



TRUTH TRACKER

WATCHING OUT FOR PAKISTAN



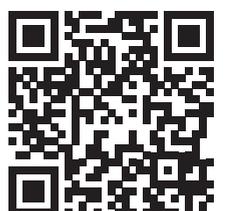
Free expression on a tight leash in Pakistan

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Wheat Farmers better buckle-up in the face of climate change

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Magazine By:





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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.

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Editorial

When the entire state machinery turns against freedom of expression

Pakistan, in the national and international context, is going through crucial times. Military and civil forces are not on the same page on numerous internal and external issues. The state has badly failed to provide a unanimous narrative to counter extremism while critical state institutions including the army, judiciary, executive and parliament have been unable to reach any consensus against extremism.

But they have managed to mount an attack on freedom of expression. The current crackdown against netizens and social media is underway which has tacit support from almost all the state's organs. It is in this context that earlier this year Pakistan submitted a report to United Nations Human Rights Committee. The report is stunning. It says, "All citizens are free to express their opinion and views and, no case of reprisal, harassment or intimidation regarding disappeared persons, human rights defenders or lawyers has been reported to government authorities or other statutory bodies."

Yet the facts, according to the government's own institutions, clearly contradict the report. Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), in a report submitted to the Supreme Court of Pakistan in January 2016, stated that it had blocked about 84,000 websites containing objectionable content.

The Federal Investigating Agency (FIA), in its report released to media in May 2017, disclosed that it had registered 114 cases in 2017 under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016 while six bloggers (affiliated with government and opposition parties), accused of criticising the Army, were also interrogated after being taken in custody.

And as recently as May 30, FIA arrested social media activist, Adnan Afzal Qureshi, from Lahore for criticising the armed forces.

Human rights defenders, including Karachi-based Concerned Citizens of Pakistan, believe this is a crackdown by the elected government and not by the army. They say intelligence agencies are attempting to settle their own scores without involving FIA or police.

Media and rights activists believe that most of those accused of misusing social media are involved in criticising the PML-N Government, not the armed forces. And, they belong to the opposition parties.

Societal suffocation has already reached its peak in Pakistan. This kind of action will only serve to further reduce the tiny space for tolerance and jeopardise the infant democracy of Pakistan.

Mubasher Bukhari

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Editor's Note

Between a rock and hard place

Not only the recent month has been grim for the Pakistani premier but the country's international relations too are in a proverbial soup. The recent rift in the Middle East has bared the, erstwhile, latent faultlines. The Arab Monarchy has been criticised on the international horizon for coming out too strongly against the neighbouring Shiite states. Political scholars view the formation of the Islamic coalition as a Salafi venture. As Saudi Arab exerts pressure around the Muslim world for the boycott of its neighbouring state of Qatar, for alleged ties with terrorists, for Pakistan a choice between its two economic allies could as well symbolize a "severing" of its financial umbilical chord.

Saudi Arab has been a critical ally of Islamabad and the familial bond is more than skin deep. Whether it is the matter of a financial bailout or seeking help in resolving its crisis in leadership, the Saudi Monarchy has always played a significant role. Pakistani government relies on the \$3 billion exports to Saudi Arab and the \$4.52 billion in the way of 1.9 Million expatriates' remittances. Therefore while Islamabad takes a neutral position on Yemen war, a Saudi request for the services of General Raheel Sharif, as head of the Islamic Coalition, could not be evaded.

Needless to say, the hawkish stance of the Saudi government against Iran caused another blow for Islamabad, where efforts have been afoot to improve neighbourly ties. Following Saudi Arab, Bahrain, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and, United Arab Emirates, UAE, have severed all diplomatic ties with Qatar for involvement in terrorist organisations. Qatar denies all allegations as baseless.

Qatar and Pakistan have enjoyed a good relationship over the years, which have been strengthened by close cooperation between the armed forces of both countries in trainings, cyber security and Defence production. In February 2016, Pakistan signed a landmark 15-year deal with Qatar for Liquefied Natural Gas, LNG, imports currently at \$864m. Pakistan is also expected to assist Qatar for FIFA World Cup 2022.

To ease tensions, PM Nawaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff, COAS, General Qamar Javed Bajwa recently went to Saudi Arab. If the visit will help quell the discord is unlikely but Pakistan will surely be able to make its position clear. It cannot afford to takes sides between Qatar and Saudi Arab. Saudi government banning the remittances or Qatar reconsidering its imports could cost Pakistan dearly.

The Saudi Arab's flexing of the muscles was evident at the US-Arab Islamic Summit's platform, by ignoring the human and financial cost of terrorism in Pakistan. At home, national and civil society leaders are alarmed and oppose siding in any conflict. The country is facing a rise in sectarian violence, which, some analysts fear may result from General Sharif's role in the coalition army; a measure criticised by Iran as well. The PM must be walking on thin ice owing to his personal ties with both the Saudi King and the Emir of Qatar. Analysts suggest that no matter the pressure, Pakistan will only save face in the long run by remaining non-partisan. The rumours of recalling the General back from Riyadh, if true, would make for a sound independent position of this country.

Ameerah Javeria

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Human Rights

Free expression on a tight leash in Pakistan



Lala Hassan

Karachi: Contrary to the government's claims of defending the right to free expression for its subjects, concerned citizens and civil society representatives have filed a constitutional petition in Sindh High Court against the crackdown, arrests and harassment of citizens, mostly social media activists and journalists in the name of defaming Military by the government.

Pakistan in its report, submitted to United Nations Human Rights Committee (CCPR) has claimed, "All citizens are free to express their opinion and views and, no case of reprisal, harassment or intimidation regarding disappeared persons, human rights defenders or lawyers has been reported to government authorities or other statutory bodies."

Truth Tracker has copy of the report titled 'Replies to the list of issues' that has been received by CCPR in March 2017 further states, "No such case has been reported to the police, any court, to the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances (COIED) under the Pakistan Commission of Inquiry Act 1956 or any state authority by any individual or civil society organizations."

Fariha Aziz, one of the petitioners and defender of free expression online while talking to the Truth Tracker said that the government could make all claims they like but those are far from the truth.

"There is an environment of fear and panic among even peaceful citizens due to unlawful activities of the state. The state must stop turning on its own citizens who voice dissenting views so that the state

may take corrective measures."

Adam Malik, a human rights defender, observed that producing such ideal reports by Pakistan would create more doubts as the world knows the facts and that the report seems to have been prepared by the bureaucrats without identifying the areas of improvement. He said that in January 2017, four bloggers and social media activists Asim Saeed, Waqas Goraya, Ahmed Raza Naseer, and Professor Salman Hyder were abducted and detained for more than two weeks but no one was held accountable.

"Government of Pakistan has made some good legislation including 18th constitutional amendment but such reports will damage those achievements as well," Malik warned.

According to media reports, Goraya had complained of severe torture during the detention, and alleged that intelligence agencies were involved in his detention. Islamabad Police had registered the case of Professor Hyder but no progress has been made in the case yet.

Pakistan's report based on the replies to the list of issues raised by CCPR will be examined during 120th session of the committee to be held from 3rd to 28th July, 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland; while shadow reports by non-governmental organizations on various issues including freedom of expression will also be shared.

Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), in a report submitted to the Supreme Court in January 2016 stated that it had blocked about 84,000 websites containing objectionable contents while 400,000 obscene websites have been circulated to all the Internet Service Providers for blocking on domain levels.

PTA also blocked 937 Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) and 10 websites of banned organizations for abuse of Internet and social media. According to reports numerous blogs such as "Khabaristan Times" have also been blocked without following due process of law.

Barrister Salahuddin Ahmed, who has filed petition on behalf of concerned citizens, while talking to the Truth Tracker said that military is the part of government and criticising any government, is not a crime. Article 19 of the constitution clearly mentions the restrictions on freedom of expression that does not include army.

He said that the interior ministry, by ordering FIA for such crackdown, is violating the fundamental rights of the citizens.

Federal Investigating Agency (FIA) in its report informed the media that they had arrested 114 persons and registered 114 cases during 2017 under Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016 while six bloggers (affiliated with government and opposition party), accused of criticising Army, were also interrogated.

According to civil society activists, government in the name of religion, national interest, and war on terrorism or disrespect of any institution is working to squeeze the space of free expression in the country, which is conflicting with the constitution of Pakistan.

Recently the Anti-Terrorism Court in Punjab province handed death sentence to a Shia youth, who allegedly posted blasphemous content on face book, making it first ever case of such harsh conviction on the use of social media. A case was registered against him on behalf of the State at Counter Terrorism Department, Multan under Section 295-C

(use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet) and Sections 9 and 11w of the Anti-Terrorism Act.

“Silencing people in such manner is against the essence of democracy because the law does not give such absolute powers to any institution and government,” observed Barrister Ahmed.

