

FORTNIGHTLY

June 01-15, 2017
Volume: 02
Issue: 11



TRUTH TRACKER

WATCHING OUT FOR PAKISTAN



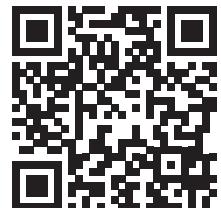
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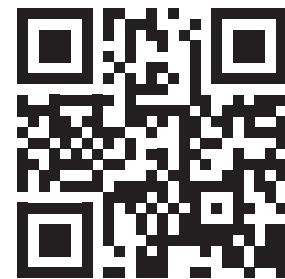


News Lens Pakistan's mission is to strengthen democracy, governance and society in Pakistan through ethics-based, quality journalism. We educate journalists and citizens about their roles, duties, rights and responsibilities by practicing responsible and enlightening journalism.

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Editorial

It's time for politicians to stop empty words and instead keep promises

It looks strange when an editorial writer ignores the major issues and focusses instead on apparently petty affairs. Ideally, Truth Tracker's editorial for its current issue should have been about corruption cases against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his children, Pakistan's role in Saudi Arabia - Iran conflict or the expected resignation of General (Ret.) Raheel Sharif from the captaincy of the Saudi-led military alliance of 39 countries. Instead we have opted to focus again on the promises and manifestos of political parties.

The present federal and provincial governments have now completed four years in power. One year is left and Pakistan will go to the polls in 2018. For the past five years Truth Tracker has been tracking promises of three parties: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML), Pakistan Tehrik e Insaaf (PTI) and Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP). PML holds the reins in Islamabad (federal government), Punjab and Balochistan (provincial governments), PTI runs the provincial government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and PPP controls the provincial government in Sindh.

After continuous tracking of the promises made by the three parties, we at Truth Tracker have found that only 30 percent or less of the promises made in the manifestos of the three ruling parties have been fulfilled to date. The rest of the promises were either broken or compromised. This speaks to the parties' lack of seriousness towards the people of Pakistan -- they know Pakistanis will not hold them accountable and ask about these promises. And so the wheel goes around again and the parties will simply come up with new promises and again there will be no questions asked.

Recently, a member of the PPP's Manifesto Committee for Election 2013, told Truth Tracker that the political parties in Pakistan don't take the preparation of their manifestos seriously. They identify some of the major issues like the electricity crisis, law and order, etc., and knit promises around them while other promises are simply fillers to increase the volume of the manifesto.

This political leader's next revelation was even more intriguing: most promises are made without proper consideration and planning which means make a promise first and then plan. It indicates that political parties take their promises as meaningless words and manifestos as useless documents which essentially become invalid after they are elected.

The mainstream political parties of Pakistan must change their attitude towards their voters as well as their promises and manifestos for it is their democratic obligation to educate voters about the importance and sanctity of the manifestos which, while helping political leaders reach the power corridors, end up becoming meaningless words with little to no truth attached.

These parties should therefore join hands with Truth Tracker, which despite having very little resources, stands for the cause of truth and promise tracking and accountability for the sake of the people of Pakistan.

Mubasher Bukhari

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Editor's Note

E-democracy at risk

There you have it. The significant-most agenda on Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar's list, these days, is purging of social media and journalism from 'trash.' If any initiative can rival the issue of the JIT, it is this. What comes as a surprise is that despite the decades of social media and independent electronic journalism in the country, it is now, that the government found its nuisance value.

In recent weeks our interior minister has gone an extra mile to ensure progress in minimising what he might call groups of individuals trying to tarnish the good name of the government, military establishment and public officials. FIA's special cyber crime unit has reportedly outlined a long list of social media activists and journalists. The rigorous investigation process has begun. Nisar has also held meetings with journalism and media organisations, APNS, PBA, CPNE; held press conferences and; together with NADRA and PTA, moved closer to forming SOPs for "devising a system that ensures freedom of expression, while simultaneously checking unbridled misuse of social media".

Only in an ideologically formed state may you find the oxymoronic maneuvers that promote freedom while reigning in dissent. The nine-month old cybercrime bill, reportedly, bore only one court decision, passing a sentence for producing a fake social media account. Already the hardliners are voicing that the cybercrime cases should be handled by military courts and not its civil equivalent.

Some analysts argue that while the country has proper laws to curb sedition, defamation, blasphemy terrorism and; cyber crime bill, PTA and PEMRA work as regulatory bodies, why do we need yet another regulator. Needless to say that netizens, rights' groups and journalists are queasy about this business. For about two decades, the nation has enjoyed independent news media and shared their ideas with the rest of the world through social networking. Moreover, while the country has proper laws to curb sedition, defamation, blasphemy terrorism and; cyber crime bill, PTA and PEMRA work as regulatory bodies, yet another regulator can only create a stir in the pot. And now as a code of conduct for journalism and social media is in the making, the message for the netizen is, when online, stick strictly to two subjects: the weather and your health.

The question arises: why now? Well Nisar's media drive came hot on the heels of the civil military kerfuffle following the controversial Dawn Leaks report. However, some political analysts see this as an effort to appease the Forces.

In its past decade news and social media have encouraged a fair discourse and an e-democracy in the country where people have the right to question. Not only has it increased the awareness among the masses as to the rights and responsibilities but also the need for accountability. It was the social and news media that raised issues of Shahzeb murder in 2013 and Qandeel Baloch among numerous other issues usually swept under the carpet.

The government is right to ensure that no wrongdoing goes unpunished in the news and social media but the process has to be transparent. The interior minister should know that he is responsible for SOPs that do not intimidate patriotic journalists and social media activists. He also needs to devise a policy on terrorist factions ruling their roost on social media pages. Political victimization of major political party members and juvenile minority members like Nabeel Masih demand attention of the civil courts. Forcing citizen to self-censor will result in a Salem hunt, encouraging further extremism. The country should preserve and value its thinking population. Another Mishal Khan tragedy needs to be avoided at all cost.

Ameera Javeria

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Human Rights

People at large in Pakistan up against blasphemy laws misuse



A societal push against misuse/abuse of blasphemy laws in Pakistan is on the rise, slowly and gradually.



Waqar Gillani

ISLAMABAD: Three days after the brutal killing of Mashal Khan, a 25-year-old student of journalism at Abdul Wali Khan University of Mardan (AWKUM) in April 2017, on hearsay accusation of blasphemy, a big number of people from different walks of life gathered in Zaida, hometown of the victim, and protested against his lynching.

The rally in Zaida, comprising of local residents, political workers, students, teachers and different civil society groups, protested against lynching of Mashal. Marching in the main bazaar of the town, protestors enchanted slogans calling "justice for innocent Mashal." It was first time that such a village in the tribal-cultured province of Khyber Paktunkhawah (KP), people got up against blasphemy laws misuse and condemned mob violence against the accrued persons. They also expressed solidarity with the family of Mashal.

On April 13, a large number of students and employees of AWKUM teamed up outside journalism department and started accusing Mashal, a brilliant and outstanding student of the campus according to his teacher, of blasphemy. Later, they forcibly entered the department office, smashed windows and doors, and thrashed a friend of Mashal questioning his faith. "I was standing in

the lab when students started gathering. They were furious and they were saying Mashal does not believe in Allah and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)," Umair Khan, a student of journalism said.

The violent mob, later, marched towards the boarding of the university, which is almost a kilometer away from the department, went three floors up and dragged Mashal, who had locked himself in the room to save his life, to the ground and beaten him to death with fists, sticks and bricks in front of a police squad and university security guards.

"We never heard of any such thing about Mashal. There is no complaint or evidence against him," Shiraz Paracha, chairman Journalism Department of AWKUM said.

"The initial information and inquiry proved that Mashal was not involved in alleged blasphemy. He, according to our information, criticized some policies of the university administration just a few days before the accusation was leveled against him," Dr Said Mehsud, a political activist, who was present at the rally told Truth Tracker. He said even then nobody in society has right to take law into hand and turn violent in the name of religion.

To have a clear picture about the violence on the accusation of blasphemy in Pakistan, the Gojra Incident might be a good example.

In 2009, a violent mob of a few thousand attacked a Christian Colony in Gojra,

central Punjab burning seven of a family to death after setting ablaze the whole neighbourhood.

In 2012, thousands of people beat a mentally-challenged man to death, and burned his corpse after he was accused of desecrating the holy Quran in district Bahawalpur in Southern Punjab. The attackers stormed a police station where the man was being interrogated and took him in their custody. There is no full-stop yet.

