruption. I want to suggest some practical measures to reform our civil service. The suggestions might give a chance to civil servants to work with honesty instead of indulging in corruption to make both ends meet. It will also attract the best talent in our country to the civil service. There are reportedly 7,500 civil servants in grades 17 to 22 who are paid meagre salaries which lead to corruption. It would make a big difference if the government provides a 'CSS allowance' of Rs50,000 a month to grades 17 and 18 officers, Rs75,000 to grades 19 and 20 officers and Rs100,000 to grades 21 and 22 officers. The financial burden because of this CSS allowance will be much smaller compared to the amount lost because of corruption. It would cost approximately Rs4.5 billion a year. Its cost benefit analysis can be conducted by professionals, though a layman can easily imagine the viability of the proposal. [Dawn]

CONSCIENCE OF RULING ELITE

[Gull Zaman, Peshawar]

It seems the conscience of our ruling political, civil or khaki elite has gone in hibernation waiting for their insatiable greed for ill-gotten wealth to be filled. How else can those sitting in Islamabad, explain their silence over the never ending scams, that keep on surfacing almost every day. There seems to be no reverence for matters relating to faith, otherwise how else do they explain their unwillingness to prosecute those involved in Haj scam. Likewise, thousands of poor lower middle class citizens and expatriates have been duped into investing in what was supposed to be a ballot for 5 or 8 Marla plots in DHA Islamabad, but turned out to be scheme in partnership with a notorious land mafia tycoon.

There was a time when Benazir Bhutto, or Nawaz Sharif were in power and delays in Haj operations would lead to serious accountability. The recent Haj operation was the worst ever conducted in the history of the country and so was the mismanagement in the PIA, yet nothing was done till the employees themselves stood up and grounded the airline to a halt. When will the appetite of sugar cartels be satisfied, or for that matter the massive corruption in NHA, Steel Mills, PASCO, TCP, KPT, FBR, Railways, Rental Power, PIA etc come to an end? I appeal the leaders of our political parties to kindly listen to the voice on streets of Pakistan, before the masses lose their patience and anarchy takes over. There is a limit to the interventions or activism of Supreme Court of Pakistan, which alone cannot provide relief to the people unless the rulers act simultaneously. [The Nation]

CIVIL SERVICE: SUGGESTIONS TO CURB CORRUPTION

[Abu Turab Warraich, Lahore]

If Syed Saadat (Jan 20) has justified corruption, Imran Asghar (Feb 14) has supported abysmally low compensation package of civil servants. I think both of these stances are disappointing. No one can justify corruption by citing poor salary. However, highlighting the causes of corruption does not mean an attempt to justify corruption itself. One should not confuse justification and causes. The low compensation package is one of the most important reasons for corruption in the civil bureaucracy. A country manager of an MNC gets a car, a well-furnished house in a posh locality and private security guards, besides a handsome, if not heavy, salary per month. On the contrary, a federal secretary is poorly compensated even though his work performance will affect the lives of people from Karachi to Khyber.

Certainly, there is a dire need to substantially improve the compensation packages of civil servants. A human resource practitioner can very well understand the positive relation between compensation package and motivation of employees. In a broader perspective, we can effectively fight corruption and inefficiency by ensuring market-based salary, performance-based incentives, proper training and very strict accountability of civil servants. These measures will go a long way in transforming civil servants to public servants as the Quaid had envisaged. [Dawn]

AMENITY PLOTS

[Naeem Sadiq, Karachi]

One feels disappointed at how our lawmakers find dubious ways to institutionalise opportunities of confusion and corruption. A new bill, Bill No 7 of 2009, has been placed before the Sindh Assembly, ostensibly to protect the “amenity plots” and prevent their conversion, but in reality the bill does just the opposite. Section 4 of the bill provides a special window of opportunity enabling the provincial assembly to arbitrarily convert any amenity plot (intended for parks, playgrounds, schools, hospitals, libraries etc.) to any other use. If passed, the bill will further (and rapidly) take away our already limited open spaces, our playing fields, our beach fronts, our parks and pave the way for their occupation for corporate, residential and commercial purposes. Are there some men and women of conscience in the Sindh Assembly who will take a stand to have this anti-city, anti-environment and arbitrary Section 4 removed from the bill? Will the citizens come together to force their representatives not to agree on this unethical legislation? [The Nation]

HEFTY PAY IS NO CURE FOR CORRUPTION

[Hina Pervez, Lahore]

This is apropos of the letter ‘Civil service: suggestions to curb corruption’ (Feb 15) by Salman James. The writer has suggested giving Rs50,000 as CSS allowance to grade 17 and 18 officers; Rs75,000 to grade 19 and 20 and Rs100,000 to grade 21 and 22 officers. This may be a meagre amount as compared to the money lost because of corruption. But we cannot ignore that

corruption has deep roots in our system and psyche, therefore, only hefty allowance would not bring any positive result unless the whole system is overhauled. This can be done only through political will for restructuring, having regular performance audits, associating the performance and delivery of service to the pay raise etc. Besides, capacity building of not only civil servants is needed, but also of the lower staff. [Dawn]

THE PRODIGAL SON

[Ahmad Khan, Rawalpindi]

While talking to the media in connection with the Haj-related corruption charges, Prime Minister Gilani's son Abdul Qadir Gilani stated that he purchased his imported jeeps worth several million rupees with his legitimate money. He claims that he has substantial agricultural income and can afford to buy more such vehicles. In order to check the veracity of this statement, the relevant authorities should just check his agricultural income tax return. If it shows an income of around Rs30 to Rs40 million, on which he has paid income tax, then let us accept his claims. [The News]