According media reports, Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court on March 7, 2017, declared blasphemers to be terrorists and directed the government to remove blasphemous content from social media. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif directed the state machinery to find those responsible for putting blasphemous content on social media and bring them to justice without delay.

In Paragraph 20 of the replies to the List of Issues, Pakistan has mentioned that “blasphemy laws were introduced during British era in South Asia and more than 20 European countries currently have Blasphemy Laws on their statutes. The Government of Pakistan is mindful of its responsibility to prevent the misuse or abuse of the Blasphemy Law, especially by those who wish to exploit it for personal

gain or interest.”

The report further says, “Blasphemy Laws aim at ensuring public order and harmony in society, by seeking to prevent inter-religious discord and incitement to violence, inter alia through hate speech. Blasphemy law in Pakistan is not discriminatory as it is based on respect for all religions. It deals with offences against all religions and applies to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.”

Contrary to the claims of government, bblasphemy laws have been a contentious issue in Pakistan where people have been murdered over such allegations. Earlier this year, a mob at Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, lynched a student, Mashal Khan, after accusing him of committing blasphemy on social media.

In 2001, the former governor Punjab, Salman Taseer, was assassinated by his police guard for extending his support for Asia Bibi, who was convicted under blasphemy charges. Taseer paid with his life for pointing out the victimisation of innocent and said that blasphemy laws

particularly 295 B and C sections of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), which carry the death penalty, were introduced by a military dictator and had declared it as black laws.

According to a joint submission with UPR by International Freedom of Expression Exchange-IFEX, International Network of Human Rights-RIDH and Pakistan Press Foundation-PPF, 1,054 Blasphemy cases were registered in Pakistan from 2012 to 2015; most of cases were filed against Muslims.

Aziz further added that the state is not even showing tolerance for anything that contravenes or challenges the official narrative and we just cannot afford to regress further as a state or society. Problems exist with both. “The better thing is to remain within parameters, identify issues and try and resolve them through consensus and in a lawful manner.” She observed that temporarily the present government may have the upper hand, but history shows the tables always turn and “they” must bear that in mind.



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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Commentary

Gulf crisis: A battle for the future of the Middle East and the Muslim world



Dr. James M. Dorsey

A Saudi and UAE-led campaign to force Qatar to halt its support for Islamists and militants is little else than a struggle to establish a Saudi-dominated regional order in the Middle East and North Africa that suppresses any challenge to the kingdom's religiously cloaked form of autocratic monarchy.

The Saudi and UAE effort goes to the heart of key issues with which the international community has been grappling for years: the definition of what and who is a terrorist and what are the limits of sovereignty and the right of states to chart their own course.

It's a battle that has pockmarked the Middle East and North Africa since World War Two, but kicked into high gear with the 2011 popular Arab revolts. Saudi Arabia and Little Sparta, a term used by some US officials to describe the UAE, waged a concerted campaign to roll back achievements of the uprisings.

The two states' effort has projected Saudi Arabia and the UAE as leaders in the fight against extremism. Yet, if successful, their campaign could empower a strand of supremacist Sunni Muslim ultra-conservatism that advocates absolutist, non-democratic forms of governance, and threatens to perpetuate environments that potentially enable radicalism.

While Saudi Arabia and the UAE differ in their view of Sunni Muslim ultra-conservatism, they agree on defining political Islam as terrorist because it advocates an alternative worldview or form of governance.

The outcome of the crisis in the Gulf, these differences notwithstanding, is impacting the larger Muslim world rather than only the Middle East and North Africa. A Saudi defeat of Qatar would cement the kingdom with its advocacy of ultra-conservatism, efforts to impose globally its anti-democratic values that make a mockery of basic human rights, and exploitation of the moral authority it derives as the custodian of Islam's two most holy cities, Mecca and Medina, as an almost unchallenged force in the Muslim world.

The irony of the Saudi-led campaign against Qatar is that it pits against one another two autocratic monarchies that both adhere to different strands of Wahhabism, the ultra-conservative worldview that legitimizes the rule of



Photo Credit: Libya Tribune

Saudi Arabia's governing Al Saud family.

Qatar, like Saudi Arabia, governed by an absolute ruler, who keeps a tight rein on politics and freedoms of expression and the media, is an unlikely candidate for advocacy of greater openness and pluralism.

Yet, in many ways, the two countries are mirror images of one another. Both see strands of Islam as crucial to their national security and the survival of their regimes. Qatar, sandwiched between the Islamic republic of Iran and the Islamic kingdom of Saudi Arabia, both of which it views as potential threats, sees political Islam, the force that emerged strongest from the 2011 revolts, as the future of a region that is in transition, albeit one that is mired in brutal violence, civil war, debilitating geopolitical rivalry, and Saudi and UAE-led counterrevolution.

Saudi Arabia, struggling with the fact that its four decade-long public diplomacy campaign, the largest in history, has let an ultra-conservative, often militant, inward-looking, intolerant genie out of the bottle that it no longer controls, sees Madkhalism, a strand of ultra-conservatism that advocates absolute obedience to the ruler, as the solution.

In doing so, Saudi Arabia is perpetuating the fallout of its public diplomacy that has been a key factor in Muslim societies such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh becoming more conservative, more intolerant towards Muslim and non-Muslim minorities, less pluralistic and less

democratic.

It is a strategy that risks nurturing the kind of anti-Shiite sectarianism that serves the kingdom's purpose in its power struggle with Iran as well as creating an environment that potentially fosters radicalism. Libya, a landscape of rival militias and governments, is an example of the Saudi strategy at work.

Much of the world's focus on post-revolt Libya, torn apart by armed militias and ruled by rival governments, has focused on the rise of the Islamic State (IS) in the country. Yet, equally devastating for the country has been the proxy war between Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt that depends on handouts from the two Gulf states for its economic survival on the one hand and Qatar on the other. Libya's travails that created opportunity for IS are in many ways the product of battling Gulf states that support groups representing the rival strands of Islam they back.

As a result, Saudi Arabia and the UAE's darling, General Khalifa Belqasim Haftar, rather than being a beacon of struggle against militant or jihadist Sunni Muslim ultra-conservatism heads a force that is populated by Madkhalists, Saudi-backed ultra-conservatives that advocate a form of governance that in many ways is not dissimilar to that of the kingdom or IS.

Led by Saudi Salafi leader, Sheikh Rabi Ibn Hadi Umair al-Madkhali, a former dean of the study of the Prophet Mohammed's deeds and sayings at the Islamic University of Medina, Madkhalists seek to marginalize

more political Salafists critical of Saudi Arabia by projecting themselves as preachers of the authentic message in a world of false prophets and moral decay. They propagate absolute obedience to the ruler and abstention from politics, the reason why toppled Libyan leader Moammar Qaddafi tolerated them during his rule.

Madkhalists often are a divisive force in Muslim communities. They frequently black list and seek to isolate or repress those they accuse of deviating from the true faith. Sheikh Al-Madkhali and his followers position Saudi Arabi as the ideal place for those who seek a pure Islam that has not been compromised by non-Muslim cultural practices and secularism.

General Haftar integrated the Madkhalists into his fighting force after Sheikh Al-Madkhali called on his followers in Libya grouped in the Tawhid Brigade to join the renegade military commander in the fight against the Qatar-backed Muslim Brotherhood. The integration of the two forces gave the Madkhalists control of key military positions in the port city of Benghazi and elsewhere in eastern Libya, according to scholar and NGO activist

Ahmed Salah El-Din Ali.

Madkhalist influence in the region illustrates the kind of society Saudi-backed ultra-conservatives envision. The alliance with General Haftar has allowed them to gain control of the body that governs religion as well as mosques in areas administered by the internationally recognized government of Libya.

Madkhalist fighters, in their bid to enforce Saudi-backed Sunni Muslim ultra-conservatism, have destroyed Sufi shrines and restricted Sufi religious activity in eastern Libya, Mr. Ali reported. Widely viewed as the mystical strand of Islam, Sufism is widespread in Libya.

Like in Saudi Arabia, Abd al-Razzaq al-Nazury, a military governor in the region associated with General Haftar and the Madkhalists, banned women from travelling without a mail guardian. Mr. Al-Nazury imposed the ban following a visit by Usamah al-Utaybi, a Jordanian-born Saudi Islamic scholar who was a fighter in the US and Saudi-backed jihad in the 1980s against the Soviets in Afghanistan. An outcry on social media forced the governor to cancel the ban.

Similarly, protest on social media, according to Mr. Ali, forced authorities to release three men detained in March by General Haftar's Madkhalist fighters for planning a public celebration of Earth Day. The fighters charged that the celebration would have been a form of un-Islamic Freemasonry that would have been immoral, indecent and disrespectful of those who had died for the cause.