The blasphemy laws in Pakistan were amended by a military dictator general Ziaul Haq with severest punishment in 1980s. Sections 295A, B, and C were added in Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) with introducing up to 10 years' imprisonment for derogatory remarks against holy personalities of Islam, life-imprisonment for desecrating Holy Quran and death penalty on uttering derogatory remarks against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The number of reported extra judicial killings of blasphemy accused persons in Pakistan from 2005 to 2017 is more than 70, according to Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), a think tank focusing on extremism.

The ratio of lodging blasphemy cases multiplied from a few to hundreds after the new amendments with strict punishment, National Commission for Justice and Peace, a church-run non-government organization highlighted in its report.

Following the death of Mashal Khan, there have been numerous debates on Pakistani television channels highlighting misuse of blasphemy; civil society groups protested and a large number of people from different walks of life expressed solidarity with the family of Mashal.

"Some of our neighbours and a local cleric announced publicly not to attend funeral of Mashal and condole with the family. However, after the rally, they came to us and apologized for the indifference saying they made a mistake for not standing with family," Muhammad Iqbal, father of Mashal told Truth Tracker. "This is not only my grief but grief of whole nation," he said highlighting misuse of such laws in the name of religion. He said whole society would have to stand up and change the situation positively after the horrible lynching of his son as new realization for peace and tolerance. He said police have also lodged case against the cleric who publicly announced not to attend funeral

of Mashal.

Saroop Ijaz, human rights activists and lawyer with focus on blasphemy cases, said there is the realization that this blasphemy law is misused on occasions. "What needs to be understood is that while Mashal's case was a most horrible example of this law being used for victimization and persecution; it also represents the norms of the society. For a greater push for reform the lead has to be taken by the government and political forces and sadly we have not seen real intent for this (beyond empty, unconvincing rhetoric)," he observed.

He said Mashal's brutal lynching has acutely spotlighted the violent and horrific consequences of the misuse of the blasphemy laws. The fact that "blasphemy" is used as an instrument of violence and persecution for personal reason. It is now becoming apparent to many and there is a hope that this could lead to an honest

national conversation and eventually reform, he added.

"The real challenge in improving the situation is mindset. We have to make bold decisions and do soul searching rather than ignoring the issue," Paracha seconded Ijaz.

The campus of the university is opened after six weeks amid protests calling justice for Mashal. Father of Mashal on the opening of the campus also called for justice alleging the university's administration for planning this violence in the name of blasphemy.

"AWKU administration killed my son for hiding irregularities of their officials and accused him of committing blasphemy to avoid accountability," Iqbal said in his officially recorded statement before police too.



Accountability Educational institutions without sexual harassment penalties or policies



Riazul Haq

ISLAMABAD: Majority of the universities in the Islamabad have no effective mechanism to stop sexual harassment. The law which gives legal protection is unknown, making students vulnerable to the offence.

"We prefer to ignore it. Otherwise we have to bear the consequences if we take the issue or the person head on," Engineering student Maryam Ali of the Federal Urdu University of Arts Science and Technology in Islamabad, told Truth Tracker.

"We are bound to fail and be the target of that teacher and even his friends if we take them on."

The case of Ali is a litmus test in educational institutes.

There are no sexual harassment committees to oversee. There is no law that protects victims or bring the offenders to book.

Truth Tracker checked websites of the universities and sought details from their public relations departments. Except for the National University of Science and Technology, none of the other dozen-plus universities in Islamabad has any clear awareness of sexual harassment policies or

penalties.

After the passage of Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010 the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan adopted the law and issued a booklet. The Act establishes inquiry committees, each of which must include one female.

Legal ladder

In 2014, media reported that Islamabad's National University of Modern Languages flouted the HEC's policy guideline when an all-male committee of three members was set up to investigate a harassment complaint. A woman was later added to the committee when the accused refused to appear before the committee. The accused professor was removed from his position as head of department, only to be appointed head of another department, despite the recommendations of sexual harassment committee that he should not be given any supervisory or departmental head's role.

In a harassment case at Quaid-e-Azam University, a teacher from Biological Sciences was removed from his post. He was later reinstated by then President Asif Ali Zardari. The Public Relations Officer of the university told Truth Tracker that the President replied with a note of Ministry of Law and Justice, "The law of harassment does not apply to students because they are not employees."

It was the first time when such major lacuna in the law was raised by the Ministry of Law and Justice which legally vets and approves the legislation drafts in the country. On February 27, a senior official of Ministry of Law and Justice, Sajjad Shah told the parliamentary committee on human rights that the law passed in 2010 did not apply to educational institutes as the law "does talk about employee-against-employee but not

employee-against-student."

The issue was being discussed at the request of MNA Asiya Nasir who wanted to amend the 2010 bill passed by parliament to bring students under the law against harassment.

Shah's statement was shocking to all members of the parliamentary committee which were majority females, already supporting the suggested amendment. Shah informed the committee that there was no need to amend the law as Article 509 of the Constitution covers all kind of harassment against women at any place with some penalties.

VC of QAU Javed Ashraf said the university has a disciplinary committee which takes action if any such complaints are received from students or employees against someone.

"Students are vigilant and smart these days and they know much about such activities and that how and where to report," he told Truth Tracker.

"The varsity has not received any complaints during the last year, which is testament to the fact that we have strict disciplinary action," the VC said.

When several students were asked if they knew about any such body or committee to report such incidents, several female students expressed ignorance.

"We have not heard of any sexual harassment committee because there is nothing in prospectus, nor any awareness in the departments about the issue," a Biological Sciences student, who did not wish to be named, told Truth Tracker. Former vice chancellor of Quaid-e-Azam University Masoom Yasinzai is now rector of IIUI.

He could not justify the absence of anti-harassment committee and lack of awareness at campus.

"We have strong authoritative disciplinary

committees which deal with such issues strictly and leave no stone unturned to get to the bottom of the issue and find the culprit," Yasinzai told Truth Tracker.

HEC's media director Aayesha Ikram said the need for referring cases to the HEC ends with the enforcement of the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010.

"During the last 12 months, only one harassment case was reported to HEC," Ikram told Truth Tracker by email.

That case was picked up by the Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment of Women in the Workplace. At Comsats Institute of Information Technology, four architecture students blamed a teacher for not only harassing but physically harming the students. The case is still being heard by a committee, the Rector of the university told Truth Tracker.

Comsats Executive Director, Dr Junaid Zaid told Truth Tracker that all efforts were being made to investigate the students' complaints.

"After all the confusion that prevails around the sexual harassment law, one can be sure that unwillingness on every part is what can be called a crime and inhuman, especially when students are involved," Khawar Mumtaz, chairperson National Commission on Status of Women told Truth Tracker.

She said a desk would be formed at the commission's office to look into the matter.

"I still cannot understand if the situation remains in such disarray then who will protect our daughters in education institutions and advise them about handling such situations," MNA Asiya Nasir said.





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The Red Gold in FATA



Abdul Salam Afridi

Peshawar: Khyber Agency Agriculture department successfully cultivated saffron in the area where cannabis farming was common with the aim to produce a substitute of the previous crop in local area with the world most expensive spice. Three million was allocated to bring the gold bulbs from Chitral in PC-1 with the aim to produce stigmas and bulbs, deliver them to the market, which will help in growing the future economy of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

From among its seven agencies, Khyber Agency is the most famous one in FATA with a unique historical background and geographical location. The 2,576 square kilometers area of the Agency is located in the north of Pakistan. Its climate has extreme temperatures, with cold winters and warm dry summers. According to the FATA Development Statistics Bureau around 49000 acre areas are cultivated in Khyber Agency with cannabis as the most popular cop.

In the beginning, the measure was initiated by an Agency officer with the support of the law enforcement representatives and political agent of the Khyber Agency under the regional development programme to produce a substitute in the market. While the KP agriculture department was not

supportive during the initial research, the agency officer started test research on his own in Tirah Valley in Sep 2016. He used the initial lot of gold bulbs from Chitral and cultivated over a 5 Kanals of saffron plots in different areas of Maidan valley spending approximately 1.5 million rupees. In the initial pilot phase sixteen different farming lands were used for saffron cultivation and these farmer received training from agriculture department on bulbs farming.