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[Basic social services to all](#)

It is for the people, especially for the think-tanks and NGOs, and no doubt for media also, that the big issue for the next election should be the provision of basic social services (water supply, sanitation, public transport, roads, paved streets, street lights, libraries, parks or playgrounds, and noise and pollution free environment) to all the citizens in Pakistan not only ensured in the constitution but binding on the next government also. If achieved, that will be a great step forward towards the unification of the ordinary and elite Pakistans. Is there any political party ready to take up this at the top of its agenda? [Editor]

IMPORTANCE OF LIBRARIES

[Banuk Sharan Bashir, Turbat]

The purpose of a library is to collect, organise, preserve and provide access to knowledge and information in the form of books. Libraries maintain a record and collection of culture and civilisation that can be passed on to future generations. They ensure access to books, newspapers, magazines and manuscripts. A library also provides support to various educational programmes and develops students' skills in locating and using information. In developed countries libraries are a source of freedom, equality and individual rights.

However, owing to lack of attention and finances libraries in Pakistan face several challenges. As the federal and the provincial government provide limited funds, libraries throughout the country are full of books and other materials which are irrelevant, damaged or out of date. It is a fact that research plays a vital role in academic work of a student but it is sad to know that libraries in Pakistan lack collections of unique materials to support the requirement of advanced and highly specialised research. Mongol warlords had also destroyed libraries in

Baghdad as they considered people in libraries as lethal as soldiers. I wonder why we fail to understand the importance of libraries despite living in the 21st century, while warriors from Mongolia understood the significance of libraries centuries ago. [Dawn]

LIBRARIES REQUIRED

[Sidra Yaseen, Karachi]

Most people cannot afford to buy expensive books anymore what with the rising inflation. Thus, they are inclined towards public libraries. There are approximately 38 to 39 public libraries in Karachi; among these nearly 14 are present in Lyari town, which shows that libraries are not appropriately distributed in Karachi. Due to this unplanned distribution, it is difficult for a large number of people to approach these public libraries. As a student, I usually face problems in finding relevant books. In varsities, limited books are available. Due to the high prices, varsities' administrations usually do not issue authentic books. Moreover, those people who do not have internet access face a huge problem in finding relevant data. The Ministry of Education is requested to make some digital and public libraries in order to facilitate every Pakistani. [Daily Times]

MODEL TOWN LIBRARY'S CONDITION

[Abdur Rehman Farrukh, Lahore]

Libraries play a pivotal role in enriching human capital and are said to be national assets. Unfortunately they have been badly overlooked by the Pakistani government. The small number of libraries that exist in the country are also in the doldrums due to the lax attitude of the ruling class.

The Government Model Town Library is the only library in the vicinity. It is an excellent facility for students and readers but there is gross mismanagement in this library that discourages visitors. The flippant attitude of the staff has entirely shattered the environment of the library. Silence is not observed while the library staff discusses their day to day matters in the reading hall, much to the chagrin and inconvenience of the readers sitting there. To cap it all, they do not turn their mobiles silent and their disturbing tones disrupts the peace of a library environment. How can they then ask others to maintain discipline in the library? There is no check and balance on the staff members. They seem to be running the library according to their own rules.

The library opens at 8am but the sweeper daily interrupts by sweeping the floor and dragging the chairs till about 10am. The lavatories are not useable. There is not any generator or alternative to provide light during load-shedding hours. The heating system is also absent during the winter season. In a nutshell, one can not study in this place, which has been built to benefit the reading public. Cooling and heating arrangements, appropriate light, air and, the more essentially, observing silence plays an important part in the concentration of the reader on reading. Unfortunately all these important facilities are missing in this library. The government should encourage the students and facilitate them to develop reading habits. Our society is in a state of flux and the youth is indulged in a number of social evils. The officials of

the Government Model Town Library must focus on preventing such inconvenience and providing a reader-friendly environment in the library. [Dawn]

MORE LIBRARIES

[Noor Ahmed, Kech]

In order to increase the literacy rate in the state, it is critical that every person has access to libraries through which students and others can acquire the knowledge required in order to develop as a nation. Without easy access to books, even willing individuals will not be able to achieve anything, since the knowledge they seek is out of reach. It is high time the educational ministry of Balochistan paid attention to building more libraries in the province. [Daily Times]

MODEL TOWN LIBRARY: ANOTHER VIEW

[Omar Draz Gondal, Lahore]

This is apropos of the letter 'Model town library's condition' (Feb 4). Mr Farrukh has rightly pointed out that libraries play a pivotal role in national development. To me, his observation regarding the quality of management in the Model town library lacks some truth. I am a regular visitor to this library. Facilities provided over here demand a great deal of appreciation. The staff is cooperative. Over the last few years the library's condition has improved to a great extent. Without any exaggeration, I have found that the staff in the library is working hard to make it a model library. Every year a large number of good books are added to the library. Recently an Internet lab has been established with full equipment. Anyone can come and check the standard of arrangements. However, I agree with the problem of the generator and heating arrangements. I, along with some other members, earlier raised the issue of alternative to loadshedding but we were told by the staff that they have not been provided enough funds to purchase an electric generator yet. I request the authority concerned to pay heed to this pending issue. [Dawn]

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[FreePakistan Newsletter, among other things, is a compilation of views and news taken from the national newspapers' print and online editions. It is not possible to mention the source of every piece of news or view made use of herein; but as a matter of policy, where possible the source is mentioned with due thanks. However, no opinion expressed here should necessarily be taken as reflecting the view of Free Pakistan Newsletter.]

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