Ironically, General Haftar's association with the Madkhalists spotlights the contradictions in the Saudi-UAE-Egyptian alliance against Qatar. The UAE and Egypt share opposition to political Islam with the kingdom but see Saudi-inspired Sunni Muslim ultra-conservatism as an equally potent threat.

The long and short of this is that there are no truly good guys in the battle between Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar. Nonetheless, at the core of their high-stakes battle is a struggle over what Islam-inspired worldview will be most prominent in the Muslim world as well as the ability of Muslim nations, especially those in Saudi Arabia's orbit, to chart a course of their own.

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

Economic Development

Wheat Farmers better buckle-up in the face of climate change



Moayyed Jafri

LAHORE: Pakistan government's lax attitude regarding countering the effects of Climate Change on its wheat crop can cause severe food shortage in the country over the next decade because of significant changes in rainfall and river flow patterns.

Pakistan is an agrarian economy. According to Economic Survey Of Pakistan 2016, the estimated land, on which wheat is cultivated, is 9045 thousand hectares and per hectare wheat yield varies between 2600 kg and 27500 kilograms. Moreover, per head consumption of wheat in Pakistan is about 120 kg which marks the importance of this food crop.

Wheat is traditionally sown in the plains at the advent of winter season, preferably between October-November. This has been done for centuries in this area keeping in view the temperature, rainfall timing and river flows. The winter rain-spell, in the past was known to occur between November and December,



according to records available on the Meteorological Department's website. However, the trend has seen a major shift.

"The country has witnessed a significant, if not dramatic, shift of weather events in recent past due to climate change. These changes include the veering of the country's winter season. The winter season in Pakistan traditionally started from mid-October, peaked during December and part of January while moderately warm weather and the spring season started end of February and start of March. The situation, however, has changed", said Pakistan Meteorological (MET) Director General Department Dr Ghulam Rasul.

Rasul explained how over the past two decades especially, the pattern of weather in Pakistan has been drastically affected by climate change.

"The winter rains have shown a delayed behavior. The winter season peaks late in January now while rain spell happens in late February March", said the Pakistan Meteorological Department Head.

"I understand that our chief interest right now is wheat, but it's important to point out that the entire Monsoon season in the country has not only shifted its calendar but has also shifted north-eastward. This is an alarming phenomenon which is going to affect the rice crop in a big way as well", Rasul explained further.

Wheat is characterized as a C3 crop. This category is most responsive to 'Climate Change' as compared with other crops. Rice, oats and barley fall under the same category.

While the top official regarding climate in the country seemed worried, there were those who seemed rather unfazed by the issue.

Wheat farmer and Wheat Growers Association (WGA) President Chaudhry Hamid Malhi, had a very different view regarding this weather development. 'This delayed winter has actually helped the wheat-crop. The shift of winter and the consequent moisture actually helps the wheat grain to grow healthier', he said. As far as the rain is concerned, the shift is not that drastic, he added.

'I don't believe there can be a shortage of wheat in the country because it is a crop subsidized by the government which incentivizes the farmer to sow it over greater area. The yield too isn't facing any problems; in fact it is improving, if anything. I am not saying that there has been no effect of climate change, but right now it is not significant enough to cause major threat', he said.

To make sense of this seeming disconnect between the alarm expressed by MET Department head and WGA President, Visiting Faculty at AgWeatherNet Washington State University and currently a Professor at University of Agriculture Faisalabad Dr Fahad Rasul was contacted. Fahad has several researches in the domain of 'Crop management Under Stressful Environments'.

'Weather events mostly are a very gradual and very incremental phenomenon, which is very deceptive for ill-informed farmers. This information/ knowledge gap can be a dangerous catalyst. The shift of seasons in Pakistan is somehow something that has announced itself on the scene and is very clearly qualifiable and quantifiable, he said.

Dr Fahad explained, "This late winter and late rains mean that both the rain-fed and irrigated wheat crop will be affected. The rainfed portion is some 20 per cent of the total wheat production of the country. This 20 per cent will start receiving less and less rain over the years at the time the crop

needs it the most. Instead, these rains will shift closer to the harvest time, when they are actually counterproductive", he said.

Elaborating further, he said, "This shift is double jeopardy for the winter crop because the canal irrigated wheat will take a hit too. The water available for the cultivation of wheat in Pakistan is 26 MAF (million acre feet) which is still 28.6 per cent lower than the normal requirement of water. The shift of winter down the calendar means slower glacial melt at that time of the year and therefore the irrigated agri-land will also take a hit due to water shortage.'

The effects of the winter shift have already started showing its effects due to slower glacial melt during the aforementioned time. According to Meteorological Department's data Tarbela Dam water level reached dangerously low levels and water level in the country's biggest Mangla dam's reservoir receded to dead level of 1040 feet, which was unprecedented for end of March period.

Fahad was not the only professional convinced that Climate Change has started driving Pakistan towards food insecurity.

Prof Dr Pervez Zamurrad Janjua, PhD from Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg and author of a research on 'Impact of Climate Change on Wheat Production in Pakistan', believed that threat of food insecurity to Pakistan, especially its wheat crop, is real.

"Chief factors of Climate Change affecting Agricultural productivity include rainfall pattern, temperature hike, changes in sowing and harvesting dates, water availability, evapotranspiration and land suitability. Also the impact of climate change on agriculture is manifold including diminishing of agricultural output and shortening of growth period for crops",



he said.

‘On the basis of variance decomposition analysis the values of the area under wheat cultivation and the climate change variables cause 30 per cent and 34 per cent variation in wheat production, respectively. Or in layman terms the wheat production in Pakistan will be cut at least by almost one third, if not more. Considering the country’s population growth rate of over two per cent, which means an additional 40 million, this shortage will effectively be 50 per cent, if the government departments fail to act’, Janjua concluded.

Punjab produces over 70 per cent of wheat in the country and the government departments have vowed to be aware and

proactive regarding optimizing production in view of Climate Change in the region. However, their outreach to the farmer regarding mitigating the effects of these changes has been questionable.

‘We’ve never witnessed any government official in our area, informing us of any measures regarding the Climate Change issue’, said Ziaullah Khan Niazi, a wheat farmer from Sherman Khel, near Mianwali, Punjab. ‘The government is mostly focused on incentivizing more cultivation of wheat through subsidies, which too is such a complicated and hectic process, that I prefer selling my wheat to private buyers’, he added.

When contacted, Punjab Secretary Agriculture Muhammad Mahmood said

that he and his team are aware of the threats of climate change and have already devised a comprehensive strategy to deal with it. Contradictory to the reality shared by the farmers on ground, he said that the department had been dispatching instructions to farmers over Whatsapp messenger and that special outreach programs too were in the offing. He said that the department had actually redesigned the cultivation and harvesting calendar to tune it in tandem with the Climate Change. However, when the concerned section of the department was requested for the altered calendar, the concerned person said that he couldn’t share it as it was still ‘work-in-progress’.



Human Rights

Menstrual Hygiene: 79 percent of female population in Pakistan exposed to disease



Sheraz Akbar

Peshawar: More than 79 percent girls in Pakistan do not manage menstruation hygienically, causing gynecological and psychological problems that lead to trauma and shame suffered in silence, say health experts.

Afshan Bhatti, National Research Manager at Real Medicine Foundation (RMF), says unhygienic practices during menstruation cause Urinary Tract Infection (UTI), which may eventually lead to pelvic infection and cervical infection. These may lead to infertility among females.

‘The basic reason behind lack of awareness about menstruation among the female population is that it is considered a taboo topic in our society,’ Bhatti told Truth Tracker.

Afshan Bhatti was one of the speakers on the occasion of “Menstrual Hygiene Management day” – observed annually on May 28. Organisers from different governmental and non-governmental organisations had arranged an event built around the theme “education about menstruation changes everything” at the University of Peshawar to create awareness and understanding about menstrual hygiene.

Menstruation, also known as a “period” or “monthly” is the regular discharge of blood and mucosal tissue from the inner lining of the uterus through the vagina. The first period usually begins between eight and fifteen years of age among females, signaling the onset of puberty.

‘The topic is not even discussed between a mother and daughter, let alone with male members of a family,’ said Bhatti, adding that menstruation should be seen as normal condition and discussed among

male and female members of a family.

However, the fact that the hall where the event was held had women speakers and an audience comprised entirely of female student, suggested that it is not be easy to engage with men on menstruation. It was not accidental but deliberate that only women were invited to the event. Socio-cultural norms treat discussing menstruation openly, especially with men, a taboo.

This was evident from the fact that the organisers did not allow media in when male journalists turned up to cover the event. Media persons were provided a press release related to the event and organisers gave interviews after the event. Even for female students at the event who keenly listened to speakers, it was the first time they had an opportunity to attend such an event.