Saffron is the world's most expensive spice. This perennial carries narrow ribbed leaves and is grown from blubs known as corm. The saffron spice is derived from stigmas of the saffron crocus, which is opulent rust to red coloured. It is a valued condiment, commonly used in cuisine of different countries. Saffron grows well in areas that have cold winters and warm dry summers.

After the successful experiment of saffron cultivation in Khyber agency, bearing outstanding results, more expectations are now focused on its harvest. An agency officer from the Khyber Agency agriculture department, Shamas-u-Rehman Khattak, told Truth Tracker that although the task presented a big challenge for them, the first and vital challenge was the availability and acquisition of healthy bulbs. This was, however, managed by bringing gold bulbs from Chitral. He, however, alluded to the restrictions in policies and security concerns, which is debilitating the progress

of any initiative.

Since the production of saffron across the country is limited, if not rare, the cultivation of saffron plants in Khyber Agency's various locations promises an increase in the production of stigmas and bulbs for the local market and an opportunity to promote saffron farming in other parts of country. This way people would get fresh quality real stigmas from a nearby place since the freshly produced saffron are best for use during first six months after harvesting, any later and the stigmas lose their real fragrance and quality.

As the initiative is still undergoing its testing phases, efforts are being made to increase size of bulbs and grow the quantity of bulbs. The healthy bulbs size, weighing more than 25grams, can bloom more than four flowers depending on climate and soil fertility. After successful experimental test of saffron cultivation, the agriculture department Khyber agency has permission of security agencies to bring synthetic fertilizer for farming bulbs. The normal time for saffron cultivation begins in September and the flowers bloom mid-October through mid-November. "As it is a one-time investment, the bulbs can be re-used for cultivation for another 5 to 10 years as the older bulbs can bloom more flowers than fresh ones" says Khattak.

Cultivation of saffron is not a common for



local farmers so they require more training opportunities to become fully aware of well forming of bulbs. "Convincing and training of local former was a challenge for us as they were thinking that the plant would grow like a big tree" says agriculture officer Khyber Agency, Faiq Iqbal. On an average, 10g of saffron can make Rs.6000 to Rs.10000 in the local market this means that per Kg can farmers can make Rs. 200,000 to Rs. 300,000 accordingly.

According to the management practice the yield of dried saffron from 2 to 6kg per hectare can be possible. But the cost of purchasing seeds and bulbs are very expensive and initially 80,000 to 90,000 saffron corms are required for one acre, which is a steep investment for the local farmer.

A local farmer dubbed saffron farming opportunity as a great chance for us to cultivate the crop for the first time under the guidance and support of the agriculture department. He hoped this would provide more business opportunities for farmers in the future.

Khattak said that production of more and quality stigmas require training and supports from the countries already producing saffron, and added that investors are welcome to come and invest in crop.

The production of saffron will not only fulfill the local market's need but could boost the economy of FATA. This is not the first time that FATA plays a role in contribution to the national economy. Last year saw the production of wheat increase from 36% to 44% of the whole



country's production. Not only this but in the previous year, during the World Food Day organized by World Health Organization, from a congregation of all farmer associations from across the country, FATA farmers were nominated in top four pitches where KP and Punjab didn't even make the list. Currently, FATA has some restrictions in

its different policies, which need to be revised. Such a provision would provide opportunities to the people of FATA to produce more quality products for the local and national markets.



Media Tracker



Media Tracker lists the challenges and achievements of the journalists and media organisations worldwide. Here's a list of journalism at risk stories in the recent month. We would like to thank international media protection organisation and news outlets for their content.

- In the recent week, Authorities of [Saudi Arabia](#), the [United Arab Emirates](#), and [Bahrain](#) blocked popular [Qatari-funded news websites](#) including those of regional broadcaster [Al-Jazeera](#) and [various newspapers](#), dubbing them as attempts to incite sedition, in violation of agreements between members of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The censorship immediately followed alleged remarks by Qatar's Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, in which he allegedly criticised U.S. foreign policy and president Trump, while expressing support for Hezbollah and Hamas and, arguing for improved relations with Iran and Israel. However, soon after, a series of tweets from the government spokesman denounced the controversial remarks saying that the news agency had been hacked and the alleged remarks were “not true and totally baseless.”
(CPJ)
- Based in [Turkey](#) for the past five years a French photographer, [Mathias Depardon](#), was arrested on [8 May](#) while reporting in the southeast of the country for [National Geographic magazine](#). Despite an order for his deportation (issued on 11 May), he is still being held at a detention and is now on a hunger strike. Turkey is ranked 155th out of 180 countries in RSF's 2017 World Press Freedom Index (RSF)
- In the recent week three separate incidents saw police brutality against [media workers](#) in [Kolkata, India](#). In one incident, at least [50 media workers](#) were [attacked](#) and [beaten](#) by law enforcement agencies officers as they covered a political protest march in [Kolkata, West Bengal](#). The attack resulted in at least a dozen journalists and media workers seriously injured. In a separate incident, [journalists](#) were gathering in Kolkata to protest against the attacks last week in the same area, when they were [charged at by police](#) and attacked. The police however apologized for the incidents and promised to investigate the responsible. A week prior to these two attacks, [photojournalists](#) were reportedly [attacked](#) by a [police driver](#) as they covered a fire in a building in the same city.
(IFEX)
- [Sozcu](#), a [Turkish](#) opposition paper published a blank “May 19 Press Freedom Special Edition,” protesting the [detentions of nine of its staff members](#). The Saturday, edition published bare columns with writers’ names, leaving the weather segment blank as well. This was done in response to Friday’s detentions of [Mediha Olgun](#), the editor of Sozcu’s website, and [reporter Gokmen Ulu](#). Detention warrants were also issued for owner [Burak Akbay](#) and head of finance [Yonca Kaleli](#). Authorities accused the journalists and staffers to have committed crimes on behalf of the U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen: an alleged mastermind of the last summer’s failed coup attempt. Sozcu is an avid supporter of the secular legacy Kemal Ataturk and a staunch critic of Turkey’s present government and leader.
(The Star)

Commentary

Policy differences emerge among Gulf states days after wooing President Trump



Dr. James M. Dorsey

Cracks have appeared in a Saudi-led, US-backed anti-terrorist political and military alliance days after US President Donald J. Trump ended a historic visit to Saudi Arabia. The cracks stem from Qatar's long-standing fundamental policy differences with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates about Iran and the role of political Islam.

The cracks emerged as the result of an anti-Qatar media and cyber campaign involving a spate of anti-Qatar articles in US and Gulf media; the blocking of Qatar-backed media websites and broadcasts in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt; statements by prominent former US government officials; and a recent seminar by the Washington-based Foundation for the Defense of Democracies that has long asserted that Qatar supports militant groups.

Seemingly emboldened by Mr. Trump's blanket endorsement of Saudi Arabia's proxy war against Iran and UAE Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed's visceral opposition to political Islam, Gulf states appear to believe that the time is right to again pressure Qatar to alter policies it sees as key to its national security. The crown prince reportedly maintains a close

working relationship with powerful Saudi Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

An earlier attempt by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain to force Qatar to align itself with the three states' hard line positions failed in 2014 when Qatar refused to bow after they withdrew their ambassadors from Doha. The ambassadors returned to their posts after a 10-month absence with little, if any, change in Qatari policies.

The policy differences have rekindled a long-standing rift within the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the regional association that groups Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman that is rooted in geography and history. Qatar unlike other Gulf states shares the world's largest gas field with Iran.

The differences reflect concern among many non-Arab members of the Saudi-led, 41-Muslim nation military alliance that the grouping is becoming an anti-Iranian grouping rather than one focused on combatting jihadism. They also erupted at a moment that Saudi Arabia is looking at attempting to destabilize Iran by fomenting unrest among the Islamic republic's ethnic minorities – a move that worries Pakistan and other coalition members.

Qatar's ability to mediate in conflicts

involving militant groups like the Taliban and various jihadist groups is a pillar of its troubled effort to project soft power. Its relationship with controversial groups like the Muslim Brotherhood is strategic and goes back to the founding of the Gulf state. The Brotherhood populated key educational and government institutions in Qatar and other Gulf states at a time that they did not have needed professionals of their own.

In Qatar, a country sandwiched between regional giants Saudi Arabia and Iran, both of whom it views as potential threats, the Brotherhood, however, offered something far more strategic: the ability to chart a course of its own. Looking at Saudi Arabia's power sharing agreement that empowers an ultra-conservative Sunni Muslim religious elite, Qatar used the Brotherhood to avoid falling into what it saw as a Saudi trap.