‘The role of school teachers and Lady

Health Workers (LHV) is vital to educating women on hygiene,” said Bhatti. “They can play a very important role in lessening the burden of hygiene related disease on hospitals through education on cleanliness.”

Talking to News Lens Pakistan, she said that like clean drinking water and improved sanitation, menstrual hygiene is a basic need of women for a dignified life.

“Menstruation is a sign of puberty among girls but affect their socialization with family and community and leave a significant impact on their education,” she said.

Romeen Khan, a participant, told News Lens it was for the first time ever that she had attended an event focusing on such a rarely-discussed topic. The discussion, she said, was useful, held in a women-friendly environment.

Muhammad Mushtaq, a cleric in Peshawar, said menstruation had been frequently discussed in Quran. It is a book, he stressed, which guides Muslims through all phases of life.

“It (menstruation) should not be

considered taboo as every Muslim has been told to reflect on each and every aspect of life,” said Mushtaq.

According to a national survey by RMF, most girls have no knowledge about menstruation on reaching puberty. When they have the first cycle of menstruation without any knowledge, they are traumatized or suffer shame. This shame becomes private trauma because it is not shared with anyone.

“Some girls get extremely terrified as they believe it is a fatal disease,” said Afshan Bhatti. “Some girls even consider committing suicide to get rid of trauma due to blood flow from their genitals.”

Lack of awareness has created myths about menstruation among the general population – men or women. These include not take bath, not to run, carry weight or avoid eating specific foods while having periods. “None of these have any medical backing,” said Bhatti.

To create awareness about menstrual hygiene and break myths regarding menstruation, RMF has introduced the “The Girls and Boys Puberty Book.”

The brainchild of Dr. Marni Sommer, Associate Professor Socio-medical Sciences at the Columbia University in New York, the book aims to provide basic guidance to girls and boys regarding changes in body due to puberty. Local versions of the book had already been introduced in Ghana, Cambodia, Tanzania and Ethiopia.

According to RMF’s Afshan Bhatti, a local version of the book would soon be introduced as “Pakistan’s Book of Puberty.” The Book will be distributed (mostly) in public sector educational institutions in all four provinces and later in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

“Response from teachers and students in all provinces, especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, towards the book was surprisingly positive,” said Bhatti. “They found the book useful for girls and relevant to the local society.”

Afshan said that (RMF) was in contact with textbook boards in the provinces to add sections of the book, if not all, part of curriculum.



Security

KP: Unresolved murder cases pile up in absence of funds, training for police investigation



Salman Yousafzai

Peshawar: Three years ago Umar Din moved from the troubled Kurram Agency in the tribal areas to Peshawar, the provincial capital. The move, he said, was meant to “to ensure better future for my children.”

Soon afterwards, on August 25, 2013, Din’s seven-year-old daughter Husna

went missing while returning home from a mosque in the Ghareebabad neighborhood of Peshawar city. She had gone to the mosque to learn reading Quran.

When the girl did not return home long after sunset, Din alerted his relatives. Hours passed by, with no sign of Husna. The family searched the streets of Ghareebabad for the girl. The setting sun took away with it any hope of Husna’s return.

In the morning, neighbors found her body

in an empty plot. They broke the bad news to Din, and he called the Paharipura police station in the neighbourhood.

The police shifted the body to hospital and after postmortem, registered case against unknown killers under charges of Kidnaping, rape and murder. Umar Din, father of three boys, says three years have passed and the police is still clueless about the killers.

“I am completely disappointed with (the) police investigation,” he told News Lens.

With Peshawar witnessing a surge in sabotage activities, target killings, and terrorist acts in recent years, cases of untraced murders have piled up. According to statistics provided by police in the city, 188 cases of murders were reported in Peshawar in 2016. Of the 188 murders, including Husna's, police has traced 75 murderers with the rest still untraced or under investigation.

The year before that, in 2015, 148 people were shot dead by unknown killers. According to official statistics of Peshawar Police Department, the police has been able to trace murderers in 43 cases, whereas 92 cases were still unsolved.

"I have spent thousands of rupees to buy a sniffer dog on the directives of police to trace the killer of my daughter but it hasn't helped," said Din. "In this age of advanced technology, it is hard to believe that a crime as violent as murder and rape of a minor girl should go unresolved."

A year after her murder, Husna's case was closed. The lead officer of the investigation has retired. "The investigators met us occasionally in 2013-14 but never told us anything about the investigation. They just tell us to have patience and faith in them."

Husna's murder is one of the hundreds of unresolved killings committed last year in Peshawar.

Police say they have closed the case because the killers are not traced.

"The police usually close the case when they fail to trace the perpetrators," said Malik Maqsood Ali, Deputy Director at the Human Right Directorate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and a former public

prosecutor.

He said most police officers consider it a "punishment" to be assigned an investigation. "The police department need to create incentives for the investigation teams to improve their performance. In most cases, the investigation wing does not receive funds allocated to it, which hampers the investigation. The police need to recruit well educated and well trained detectives as most of the investigators are not."

Maqsood said eye-witnesses may give wrong information but circumstantial evidence is closer to accuracy. "The police needs to sharpen their skills when it comes to collecting circumstantial evidence."

Poor investigation skills are not the only factor undermining the ability of courts to proceed with murder trials. Maqsood said on some occasions, the family of a murder victim prefer to take 'revenge' from the accused themselves than having the police or the courts handle the prosecution.

At other times, investigating the accused can be dangerous and risky if the accused happens to be more powerful than the complainant. "People just don't trust the police," said Maqsood.

He said the police in Peshawar need to establish a forensic facility like the Punjab Forensic Laboratory in Lahore or send the investigators there for training.

Witnesses to killings, said Maqsood, say the police routinely arrive at the crime scene long after the assailants have escaped, even if the nearest police station is minutes away. "Police often fail to collect obvious evidence such as bullet casings, or question witnesses or suspects. Instead,

the police pressure the families of victims to name a suspect while filing a case."

A police officer said on the condition of anonymity that unregistered arms and bullets were available in the different parts of KP and the nearby tribal areas. "The government need to register them and keep a proper record of arm-dealers. This can help investigators trace the killers."

Experts like Maqsood cite several reasons behind the police failure to arrest criminals involved in killings. These include corruption, lack of interest, and faulty investigations.

The large cases of crimes, killings and terrorism has also stretched the police capacity to focus on unresolved cases. "It has resulted in a dwindling number of investigators in the police department," said Dr Masood Saleem, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Investigation, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said policemen in Peshawar did not prefer the investigation wing work in the operations.

"Homicides and the number of shootings have gone up and the number of detectives have gone down," said a police investigator on condition of anonymity. "We're not going in the right direction."

He said policemen in the field have to bear expenses of raids in pursuit of the criminals. He blamed the senior officers for consuming all operational funding so that little reaches the police stations. This hampers all progress on cases, he said.



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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.

- **Rana Tanveer**, a journalist with **Express Tribune**, acclaimed for his reportage of religious minorities and human rights, was run over by a car on June 09 and suffered severe injuries to his lower torso in **Lahore, Pakistan**. Only a few days prior to the attempt on his life, he had found a threatening graffiti in front of his house, labeling him as a Qadiani sect supporter and hence liable for murder. Despite Tanveer's attempts the police undermined the significance of the threat and kept from registering an FIR (First Information Report). Local and global rights organisations for journalists demand justice for Tanveer. (Freedom Network Pakistan)
- Last week **Turkish** police detained at least **38 people for their activity on social media**, the news website **Diken** reported yesterday, and cited public data on anti-terrorism activity published by the Interior Ministry each week. According to Turkish media reports Turkish police detain an average of six people a day based on their social media posts. (CPJ)
- **Anup Tiwari**, a reporter with **Radio Birgunj** and **Mountain TV**, was attacked by a gang earlier this month as he was enjoying a meal with his friends at a hotel in **Birgunj, Nepal**. The men allegedly accused Tiwari of involvement in anti-Madhesh activities and for writing news stories against the Madhesi community. Later, the accused threw a petrol on his face and body. Previously Tiwari had also received threats through social media, which he had reported to the police. (IFEX)
- **South Sudanese** government announced a refusal to issue or renew visas for **20 foreign journalists**. These journalists came from approximately ten countries, and work for both print and broadcast media. The journalists are accused by the government for writing "unsubstantiated and unrealistic" stories that "insulted or degraded South Sudan and its people." Eight journalists have been killed in connection with their work since 2013 without an investigation by the authorities. South Sudan is ranked 145th out of 180 countries in RSF's 2017 World Press Freedom Index after falling 20 places since 2015. (RSF)

Promise Tracking

PML-N breaks its promise about development of a Christian neighbourhood in Lahore



Durdana Najam

The Promise

During the 2013 election campaign, Mian Shahbaz Sharif made several visits to his constituency NA 129 Youhanabad, Pakistan's largest Christian locality, where approximately 250,000 Christians live, as it had been of particular interest to Sharif. Out of the several election's promises that he made, one that stood out, and is still alive in the minds of the residents of Youhanabad, was about making this locality Paris.

Background

Five years later, the condition of this area is as dilapidated as it was in 2013. There are no hospitals, no water filtration plant and no public school there. The roads are still broken and they become a den of filth when sewage water spills over due to overflowing gutters during rain or clogging. This is just the tip of the problems that people of this area face due to poverty and lack of opportunities. The deeper one goes into Youhanabad, the social and infrastructural issues get worse and make it plain to see how narrowly do we define our priorities when it comes to minorities and their rights. One overwhelming problem, on a national level, is recognizing the numerical strength of minorities in the federal and provincial assemblies of Pakistan.

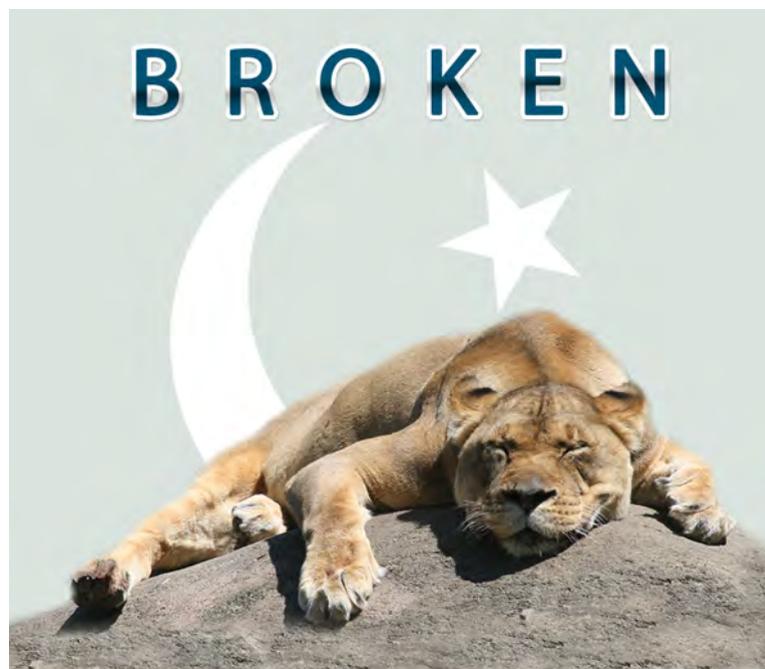
Since 1973, the reserved seats of minorities in the National Assembly are 10 and 14 in the Punjab Assembly. In 2014, the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Law and Justice took a decision to increase the number of reserved seats for the country's religious minorities. This decision was taken up on the private member bill moved by Asia Nasir, a Christian member of parliament from Jameet-e-Ulmai-Islam. According to the official statement released by the committee, it was agreed upon to increase the number of reserved the seats for minorities in the National Assembly by five and in Punjab and Sindh by two each and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan one each. It is an irony that since 1973 where the number of general seats in the National Assembly had been increased from 210 to 342 and reserved seats for women from 28 to 60, seats reserved for the religious minorities stayed 10.

Mindful of the importance of the important of the census that had just concluded in Pakistan minorities had been instructed by their leadership to be extra conscious and alert in getting themselves enlisted properly. The member of minorities believes that census will determine their size of the minorities' population, which in turn will help define their proportion of representation in parliament. As per the National Population Census in 1998 minorities make up 2.8 per cent of Pakistan's population, which included Hindus, Christians, Sikh, Zoroastrians, Ahmadis, and Jews.

Minorities also seek the right of choosing their representatives through direct elections. Currently, they are selected through the proportional representative system.

The Supreme Court of Pakistan had instructed the governments to give minorities the right to elect their representatives directly. However, like many other orders of the SC, this too was ignored.

Minorities in Pakistan face many issues that directly affect the quality of their life in terms of freedom of expression and religion. A delegation of minorities on May 17, 2017, met Nasir Janjua the Security Advisor to the Prime Minister and raised their concerns. On the top of their agenda was the issue of the misuse of blasphemy law and forced conversion.



Forced conversion has become a major issue for both Christians and Hindus in Pakistan. According to the data available with Aurat Foundation, about 1,000 young women are forcibly converted to Islam every year. In November 2016, Sindh Assembly took a bold step to introduce a bill against forced conversion, carrying a harsh punishment for the offense. The bill, however, could not be passed following the backlash from the Muslims religious groups.

Tracking

Punjab Human Rights Minister, Khalil Tahir Sindhu, talked to Truth Tracker about Mian Shahbaz Sharif's promise of making Youhanabad into Paris and agreed that the promise had not been followed, let alone fulfilled.

Talking about the underrepresentation of minorities in the various assemblies of Pakistan, he said that he had been in touch with the Federal Law Minister on this crucial issue and was given assurance that this matter would be resolved once the results of the census arrived.

"Ideally, census or no census, the reserved seats for the minorities should have increased the same way that the number of general of seats and reserved seats for women were increased. Our representation in the National Assembly should have been 14 in the National Assembly and 16 in Punjab Assembly."

Sindhu told Truth Tracker that seat adjustment required constitutional amendment under Article 101 and 56 of the Constitution of Pakistan.

Lately, Doctor Waseem, MPA from Jamaat-e-Islami in Punjab Assembly suggested making Islamiyat a compulsory subject for every student irrespective of his or her religion. Sindhu said that him and his party sharply criticized the proposal and the matter was dropped.

He said, "We demanded that just as 20 per cent extra marks were awarded to Muslims students who had memorized Quran (Hafiz), students belonging to minorities with a similar trait should be also given the provision to gain additional numbers."

Sindhu, however, said that unless election reforms are made, and minorities are given the right to elect their representatives, quality in legislation concerning minorities would remain an issue that would ultimately reflect in the continuation of discrimination and unmet social needs.

Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaaf, MPA Punjab Assembly, Shanila Ruth,

told Truth Tracker that Shahbaz Sharif was in a campaigning mood when he promised to convert Youhanabad into Paris. She further said that when the Church blast incident happened in Youhanabad two years ago, Sharif did not even visit the bombing site. She said that instead of empathizing with the victims of the explosion, the incident of the lynching of two Muslims following the blast was given more importance. A witch-hunt began after that, and Christian boys were lifted from their homes to investigate the incident.

“Many innocent people have been arrested. While in jail, these people had been offered conditional release if they convert to Islam,” said Ruth. She said that the police is wrongfully holding onto innocent people.

Talking about the rights of minorities she said: “We have been asking the government in Punjab to give us a five per cent quota in every field. If only this promise is fulfilled, many of our issues will get resolved.”

Like any other member of a minority, Ruth also believes that her community needed an increase in the number of seats in all four provinces, “But the litmus test,” she said, “lied in allowing the minorities to elect their own representatives.”

“Currently those who are selected from minorities are not the real representatives of the people because of the sheer fact that they do not have contacts with the masses, hence their entire activity revolves around their self-interest,” said Ruth.

Independent Viewpoint

Maulana Tahir Ashrafi, Chairman All Pakistan Ulema Council, condemned all sorts of violence and discrimination against minorities. He agreed that minorities should be given the right to

elect their representative.

“The minorities’ legislatures do nothing for their community. They serve the interest of the party or work on raising their status,” Said Ashrafi.

On the issue of forced conversion, Ashrafi told Truth Tacker that the issue has nothing to do with religion. “It is,” he elaborated, “a social issue emanating from poverty on one hand and feudalism on the other. Girls from the Christian community, and Muslim boys from well to do families usually decide to marry. To lead a decent life, these girls usually agree to convert to Islam.” “Mostly,” Ashrafi further added, “the boys abandon these girls, which is very unfortunate.”

Kashif Nawab, Director at SATH Pakistan and Admin Minority Rights Watch, told Truth Tracker that funds worth billions were allocated for minorities, however, they have been diverted to the construction of the Orange Train.

“The Finance Minister Punjab, Aysha Ghous, had said on the floor of the Punjab Assembly in the recent budget speech that the funds allocated for minorities in the preceding year were being collapsed. It means those funds were not used. Our scholarships and grants were withheld,” Nawab said.

Ruling

From the above investigation, Truth Tracker has reached the conclusion that CM Punjab forgot his promise of making Youhanabad into Paris after assuming power. This forgetfulness meant that the government was not interested in reforming the lives of the minorities, including election reforms.



Promise Tracking

PTI's promise to create 150,000 seat call centers compromised



Izhar Yusafzai

The Promise

Pakistan Tehrek-i-Insaf central leader Shireen Mazari while unveiling elections manifesto of the party prior to 2013 general elections promised that her party would establish 150,000 seat call centers that would create 250,000 new jobs.