As a result, Qatar has no powerful religious establishment of its own. Its most prominent Islamic scholar, Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi, is a naturalized Qatari citizen of Egyptian origin who is associated with the Brotherhood. Qatar's ruling Al Thani family retains absolute power that it does not have to share.

In one of many contradictions in Qatari policy, Qatar unlike other Gulf states and despite being an autocracy, supported the anti-autocratic popular Arab revolts of

2011, and backed Islamist forces like the Brotherhood in Egypt. Its support explains why Egypt this month joined Saudi Arabia and the UAE in blocking Qatari-backed websites and broadcasts like Al Jazeera and The Huffington Post's Arabic edition.

Qatar, along with Saudi Arabia the world's only country that adheres to Wahhabism, a puritan, intolerant interpretation of Islam, has had strained relations with Egypt since general-turned-president Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi in 2013 toppled Mohammed Morsi in a military coup and brutally cracked down on the Brotherhood. Mr. Morsi, a Muslim Brother, was Egypt's first and only democratically elected president.

The most recent GCC crisis erupted after Qatar charged that remarks attributed to Qatari emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani that stroked with Qatari policy and were broadcast by state-run Qatar television as well as carried by the Gulf state's official news agency and various Twitter accounts, were the result of a

cyberattack.

Sheikh Tamim was alleged to have suggested that Mr Trump's administration could be short lived because of problems at home, questioned the wisdom of increasing tension with Tehran and defended Islamist groups Hamas, Hezbollah and the Brotherhood. Qatar has said it is investigating the hack.

In a bid to tarnish Qatar's already troubled reputation, Saudi and UAE media gave prominent coverage to the alleged remarks. The two states' media outlets rejected Qatari assertions of a cyberattack. They accused Qatar of having ties to Al Qaeda and reported that Qatari Foreign Minister Shaikh Mohammad Bin Abdul Rahman Al Thani had met secretly in Baghdad with Qasim Soleimani, the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' notorious Al Quds Force.

Adding fuel to the fire, Robert Gates, a former US defence secretary and director

of central intelligence, this week warned at a Foundation for the Defense of Democracies gathering on Qatar and the Brotherhood that Qatar risked losing its hosting of US forces at the Al Udeid Air Base, the largest US military base in the Middle East. "The United States military doesn't have any irreplaceable facility," Mr. Gates said.

Ed Royce, the Republican chair the House Foreign Affairs committee, told the gathering that "if it doesn't change, Qatar will be sanctioned under a new bill I'm introducing to punish Hamas backers."

Qatar has struggled to downplay the crisis and prove that the remarks attributed to Sheikh Tamim were fake news. Qatar's problem is that it doesn't matter whether the news was true or fake. The Gulf state is caught in a Catch-22. It is confronting a concerted Saudi and UAE effort to force it to align itself with the policies of a majority of the GCC. Qatar is doomed if it does and doomed if it doesn't.

*Dr. James M. Dorsey is a senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, co-director of the University of Würzburg's Institute for Fan Culture, and the author of *The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer blog*, a book with the same title, *Comparative Political Transitions between Southeast Asia and the Middle East and North Africa*, co-authored with Dr. Teresita Cruz-Del Rosario and a forthcoming book, *Shifting Sands, Essays on Sports and Politics in the Middle East and North Africa**

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Promise Tracking

Khan's pledge to adopt effective measures for girls' education in KP unfulfilled



Rehmat Mehsud

The Promise

Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan vowed that his party would adopt effective measures for better education of girls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province.

Background

Addressing a conference in January 2014, Khan had said that weak women couldn't be able to get their rights; hence education is very necessary for them.

"We have to focus earnestly on girls' education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This is our number-one priority. And once a female gets education she automatically knows about her due rights," Khan had said.

An uneducated female, he said could not benefit from any legislation and there is need to strengthen rule of law to empower women and ensure their rights.

In addition, he said that efforts be made to ensure women rights in inheritance, which is a big problem in Pakistan.

Tracking

Truth Tracker tried repeatedly to contact Muhammad Atif, provincial education minister, who neither returned the phone calls nor the text messages.

However, Mohammad Arif, a PTI lawmaker and standing committee chairman on elementary and secondary education department, said of course, it was the PTI's catchphrase to reform the education and health sectors in KP.

"Working on education sector was among our top most priorities," Arif reiterated.

A formula, he recalled was agreed upon to build 70% female schools and rest 30% male educational institutions and "our government was to strictly stick to that commitment," he recalled.

"Schools have been built on the same 70% and 30% ratio for female and males students respectively," he noted.

Let him quote as an example to depict the deteriorated education during the previous governments, he recalled that only 70 female teachers were hired in the last 16 years in his constituency.

"In my constituency, there were 16 closed or non functional female schools and by the grace of almighty, we have appointed 96 female teachers and now there is not a single closed school today in Shabqadar region," Arif added.

Arif claimed that the second achievement of the PTI-led government is that talented teachers have been hired purely on merit basis, and that is the reason that education is thriving in the province today.

"I personally think that unprecedented work has been done with tandem in the education sector," he observed.

Malik Riaz, Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) from Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (F), said that PTI has a long list of promises for a better tomorrow but unfortunately he didn't see any changes in



any sector of the province.

On Khan's pledge to shift more focus to enhance girls education in the province, Riaz said he didn't notice any surge in female education or a specific effort to promote girls education.

"The same old things and governance system are going ahead with snail's pace and I neither observed nor expect any change in girls' education in KP," he noted.

He said that PTI has countless promises with voters but none of them seems implemented in letter and spirit.

Sahibzada Sanaullah, another MPA from Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), noted that he found only one new girls primary school during the last two years being built by the sitting government.

If a judge or an independent observer wants to know about PTI overall performance and role in promoting of girls education, then one should go and see for himself/herself the state of education in remote districts of the province.

"Not only girls' but overall education in the far-flung areas is virtually in shambles," he added.

Main Ziaur Rehman, an MPA from Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), said the PTI has pledged to improve girls' education but he didn't observe any extraordinary step taken by the provincial government in education sector.

According to the constitution of Pakistan, Rehman said free education is the right of every child. He suggested that efforts should be made to ensure that every child is going to school not only in urban and populated areas but in remote parts of the province too.

For example, he suggested the PTI should build a school if there are 40 children living in a village in inaccessible area, which would help surge overall literacy rate of the country.

On girls education, Sayed Jaffar Shah, a noted MPA from Awami National Party (ANP), said everyone knows that health and education sectors were among the top priorities of PTI.

"But today doctors are on strike in the province where patients are facing acute problems in every hospital," he remarked.

Referring to girls' education, Shah recalled that only 19 primary schools have been completed since last four years, which depicts the poor performance of the PTI amid tall claims to bolster education.

Neither any new college nor a university can be established in the province with the exception of cadet colleges, he noted. "I fear, the province is in reverse gear in terms of development," he added.

Independent Viewpoint

When contacted for comments as an independent observer on the PTI's promise to promote girls education in KP, Shamim Shahid, a Peshawar based senior journalist, said that they (PTI) have opened one female university in Swabi district and another girls cadet college in Mardan district.

However, he said that PTI has tall claims to promote education but "I personally observe that private education has made unprecedented progress during the PTI tenure."

After four long years, he said the PTI-led government has formed a regulatory authority to control private educational institutions and during those years private education has spurred in the province.

"The sitting government has given free hand to private

education because most of the PTI MPAs are owners of the private educational institutions. Hence, the private education has witnessed considerable development comparatively," he remarked.

"I think female education sector has not been given due attention the way it was expected or deserved," Shahid added.

The PTI claims regarding promotion of education sector in KP is exaggerated while the ground realities are totally different, he observed.

Ruling

Keeping in view the remarks and viewpoints of ruling, opposition lawmakers and independent analyst, Truth Tracker rules the PTI has broken yet another promise regarding Khan's commitment to adopt effective measures for better education of girls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



Promise Tracking

PML-N has been unsuccessful in enacting the whistle-blower protection law



Durdana Najam

The Promise

To promote the culture of accountability and transparency, the PML-N had in its 2013 manifesto, promised to enact the 'whistleblower protection law'. The law provides a safeguard to persons who expose corruption, wrongdoing and other illegalities.