Background

Pakistan Tehrek-i-Insaf (PTI) emerged as the newly ‘populist’ party at the country’s political threshold before 2013 general elections in Pakistan. The party’s show of power was witnessed in Lahore, back in 2011, as the biggest event in the party’ history.

Before general elections, with hundreds of other promises, PTI also promised the nation that they the party would establish 150,000-seat call centers, which would create total of 250,000 new jobs if they were voted into power.

Party’s leader Mazari, while unveiling the party’s manifesto in Islamabad on April, 8 2013, said that the call centers would take service calls and will help facilitate the e-governance.

Tracking

The call centre idea, said KP’s minister for Information Technology Shahram Khan Tarakai, was to create job opportunities for the youth of the province and the country and in this regard various steps have been taken by the government.



While speaking to the Truth Tracker, Tarakai said that PTI government has trained over 21000 youth and freelance students to become more productive, capable of earning money while even working from homes or with various companies.

Besides this, he said more than 40,000 youth have been trained in a recently held Digital Youth Summit in Peshawar that would help them coordinate with the national and international companies to find jobs or freelance prospects. “These are steps towards employment opportunities in the province for the youth, announced Taraki.”

“More than 1200 women have also been trained for various skills

to empower and enable themselves from the comfort of their own homes,” he claimed.

Moreover, he said a concept called ‘Durshal’ (door entrance) space have been created for the youth of the province where they can float their creative ideas and work on them in coordination with their other colleagues and the support of government. The ‘Durshal’ concept encourages the youth to rigorously brainstorm diverse innovative ideas for resolving the civic and governance issues.

When asked if KP’s e-governance system introduced in different departments are like the party’s previous promise of establishing call centers, he refuted and said that this is totally different idea where complaint cells, much like chief minister complaint cell, have been established. The local citizen can lodge complaints in case any malpractice is seen happening in the departments.

However, what the minister shed light on, ‘steps taken’ for creating new jobs, hasn’t been in line with the promise the party had made—that is establishment of 150,000 seat call centers.

Independent Viewpoint

Shafiq Gigyani, Youth Activist who also provides trainings to the youth on entrepreneurship told Truth Tracker that the government’s preoccupation with creating freelancers rather than encouraging true entrepreneurship in the province was an unsound strategy.

He said freelancers mostly start working with the companies but quit after six to seven months owing to several issues but entrepreneurship is far sustainable than freelancing.

About call centers, Gigyani said that no such call centers have

been established in KP. “I personally am not in the favor of call centers as these too are not that much sustainable for the youth employment.”

Furthermore, he said that the government needs to train the youth for entrepreneurship where they would establish their own small businesses and, in the process, also provide jobs to others.

“The youth needs to be honed with technical skills that would help them in finding far better and stable occupations,” Gigyani said, adding, freelancers’ output are immediate but less sustainable than entrepreneurship and a skillful youth.

Muhammad Rafiq, who completed his Master degree in social work two years ago, is still unemployed and on a continuous search for a job. Speaking to the Truth Tracker, Rafiq said that the government needs to create more jobs in the province. “I am searching here and there to find a job for the last two years but in vain.”

About call centers, Rafiq said it would be good if young people could find jobs through call centers but the government is yet to fulfill its promise of establishing one. “I think the government should make those promises which they have ability to keep, rather than hollow ones.”

Ruling

Keeping in view the versions of officials, and independent observers, Truth Tracker reached the conclusion that PTI hasn’t fulfilled the promise of establishing 150,000 seat call centers. However they did, take steps for creating other opportunities for new jobs.



Promise Tracking

PPP’s promise to improve quality of legal education and training for lawyers stands broken



Durdana Najam

The Promise

The PPP had promised in the 2013 manifesto that they would improve the quality of legal education and training for lawyers.

Background

Just like any other discipline, legal education has also been given free reign to grow. While a burgeoning legal community is something to be proud of, however, sans quality the end product leaves society more burdened with incompetent and ineffective legal machinery. A lawyer is a reflection of the legal system, it’s where he gains education and practices law. Likewise, a developed and sophisticated legal system not only protects people from harmful practices but it also provides a mechanism for restorative justice.

The responsibility to advance and protect a responsible legal system falls on the shoulders of law colleges. The law colleges are bound to make sure that their students become aware of the complexity of the legal system, so that the community the lawyer serves adheres to and respects the law.

The quality of legal education has been compromised in Pakistan with the consequence that universities had been granting affiliation to ‘ghost law’ colleges. The anomalies in education imparted at law colleges, such as dated curriculum, inexperienced teachers and lack of research emanates from the problems afflicting the primary and higher education systems of Pakistan. The system lays emphasis on rote learning over concept building,



scoring marks over analytical skills, and memorizing text over critical thinking.

Another area of concern that has gravely affected the quality of education in law is the medium of instruction, which is English. Apart from a handful of students who could afford private schools offering English medium education, the majority of students joining law colleges in Pakistan come from public schools and colleges where English as a medium of language is neither properly adopted, nor taught professionally. The legal system of Pakistan, however, uses the English language as a medium of instruction. Our entire jurisprudence is informed by

references to foreign sources.

The dearth of research and academic discourse has kept Pakistan far behind the legal system followed internationally. The paucity of quality research in law can be deciphered from the fact that there is only one local law journal, 'The Journal of Law and Society' recognized by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. The University of Peshawar takes out the journal.

Lately, Pakistan Bar Council attempted to reform legal education in Pakistan by introducing the Legal Education Rules, 2015. This new system abolished three years law education and required a five-year law degree. Under the Legal Education Rules 2015, the number of students to be admitted to the first year of LLB was restricted to 100. Evening classes were stopped. Candidates applying for the degree should not be more than 24 years on the closing date for the submission of application form.

The experts, however, say that the Legal Education Rules 2015 is not much different from the old 1978 Rules. The provision of five per cent seats reserved for the children of advocates has been carried forward, which the right wrong activists view as discriminatory with no parallel in other degree programs.

Passing marks are also the same as were under the 1978 Rules; forty per cent in the individual exam and 50 per cent aggregate.

There is no guideline for the improvement of legal scholarship offered in the local LLB programme, for producing quality research and on how to make law education in Pakistan attractive for the brilliant students to enter the field.

Of late, the term 'wukla-gardi has been coined to categorize violence portrayed by lawyers. The members of the lawyer's fraternity are often found scuffling amongst themselves, and in extreme cases, were found throwing tantrums at the judges hearing their cases or otherwise. We also have examples where lawyers had helped criminals accused of murder escape from the premises of court.

Tracking

Former Governor Punjab, Latif Khosa, who belongs to Pakistan People's Party, gave his viewpoint to Truth Tacker on why the lawyer fraternity has fallen from grace. Although he agreed that the government has failed to bring about visible reforms in the quality of legal education, he put the onus of improving legal education and lawyers' behaviour on the Bar Councils of Pakistan. "It is the responsibility of the Bar Councils to bring reforms in the legal education and bring it at par with the international standard." "Unfortunately," Khosa continued, "We as a nation have not learned to work above self-interest." He further added, "Bar Councils and the lawyers are more interested in protecting the interest of their political parties, vote banks or the Mafias they give legal assistance to."

Khosa said that the black coat a lawyer wears was not just a piece of cloth, it carried honour and prestige. He explained that whenever a lawyer indulges in inappropriate behaviour, not only is he tarnishing his own image, but also that of his profession and community.

"The Supreme is divided over the issue of whether Urdu or English should be used as a medium of instruction in Courts. Barring a few judges, no one even writes the judgment in Urdu, and even that becomes difficult for the lawyers and others to understand." Khosa said.

Khosa agreed that because of the low standard of legal education and lack of training, some unaware people have joined the lawyer's community. "These so-called lawyers," Khosa said, "were non-serious and unaware of the responsibility that their profession laid upon them. "

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf's spokesperson, Fawad Choudhary, told Truth Tracker that it was in the 80's and 90's that the level of legal education went down. "First, the medium of instruction was made Urdu," he recalled, "during Ziaul Haq's times. Later, it returned to English, which not only created confusion among the students but also made a joke out of the education system."

"There is a huge number of non-professional lawyers. Their sole aim is to participate in politics, which they do on the back of Bar Councils," Chaudhry said. He further added that no serious and professional lawyer was found involved in bar activities, knowing that bars in Pakistan did nothing substantial.

Talking about the responsibility of the Pakistan Bar Council towards reforming the standard of legal education, Chaudhry said, "The PBC failed to do so because it did not have the capacity to carry out such a sensitive and academic activity."

Independent Viewpoint

Advocate Pakistan Supreme Court, Mian Asghar, said that the legal education in Pakistan had been affected due to two reasons. Firstly, the mushroom growth of law colleges. Secondly, the lack of oversight on the performance of law colleges that inadvertently allowed them to violate rules. He said that there were law colleges in Pakistan opened in two room apartments. While talking to Truth Tracker, he divulged that there were many law colleges in Lahore that had opened their franchises in small towns where they enticed students to join the legal profession, which would bring them to Lahore or other metropolitan cities. Asghar added: "In most cases, these students are given a law degree even if they do not attend the full course."

"This situation could only improve if all those law colleges giving sub-standard education were shut down. The Lahore High Court has heard a petition on this, and a decision is awaited," he said.

"The Pakistan Bar Council should require a renewal of licenses every three or four years on the basis of the character and performance of the lawyers," Asghar said.

Ruling

The PPP has not been able to improve the quality of education in Sindh where it has been in power for the last eight years. Their promise stands broken.



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Promise Tracking

PTI fails to keep promise of Jabba Dam's construction for water supply to Peshawar City



Rehmat Mehsud

The Promise

The Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) led government had plans to construct Jabba Dam under the Peshawar Greater Water Supply Scheme (PGWSS) to ensure provision of clean drinking water to the residents of the provincial metropolis, Peshawar, and parts of adjacent Khyber Agency.

Background

Last year, the Jabba Dam was included in the Annual Development Program (ADP) 2016-17 under PGWSS, according to provincial Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department.

The feasibility study of the dam had already been completed, which was found feasible through an engineering point of view. The dam is located in Jamrud locality, Khyber Agency, which was scheduled to be completed by the end of 2017.

It was estimated that the dam, after completion, would help irrigate around 20,000 acres of land and protect Peshawar City and parts of Khyber Agency from floods during the monsoon season.

In addition, the dam would help ensure provision of one million people with clean drinking water facility with water storage capacity of up to 38,000 gallons of water.

Tracking

Truth Tracker moves to contact Shah Farman, minister for information and public health engineering, who said, "The Jabba Dam has been finalized as a source of constant drinking water supply facility to the entire population of Peshawar City."

"The construction of the dam has been approved, with the World Bank (WB) agreement," he remarked. "Issues pertaining to the funding will be dealt and handled by the FATA secretariat," he added.

"The proposed dam is situated on a considerable height and its construction does not require heavy funding due to its location," he noted.

"The dam has already been declared suitable in terms of its feasibility. The dam related issues will be handled by the FATA secretariat," he observed.

When asked what its completion date is, Farman said that the rest of the issue should be discussed with FATA secretariat as it has the lion's share.

"Only 20 per cent of the water in Peshawar is suitable for consumption," he added.

When approached for comments on the subject, Mian Iftikhar Hussain, former provincial information minister and stalwart of Awami National Party (ANP), said, "All the pledges and promises made by the PTI have been trampled upon badly."

He said that the vital education and health sectors are in shambles and the doctors' community held a strike against the government.

He said, "The PTI has made all promises in an apparent attempt to help pave way for Imran Khan to become the country's next prime minister."



"The Peshawar drinking water issue is the most serious one for the metropolitan city and four budgets have lapsed, and the current budget is tottering upon debt. How could they uphold such a gigantic project for the rest of their term?" he asked.

"I don't think the PTI will resolve the dire water supply issue in Peshawar. This issue will meet the same fate as all of the other broken promises made by PTI," Hussain remarked.

Malik Riaz, Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) from Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam- Fazl (JUI-F), questioned, "Tell me of a single pledge or promise that the PTI has materialized so far."

"No activities have been seen or reported that show work has started on the Jabba Dam. There are no funds for projects and the dam will cost billions of rupees. I'm not sure how they plan on constructing it," he remarked.

Mian Zia-u-Rehman, MPA from Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), said of PTI's plan to build Jabba Dam, "It is simply a joke on the people of KP."

He asked, "Did the people of the province see any dams at a time when the PTI already has a long list of promises, including construction of 300 dams in KP?"

"The dam is another addition to their tall claims and broken promises," Rehman observed. He said that the four-year term of PTI is in front of the people and voters of the province will decide the fate of the ruling party in the next general election.

Fakhr Azam Wazir, another lawmaker from Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), said, "Construction of Jabba Dam is totally impossible at a time when the PTI has ten months left in power."

"Did the PTI construct the promised 350 dams?" Wazir questioned. As usual, he said that the provincial government badly failed to materialize any of its promises during their rule in KP.

"For example, if a particular scheme costs Rs. 10 billion and the PTI government releases Rs. 1 million, he doesn't think that they (PTI) would be able to complete this ambitious project," He said. He added that the growing population of Peshawar direly needed clean drinking water but it is impossible for the sitting government could resolve the issue any time soon.

Independent Viewpoint

When approached for comments, Mudassar Shah Afridi, a senior

Peshawar based journalist and an analyst, said that being the resident of Khyber Agency, he did not observe any dam related development activities taking place in the area.

"I myself visited the Jamrud area where the Jabba Dam will be built and held interviews with locals. I was told that a team visited the area four months ago and there are no other activities underway there," Afridi noted.

He said that a well has been dug there but no formal work has been started as of yet. "After visiting the area, it does not seem as if any dam is being built there," he observed.

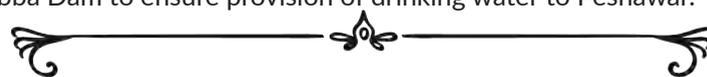
He also added that the situation was very particular, as the dam was located inside FATA territory. How will the KP government

construct the dam there when FATA has not merged with the province yet.

"If you observe facts and ground realities of the area, it (the dam) seems nearly impossible to construct," he added.

Ruling

In the wake of remarks and viewpoints and observations by ruling/opposition lawmakers and independent analysts, Truth Tracker rules that the PTI has broken its promise to build the Jabba Dam to ensure provision of drinking water to Peshawar.



Accountability

Half of FATA schools functioning in dire straits



Abdul Salam Afridi

Peshawar: Low literacy and significant out-of-school children paint a grim picture of education in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) where 5 out of 10 schools lack basic facilities, propounding the implications on local children's enrollments and dropouts. Previously, the government had doubled the expenditure on education, during the hard-hit militancy era, but no tangible development was witnessed in the in FATA.

The Directorate of Education FATA has the mandate to yield and ensure quality education in the tribal areas with the use of advance skills. However the government's financial shot in the arm for education was aimed at increasing student enrollment and improving quality, the official budget allocations are focused elsewhere: on employees' pay, allowances

and loans.

The Truth Tracker found that the education department has received worthwhile contributions in terms of foreign aid, which are worthless when compared with the outcomes. Currently, USAID, UNDP, UNICEF and GIZ are the prime partners, supporting the soft and hard development in FATA.

Only after the successful military operation in FATA, many schools started their normal operations in the last few years. Presently, of every ten government schools in FATA eight are functional while two are non-functional. The total number of government institutes are 5994 and those private are 408. Of every ten enrolled children, eight go to public schools, while two attend in private school according to the year 2015-2016 official statistical report.

During the militancy in FATA, around 1200 schools were destroyed either

fully or partially. Under different annual development programmes, Rehabilitation & Reconstruction Unit (RRU) and foreign donors' assistance, around 900 schools are rehabilitated and some of them are still under construction as revealed by the data provided by the Directorate of Education. Government figures indicate that about 300 schools still await rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Director Education FATA, Hashim Khan Afridi told Truth Tracker that around four million rupees were spent on school furniture and maintenance in Bajaur Agency in 2009, since the blasts destroyed the classrooms and most of the furniture. The remaining furniture was robbed. This is a picture of how schools suffered in FATA for many devastating years.

More than half of Schools without Basic Facilities

Although education department in FATA is striving hard with the goals they aspire to

achieve, they are ridden with major security anxieties; budget constraint, lack of coordination and, poor development plans. More than half of the schools in FATA go without a boundary-wall, electricity, toilets and drinking water facilities, which are the major reasons of increasing dropout ratio and number of out of school children in FATA.

After the terror attack on Army Public School Peshawar on 16 December 2014, when around 144 students were martyred, the government warned all educational institutes across the country to increase their security resources including boundary-wall but FATA remains most vulnerable than in comparison to the other provinces in the country to have more schools without boundary-wall yet. This exhibits the government's lack of interest to ensure the security of children in FATA and their Education amid grand slogans avowing to teach the children of the enemy, "mujhe dushman ke bachon ko padhana hai"?

Assistant Director Planning and Development, Kashif told Truth Tracker that limited resources and budget constraints cause the standstill development in fulfilling the missing basic facilities in schools.



Most of the students quitting schools before fifth grade

The missing basic facilities in FATA might probably be the reason why, every year, the numbers of dropouts increase. The last six years official data reveals that of every ten children six are not able to matriculate. The same is true for fifth grade as most of the children quitting school before completing. Further data research find that in FATA female drop-out rate slightly higher than male, which means seven of every ten female students quit school before completion and six male in every ten.