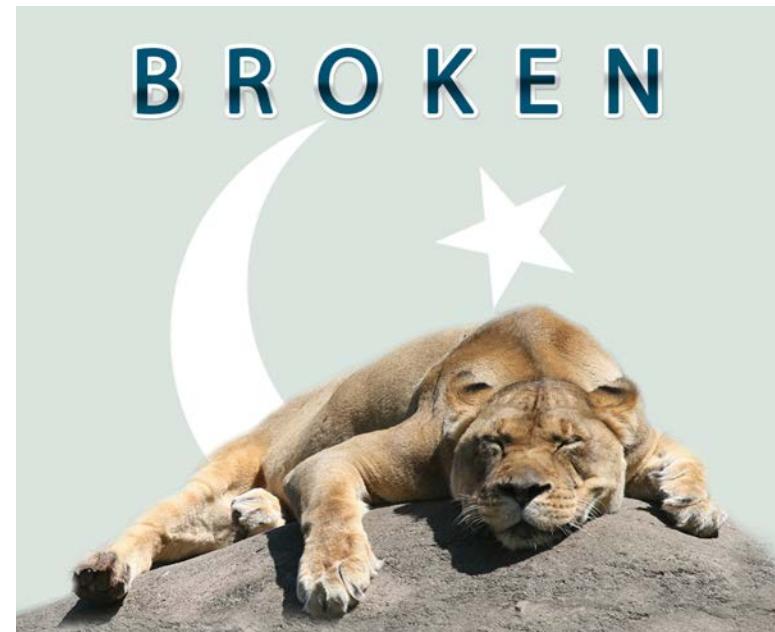
Background

A Whistleblower is a person who exposes a wrongdoing committed by an individual in a private or a public sector organization. The wrongdoing the whistleblower unearths through reporting has the potential to affect the public at large. Whistleblowing is not always appreciated and liked by companies or government that makes them punish the whistleblowers. In most countries, whistleblowers are protected by law, which means they do not lose their job or face discriminatory behaviour at work. A whistleblower can raise his/her concern on any wrongdoing that had happened in the past or would take place in future or is being carried out in the present. Personal grievances such as bullying, harassment and discrimination are not considered whistleblowing complaints. Following are the complaints that count as whistleblowing:

- A criminal offence e.g. fraud.
- Someone's health and safety is in danger.
- A miscarriage of justice
- The company is breaking the law.
- If someone is covering up wrongdoing.
- Risk or eminent danger to the environment

(Source of list: <https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing/what-is-a-whistleblower>)

Under the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, Pakistan as a signatory is obliged to legislate on Whistleblowing.



In one of the press releases issued by the National Accountability Bureau of Pakistan, dated 31 January 2015, (<http://www.nab.gov.pk/PRESS/NEW.ASP?886>) the Chairman NAB, Qamar Zaman Chaudhry, stressed upon the importance of having the Whistleblowing law in Pakistan to promote the culture of accountability and transparency. He said that law should protect courageous people who are prepared to lift the lid on corruption.

India and Bangladesh have already passed the law.

In July 2015, the Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights sent the draft of the Whistleblowers Protection Bill 2015, to the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for the approval of the bill from the cabinet. The bill was prepared in consultation with the NAB, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), and the Federal Investigating Agency (FIA). The bill, however, was never presented in Parliament.

The Senate Select Committee on the Right to Information Bill 2016, wanted to include a clause for Whistle-blowers in the bill, but the idea was later dropped. Some members of the committee and the State Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb were not in favour of including the Whistleblowers clause.

However, the FBR included a whistleblower clause in the Benami Transaction Prohibition Bill 2016. Benami assets are those that are not in the owner's name. These transactions are a source of investment of black money. The FBR had proposed rewarding the Whistle-blowers in the case of credible information leading to the identification of any property brought under a fake name.

Check

Senator Pervez Rashid, the former Federal Minister for Information, told Truth Tracker that Whistleblowing Act should have been formed. "We tried to bring this law, but since we lacked a majority in the Senate, our hands were tied." Talking about the importance of this law, he said that being a stakeholder in a state every citizen should have the right to speak out if he/she observes corruption in any department or organization with a direct implication on the working of the state business or society. "Our opponents had a different understanding of a citizen, and therefore we could not get this law become a reality," said Rashid.

"Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf is clear about the necessity of Whistleblowing Act and our party has already enacted the act in KP," Fawad Chaudhry, the media spokesperson of PTI told Truth Tracker. However, when asked if this law should be passed at the federal level, Chaudhry, was sceptical about its utility considering that laws were either not implemented in Pakistan or had been used for political victimization. He pointed out the Right to Information Act and said that for a government that had been unable to fully apply this law how could we expect it to put in place the Whistleblowing Act.

Senator Saleem Mandviwalla from the PPP told Truth Tracker that the whistleblowing clause had been introduced in a number of other Acts, the problem, he said was that when it comes to implementing the law, the system did not support it. He too pointed out the national government's inability to get over this

tardiness to enforce laws in its true spirit.

Independent Viewpoint

Civil right activist Jibran Nasir said that if KP could make a law on whistleblowing in spite of the fact that the government had to face many impediments due to not very friendly bureaucracy, then it should not be a difficult job for the other provinces especially Punjab. However, he added that since the PML-N government knows that its hands were not clean, which had been proven over the last few months especially during the Panama episode, the government, Nasir further elaborated, would resist making the whistleblowing law. "There is otherwise a lack of independent monitoring system to oversee the activities of the government, in this vacuum having a whistleblowing law becomes all the more imperative," Nasir said.

Going forward, Nasir told Truth Tracker that he was sure that there must be many people, with evidence in hand, desiring to expose the corruption of the sitting government, but due to lack of legal protection, they do not come forward.

"The whistleblowing law would not only protect the whistleblowers it would as well tell them how far they could go in exposing the wrongdoing of the government or an organization," argued Nasir.

Ruling

The conclusion drawn from the above discussion is that the government has failed in fulfilling its promise of enacting the whistleblowing law after coming into power.



Promise Tracking

PTI commitment to eradicate poverty in KP stands broken



Rehmat Mehsud

The Promise

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan had pledged that his party wanted to eradicate poverty

Background

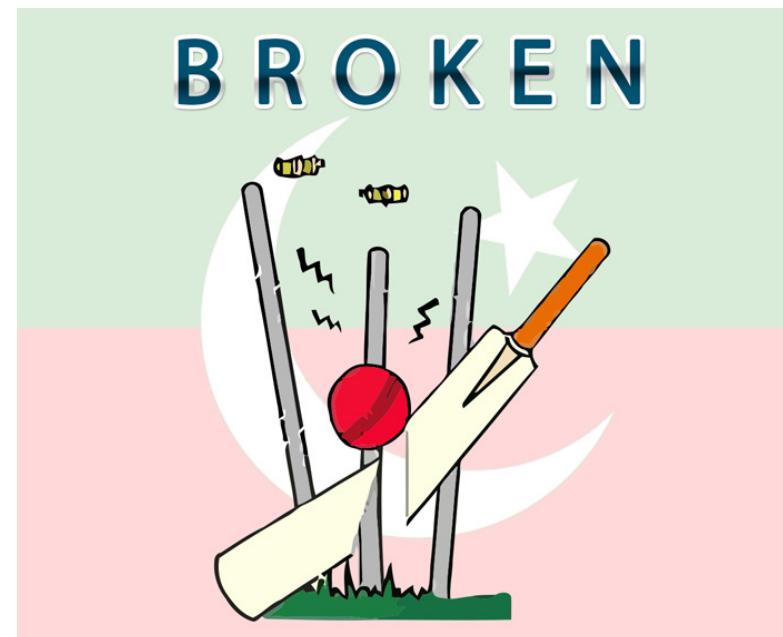
This was stated by Khan while speaking at a public gathering organised by the PTI here to celebrate Diwali back in November 2015.

"For us Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a test-case where we will prove that we can provide basic amenities to people and improve their living standards," Khan had vowed.

Tracking

Truth Tracker tried to contact Shah Farman, minister for Public Health Engineering, who could not be reached for comments.

But when contacted, Arif Yousaf, a PTI lawmaker and special assistant to chief minister on law, who said that he was not the right person to talk on the subject but he subsequently said that he had taken up the issue with Khan regarding ministers and PTI lawmakers who didn't attend or return phone calls.



However, he only said the PTI has given a three years policy on food security (poverty alleviation) for which a lion share has been allocated in the budget.

He said the provincial government has adopted all available options to improve entire areas specifically the health and education sectors.