In every ten enrolled boy students, six quit schools.



In every ten enrolled girl students, seven quit schools.

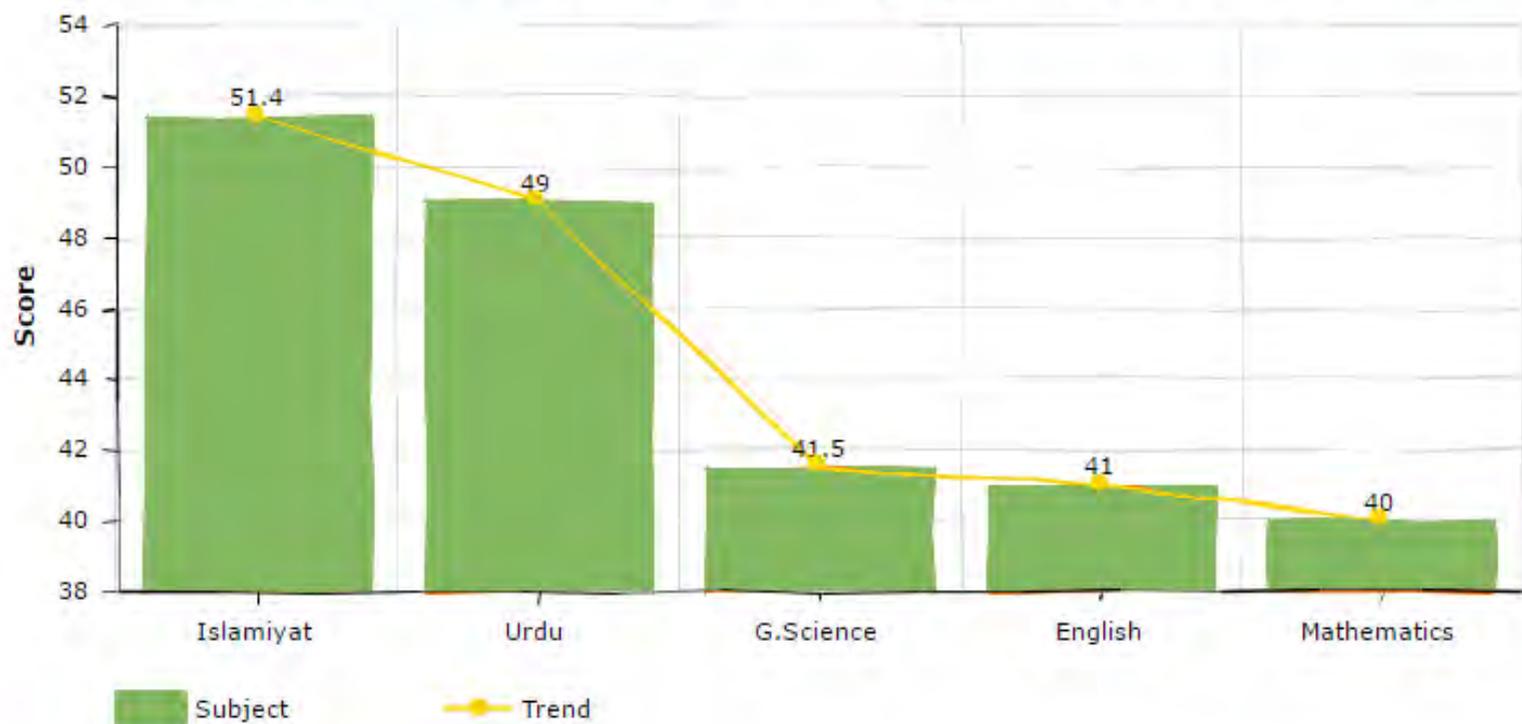


Additional Director Education FATA, Muhammad Abbas Khan told Truth Tracker that upcoming development plan will bring ample changes in education and yes this is the priority to fulfill the missing basic facilities in Schools very soon. He iterated his belief that the day not so far that there will be no school without basic facilities in FATA and all out of school children will be in the class rooms.

More than half of the students cannot pass basic literacy tests

Official data reveal that the basic literacy trends of government school students are perturbing. More than half of the fifth-grade students cannot pass their basic writing tests. The graph shows that of every ten students only four can pass English language writing test, four Mathematics, four General Science, five Urdu, and five Islamiyat. "Although we are not comparing rural with urban areas

Government school students fare slightly better on Islamiyat tests



Source: Directorate of Education FATA | Year: 2015-16

currently, however, there was a time when the performance of FATA schools was better than urban areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), but with the security challenges to the education in FATA have been a blow to schools, now awaiting hefty upgrades,” says Hashim.

An education activist Shahidullah Afridi from FATA told Truth Tracker that no matter what resources are at hand, it is the responsibility of teachers to take advantage of the time and shape student interest rather complaining about things.

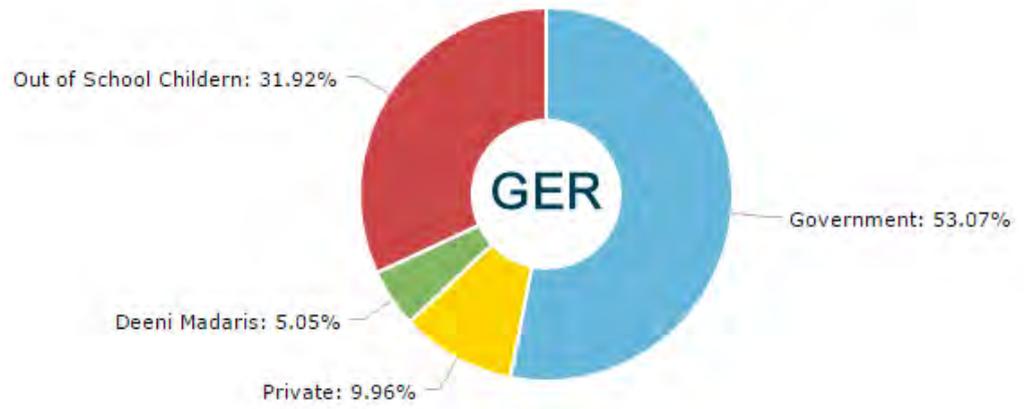
Out of School Children

Although education is a basic right, according to Article 25-A ‘right to education’ that the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children across the country; But in FATA between ages 5-9 population 31% still out of school official data reveals.

Which means that the population of ages 5-9 of every ten children of FATA five enrolled in public schools, one in private, one in deeni madaris and three out of schools. Further research on data shows that between ages 10-14 population 82.78% children remain out of schools, which means that of every ten 10-14 year old children in FATA, only one is enrolled in public school, one in private school and eight out of school till now the age population of age 10-14. This graph details the gross enrollment ratio with respect to different age groups.

Hashim iterated that the education department has support of security agencies to protect the schools in FATA from any risk and also they provide security during rehabilitation and reconstruction of schools. It is hoped that the support of local political agents in bringing-back and enroll out-of-school children in FATA, improved outcomes could be afoot.

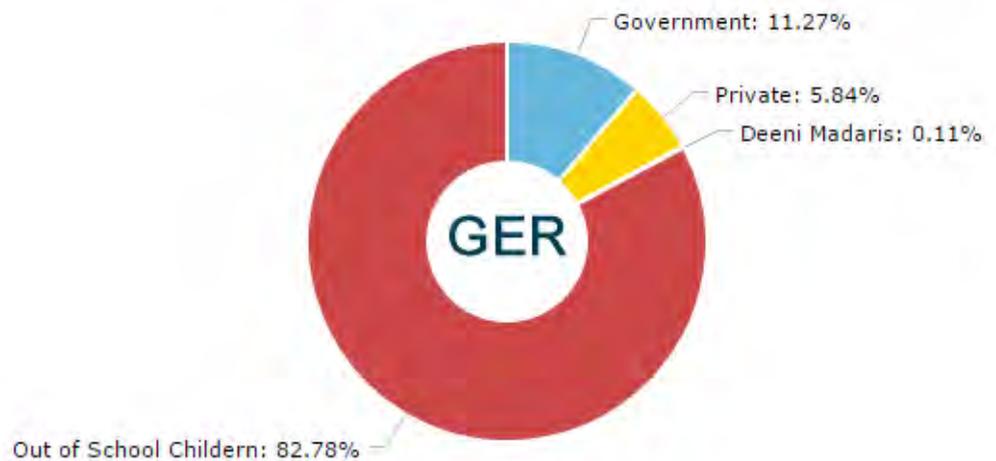
Age 5-9 population: Out of School



Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER)

Source: Directorate of Education FATA | Year: 2015-16

Age 10-14 population: Out of School



Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER)

Source: Directorate of Education FATA | Year: 2015-16

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