"Changes don't take place instantly but I'm sure the outcome of the PTI-led government will be visible with the passage of time," he added. Efforts, he said are on for greater economic activities in the province.

Sayed Jaffar Shah, Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) and a stalwart of Awami National Party (ANP), while commenting on Khan's statement of poverty eradication, said that that statement seems correct to the extent of social media and official papers but he saw nothing a sort like that on the ground since PTI has assumed power in the province.

Has the PTI honoured any of its promise, he asked.

"Look, our ranking in human development index since last three years has surged to 149 from 146, which is an alarming situation for the country," Shah observed.

In addition, he said the province is experiencing rampant poverty with no imminent end to the menace in near future. "Our poverty ratio has touched the figure of 59%, which was 33% earlier," he recalled.

Malik Riaz, an KP MPA from Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (JUI-F), said that poverty ratio has increased instead in the tenure of PTI. "Poverty can be alleviated if you have established new industries and put in place other development projects but we don't see hectic development activities here so what criteria the PTI has to banish the scourge of poverty," he added.

Inflation has multiplied the problems of poor people and did the changes the PTI has been claiming minimize the woes of masses, he questioned.

"To be very frank, apart from political differences or rivalry, I never observed the graph of poverty has gone down during the PTI rule," Riaz remarked.

He said that he didn't observe any positive change in the living standard of common people on the street and questioned on what ground the PTI claims of poverty alleviation.

Sahibzada Sanaullah, another MPA from Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), said he doesn't think the PTI has done any commendable job to alleviate poverty in the province or improve the life of labour class.

For poverty eradication, he said only the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is still working otherwise the PTI has no contribution to overcome the menace of poverty.

"I personally neither heard nor saw that the PTI has anything on the ground to eradicate poverty," he added.

Main Ziau Rehman, an MPA from Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), said he has the witness of PTI's poverty eradication pledge but the provincial government has done nothing practically in this sector.

"The PTI has raised perks and privileges of lawmakers but no step could be taken to improve the living standard of poor segments of society," he noted.

He expressed commitment he would fully support PTI if they take some popular decisions to facilitate the masses but only commitments, pledges and promises would not change the prevailing critical situations without taking solid steps.

"Where the world stands today, scientific experiments are taking place and countries are signing agreements in the field of science and technology while the PTI-led government is inking agreement for exporting donkeys to China," Rehman rued.

Independent Viewpoint

Riaz Khan, a senior journalist and an independent analyst, told Truth Tracker that any government needs to ensure provision of jobs' opportunities for poverty alleviation but such kinds of activities could not be observed in the province.

Secondly, he said that launch of collective projects or schemes for public welfare are mandatory to eradicate poverty and improve the economic condition of downtrodden people of society.

Thirdly, Khan said that for poverty alleviation any government is needed to adopt austerity measures to cut its non-productive expenditures, which would for sure lead to collective well being of the masses.

Referring to last year budget, he recalled the PTI government had spent only 31% of the PSDP and the rest would lapse automatically.

"How will poverty be eradicated when they (PTI) cannot spend their budget judiciously," Khan questioned.

The PTI, he said has four fertile areas in KP where there are industrial estates and majority of industrial units are closed and the manpower is working on contract basis there.

In addition, he said pharmaceutical units where mostly women are working present a very grim picture.

"Keeping view of all these indicators, it is easy to judge poverty has increased instead. I don't think poverty has been eradicated," Khan stated.

Ruling

In light of interviews and discussion with ruling, opposition lawmakers and independent analyst, Truth Tracker rules that the PTI pledge to alleviate poverty in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province stands broken.



Promise Tracking

PPP promise of hiking adult literacy rate in Sindh not fulfilled



Durdana Najam

The Promise

Pakistan Peoples Party has promised its voters in the 2013 manifesto that after coming to power, it would raise the adult literacy rate from the current 54 per cent to 85 per cent. This promise was to be implemented at the country level. However, since the PPP could not make government in the Centre, and with the education becoming a provincial subject after the 18th Amendment, tracking the implementation of the promise in Sindh where the PPP is in the government for the last ten years seemed befitting.

Background

As of September 2016, the literacy rate in Sindh was recorded below 50 per cent in rural areas. In 1972 and 1998, it was 30.20 per cent and 45.30 per cent. Similarly, 2013, 2014, and 2015 it was 69, 60, and 56 per cent respectively. The literacy rate dropped by four per cent from 60 to 56 per cent in 2015, as revealed by the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2014-15.

According to the survey, the female literacy rate, in Sindh was 43 per cent compared to 47 per cent of the previous year. Male education in Sindh witnessed a decrease in percentage from 72 per cent to 67 as compared to 2012-13.

According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2016-17, the total number of literacy rate has risen to 73 per cent in Sindh. During Fiscal Year 2017, the Sindh government has allocated Rs 20.07 billion compared to Rs 14.82 billion the previous year, an increase of 35.4 per cent on 172 on-going and 325 new development project for education, which includes Rs 15.14 billion for Education and Literacy, Rs 0.21 billion for Sindh TEVTA and Rs 2.96 billion for Universities and Boards.

All these allocations and improvement in the education sector notwithstanding, the situation on the ground betrays the intentions of the Sindh government. The overall education system reeks of corruption with the result that the province, like anywhere in Pakistan, lacks quality education. Inaccessibility of education to a large segment of the population in Sindh is another factor behind education remaining a dream to many still. Though funds are allocated but rarely are they spent judiciously. Resources dedicated to education are always scarce while the commitment to improve the education sector at the political and administrative level has been missing throughout. Complaints about the absence of clean drinking water, missing washrooms, ghost and non-functional schools have been making rounds with little or no redress.

Truth Tracker talked to the PPP lawmaker and its Deputy Speaker in the Sindh government, Shela Raza to find out reasons behind Sindh's dismal performance in the education sector and to know if the PPP government had been able to meet the target of 85 per cent adult literacy rate at the fag end of their current year in power.

Check

Conceding that Sindh was still far behind in achieving its education targets, Raza, however, laid the blame on the President Musharraf government for throwing the province backward in education. Going forward, she said, the PPP government had done quite a lot of work in the education sector though, such as she added building new universities, medical colleges, expanding



Institute of Business Administration, and making new technical boards and colleges. Talking about what had kept the province from giving each person their right to achieve education, Raza said that because of Sindh government's funding from the Asian Foundation and the World Bank, with the commitment that these funds would be used at the rural level only, the government, she added, had been held back from engaging qualified teachers.

"Since there were not enough funds, so it was not possible to hire teachers from the urban areas." Which, said Raza, had affected the quality and quantity of education in rural Sindh.

These agreements, Raza pointed out were made when Arbab Raheem was the Chief Minister Sindh, a reference again to the Musharraf era.

As for the budget, she agreed that not all that is allocated for education is spent on education.

To Raza, the main reason behind illiteracy is poverty and not lack of commitment of the governments. She said, for a poor person feeding his child is more important than sending him/her to school.

"Before we aim at reforming the education sector we should work on eliminating poverty. Our focus should be to make people prosperous enough so that they happily send their children to schools. We need economic policies that open up job opportunities for the people," Raza said.

Raza admitted that the PPP government could not meet its target of achieving 85 per cent adult literacy rate in Sindh.

Truth Tracker engaged Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf's lawmaker in the Sindh Assembly, Khurram Sher Zaman. He scoffed at Raza's remarks and said that the Sindh government had no commitment to provide quality education to the children of Sindh.

"The problem lies with the quality of people entrusted with the task to develop and implement education policies." He added, "Incompetent and non-committed officers have been hired in the education sector, which has resulted in the ruination of the education sector," Zaman said.

Mahtab Akbar Rashidi, a member of Sindh Assembly from Pakistan Muslim League (Functional) told Truth Tracker, that the political parties in Pakistan made manifestos only for the consumption of electoral period. She said governments in Pakistan carry out development projects without specified targets. The result was she stated that we found development

work continuing from one government to another.

Talking about the adult literacy rate in Sindh Rashidi said that the Sindh government had been non-serious about education. It was, she lamented, business as usual, even though many projects about education and vocational training had been initiated.

"Even if 22 per cent of the allocated funds on education is spent this fiscal year, we could consider it an achievement. Otherwise, what good could we expect in the coming year."

Independent Viewpoint

Dr Saeed Shafqat, Professor and Director, Centre for Public Policy and Governance (CPPG), Forman Christian University, gave following analysis on education:

"A new trend has emerged after the 2013 general elections where the governments are more interested in investing in infrastructure development than spending on social sector reforms such as education. Though provinces have increased spending on education, they have failed to bring quality in the system. In Sindh, in spite of the fact that Sindh Assembly has been actively making new legislations, and many donor agencies have been spending in the education sector, the provincial government has failed to provide quality education," said Shafqat.

He argued that to arrest this declining trend in the education sector, it is important that an overarching monitoring body and a commission are established at the federal level to oversees the performance of the Education Boards and Education Foundations

in all the provinces.

Shafqat stressed that another area that needs equal importance is teacher management system. In spite of the pay raise, teachers are not happy with the overall work environment in nearly all the provinces. This dissatisfaction ultimately affects their performance. He opined that governments have to co-opt teachers in the development and implementation of education policies.

He suggested that another reason why education shows the dismal result is the disproportionate spending on education vis-à-vis rise in population. We have more children every year, but we are not building as many schools to educate them.

"It is the responsibility of the state to provide free and quality education to its children till the age of 16. The passage of 18th Amendment, after which the weight of social sector management has been thrown on the shoulders of the provincial governments, does not exonerate the state from performing its constitutional obligation concerning education," he concluded.

Ruling

The Sindh government has been unable to achieve its target of achieving 85 per cent adult literacy rate.



Celebrating 70 years of UK-Pakistan relations Exhibitions, competitions, highlight Pak-UK cooperation in pictures.



Waqar Gillani

Islamabad: Pakistan and the United Kingdom are celebrating the 70th anniversary of their bilateral relations. The tagline of these celebrations is, "Shared History, Shared Future."

Throughout the year, the British High Commission in Islamabad in collaboration with the Pakistan High Commission in London, British Council, Department for International Development, Department for International Trade and British Deputy High Commission will conduct a series of activities and events that will celebrate the strength and depth of the UK-Pakistan relationship.

The events, primarily, focus on the future of the relationship between the two countries. The celebrations also seek to increase bilateral trade and cultural links between the two countries, hence events will be organised both in the UK and Pakistan.

Along with these events, there have been high-profile visits to strengthen ties and explore prospects. The highlight of these celebrations is an external photography competition and internal photography exhibition showcasing the bond between Pakistan and the UK in practical terms.



The photographs, recently exhibited in the main cities of Pakistan – Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, and Peshawar – showcase 70 years of UK-Pakistan cooperation through pictures. Over the next few months, the

photography exhibition will tour the UK and Pakistan. After inaugurating this exhibition in the capital city of Islamabad a few days ago, it will be displayed in over 10 cities in both Pakistan and the UK.

Most importantly, the pictures focus on what the UK is doing in cooperation with Pakistan to help build relations for the next 70 years, ranging from education, health, culture, defence, politics, infrastructure, trade to sports. The photography exhibition tour has already visited Peshawar, Islamabad and Karachi and will travel to over 10 other cities in the UK and Pakistan this year.

In the external competition, a young photographer, Yasir Mehmood, won British High Commission Islamabad's photography competition. The competition was the subject of tremendous interest and received over 400 high-quality entries from a mix of amateur, semi-professional and professional photographers in both Pakistan and the UK.

"Some of the photographs showcase our shared history. This includes some pictures of the Queen's own visits to Pakistan in 1961 and 1997. Such pictures are examples of physical embodiments of that history, from architecture to railways, but mostly and more importantly they are about our shared future," British High Commissioner, Thomas Drew said while commenting on pictures. "The pictures focus on what we are doing with our Pakistani friends now to help build ties for the next 70 years - in education, health, culture, defence, politics, infrastructure, trade or sports. It showcases our mutual cooperation underpinned by history, culture and the 2 per cent of our population which traces its heritage back to Pakistan, for our shared goal of a stable, secure and prosperous Pakistan," he added.

The winning photograph was also displayed at the Queen's Birthday Party (QBP) events in Pakistan, and later at photography exhibitions in Pakistan and the UK. It will also be published in a special photography book to celebrate 70 years of relations between the UK and Pakistan.



Training Workshop & Forum

MF360 holds training session and forum in Multan



Media Foundation 360 organised a three-day training workshop for professional journalists in Multan on May 16-18 on 'Investigative Reporting through public record and use of Right to Information Laws'.

Highly skilled and professional journalists from various media groups attended the workshop and stunned the trainers by exhibiting deep involvement, punctuality and strong skills. The extremely practical workshop focused skills like use of RTI law, focus statement of a story, data journalism, techniques to conduct interviews and methods to ask follow-up questions. On the third and last day of Multan Training Session on May 18, MF360 organised a forum which was attended by City Police Officer Multan Ahsan Younas, Deputy Commissioner Multan Nadir Chatha, District Information Officer Multan Waseem Yousaf, Spokeswoman of Multan Police Ms Shabina, Professor of Media Studies Department at Bahaud Din Zikria University Multan Babar Khaqan and 12 experienced journalists from the leading media houses.

The forum vibrantly discussed Punjab Right to Information Law and bureaucratic hitches in its implementation in letter and spirit.

The journalists were almost unanimous on the points:

1. The RIT law is for the people but majority of the people, especially in 13 districts of Southern Punjab, is not aware of the law and their rights to know. An awareness campaign must be launched by the government to educate the people about RTI
2. Heads of the Government's institutions should regularly review the performance of Press Information Officers (PIOs) in their respective institutions to know if they are cooperating with people under RTI
3. Most of the PIOs are also least bothered about the RTI, and don't exhibit friendly attitude to media and people when they seek information under the law

Suggestions by journalists:

1. The PIOs should be trained about handling the RTI requests and responding positively
2. The concerned department should introduce a policy about provision of information within the timeframe, given by the law
3. An RTI commissioner should be appointed at every divisional headquarter. The provincial commissioner holds office in Lahore. The applicants cannot go this far to submit appeal to



the commissioner if their requests are declined by the local departments in Southern Punjab.

4. The officers should be educated about 'classified' and 'non-classified' information

DPO Ahsan Younas was quite pleasant, positive and cooperative towards the suggestions.

He committed, "I would direct all police stations in Multan to display banners in the police stations about RTI Law to educating people and implementation of the law."

"If local journalists cooperate with Multan Police, I am ready to air an announcement about RTI Law through Multan's Police Radio Station FM 88.6 after every hour."

"However, I think that some of the documents and information are not public. The media should also understand the difference between classified and non-classified information."



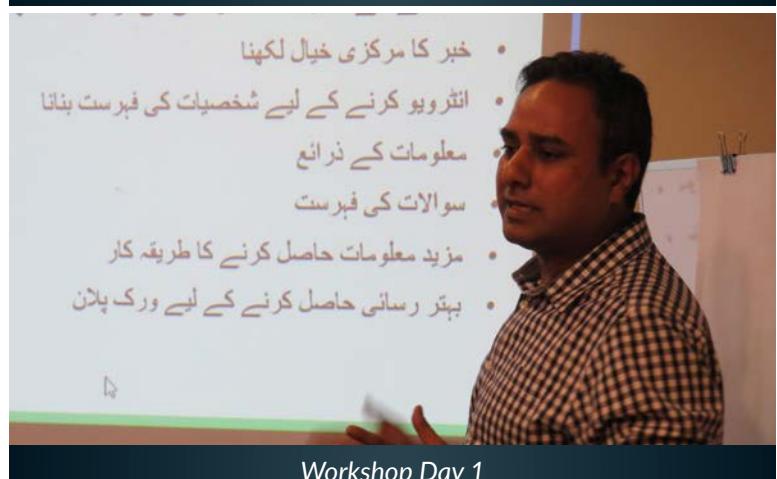
Workshop Day 1



Workshop Day 1



Workshop Day 1



Workshop Day 1



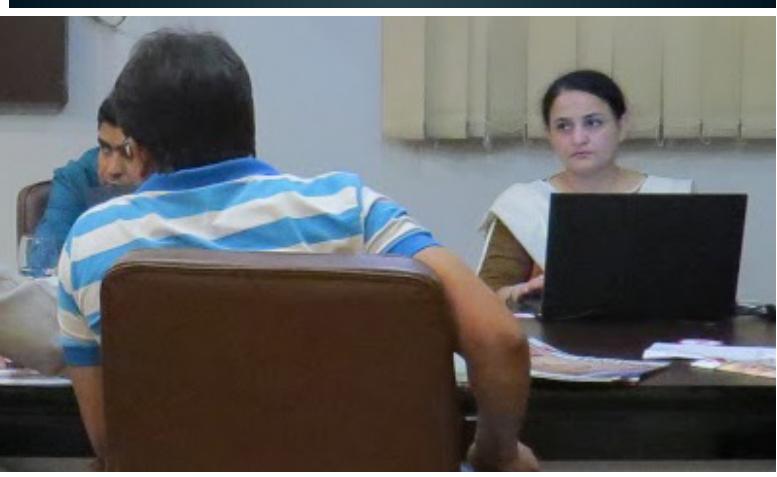
Workshop Day 2



Workshop Day 2



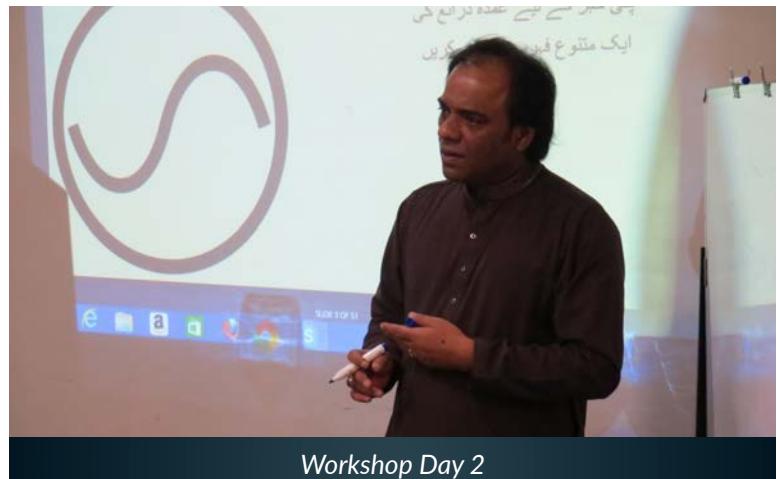
Workshop Day 2



Workshop Day 2



Workshop Day 2



Workshop Day 2



Workshop & Forum Day 3



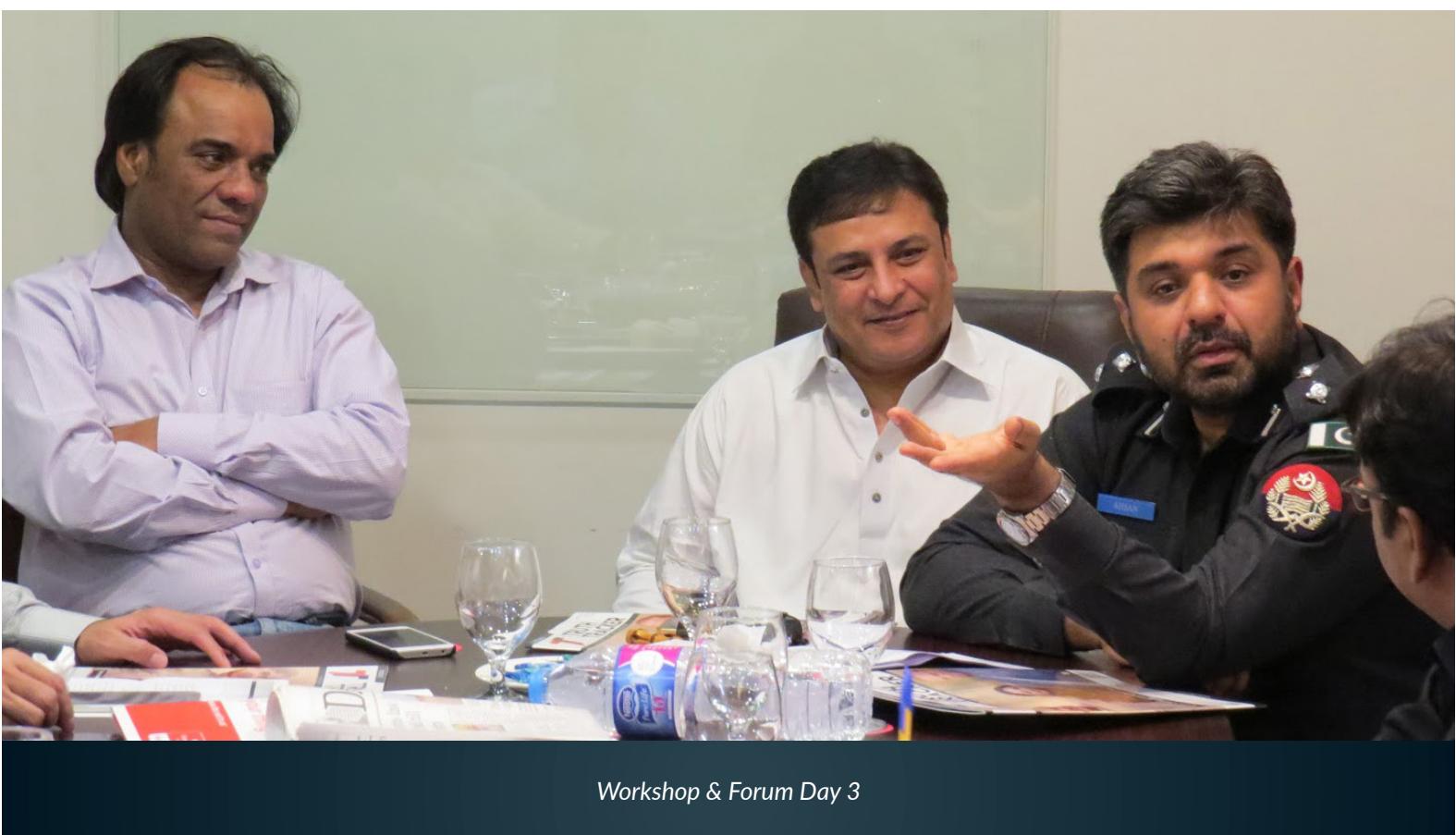
Workshop & Forum Day 3



Workshop & Forum Day 3



Workshop & Forum Day 3



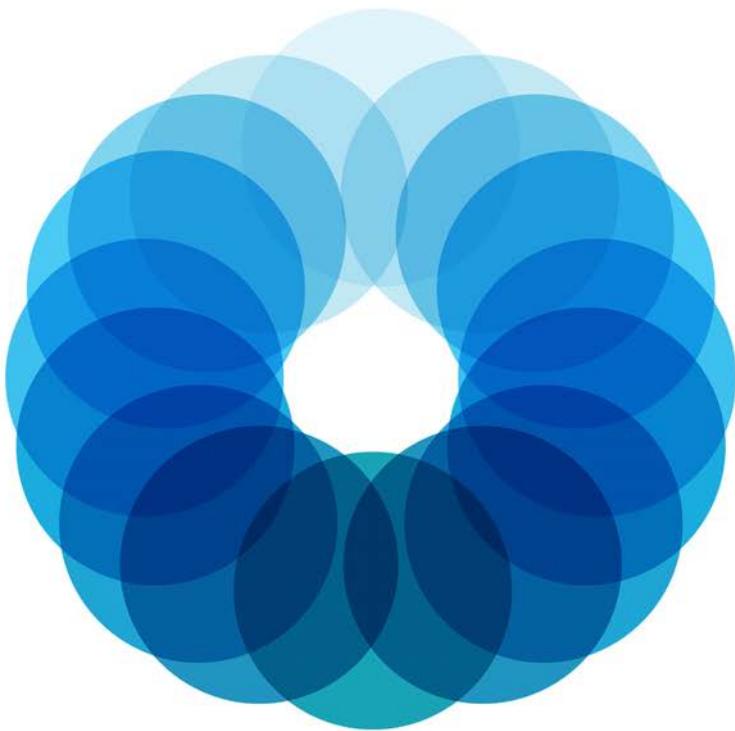
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media foundation360

THE WHOLE JOURNALIST

As a part of journalism profession we, at Media Foundation 360, have been seeing the problems and pressures journalists face within the organization and out in the field regarding their rights and security ranges from salary payment issues to murders and kidnappings. This is when we decided to be their voice and stand up for their rights.

With the slogan of "A Whole Journalist", we are here with the ambition of helping media professionals getting their rights as well as their training to improve journalism standard in the country. In this regard, we arrange workshops and discussion sessions for journalists with country's top media professionals and foreign trainers. We also intend to be a watchdog of media outlets in the country, keeping an eye on journalism standards and practices they follow, and pointing out the areas where they failed to follow ethics and laws.

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