Climate Change and Policy Failures

Willingness for particular political goals and formulation of policies accordingly are two major causes of injustice for forest dependent livelihood.

Over the past 50 years, changes in the ecosystem have been rapid and widespread due to increasing human activities. Unfortunately, there is a limited understanding of the processes that facilitate fundamental improvements in natural resources for socio-ecological systems and economic development. In Pakistan, a number of natural resources, including water, fisheries and forests, are currently under threat due to decline in biodiversity, change in climate and decrease in freshwater flows to the Indus Delta. Institutions having formal and informal rules, are responsible for influencing human behaviour, which affects the economic outcome such as economic growth, development as well as efficiency.

According to experts, the Indus Delta hosts 97% of the...
total mangrove forests over an area of around 98,128 hectares, which provides livelihood to nearly 900,000 coastal residents. The importance of mangrove ecosystems has been widely accepted, as they provide a feeding and breeding ground for a variety of economically and ecologically important animals and other organisms, including fish, shrimps, crabs, etc. One hectare of well-protected and healthy mangrove ecosystem can yield up to 100 kg fish, 25 kg shrimps, 15 kg crabs, 200 kg mollusks, 45 kg sea cucumber besides proving a support to 400 kg of fish and 75 kg of shrimp that mature in off-shore areas. Pakistan’s fishing sector employ 125,000 people with their family dependents of about one million. However, the alarming disappearance of mangrove forest cover from Indus Delta at a rapid rate of 2% per annum makes them ‘critically threatened’.

The government has been investing in water engineering plans profoundly to establish dams and the world’s largest gravity-driven irrigation system on the Indus river. By the 1960s, about 40,000 hectares of cultivable land was turning into wastelands each year due to water-logging and salinity. Therefore, the country had no option but to develop miles of drains and several tube-wells compatible to the existing irrigation infrastructure. Besides contributing an important role to meet the energy demand from hydropower inductions, 14 million hectares of farmland is irrigated by the irrigation network propelling agriculture sector, which contributes about 21 per cent of the country’s GDP, 60 per cent of the exports and 45 per cent of the labour force. But still the coastal communities around the Indus Delta are poor, as they subsist primarily on natural resources. They dwell in small and scattered settlements usually around fringes of creeks that are highly vulnerable to natural calamities.

Lack of deliberation on human dimension and considering a ‘pro conservation’ approach compromising even the cost of livelihoods, had been the dilemma in the recent past. A survey study from different institutions responsible for mangroves of Indus Delta revealed that Forest Policy failure is because of un-sustainability of policies. National policies are directly proportional to sustainable consequences and community development. Willingness for particular political goals and formulating the policies accordingly are two major causes of injustice for forest dependent livelihood. Thus, most of our forest policies are documented and limited to office cupboards instead of achievable in the real life situations, presenting diversified sets of factors. This particular problem arises from the non-participatory practices that prevail in the country. Changing trends and learned experiences are leading the world towards a new approach of ‘conservation and development’ that may be replaced with ‘conservation versus development’.

The proponents of this approach, including governments, international donors and international lending agencies are recalibrating their vision and mission statements to organize themselves towards development without distorting the conservation. However, good governance is a key to pro-poor efforts for any development. Certainly, marginalized coastal communities engaged with fishery (90%) or agriculture sector (8%), are highly sensitive and exposed to the climate change driven threats. Further, there is a lack of adaptive capacity mainly due to the poor consumption patterns, less income diversification, high dependency ratio and lack of education. Hence, some key adaptation options that can be fed into ongoing national efforts for developing climate change action plans are: provision of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, ensuring the environmental flows to the Indus delta, provision of safeguards from the climatic disaster, enhanced access to education, and adoption to the innovative livelihood options in order to enhance the community’s resilience to climate change in coastal areas of Pakistan.
Pathways to Resilience in Semi-Arid Economies’ is an ongoing research project at SDPI which aims at identifying threats and opportunities arising out of climate change being faced by Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) in order to promote climate resilient development. This project is currently in its inception phase and thematic review papers are in progress focusing on the linkages of climate change with natural capital, human capital, markets and governance.

While the studies conducted in the second half of the 20th century primarily focused on non-market impacts of climate change, the current focus has been gradually shifted to the market impacts of climatic variability. These two dimensions are inter-related in the sense that the non-market impact of climate change ends up impacting the markets as well. For instance, the productivity of soil decreases with the increase in temperature (non-market impact) which leads to decrease in agricultural yield. Resultantly, reduced agricultural supply causes the prices of the agricultural commodities to rise, decline in real income and consumption of agri-dependent population (Jorgenson et al, 2004; Ludi et al, 2007; IPCC, 2007).

Apart from this, the ability of markets to offset the adverse impacts of climate change is a major reason of markets being central to the analysis of climate change (Aldy and Stavins, 2012). In this context, climate scientist and economists are striving to find market-based solutions in order to increase the resilience in markets against climate threats. This issue of market sensitivity finds greater relevance to the developing economies because most of the developing countries have arid land which makes these highly vulnerable even to a slight change in climate (IPCC, 1996) (Figure 1 & 2).

Resource scarcity in particular, as a result of extreme weather i.e. floods, droughts etc. in ASALs leaves a long-term impact on the markets and causes them to have greater reliance on imports (Nelson et al, 2009). Moreover, these extreme changes in climatic conditions create a balance of payments deficit (alterations in trade market), increase in poverty and infrastructural damages (alterations in factor market) as well. Such changes in markets then translates into negative shifts in the growth pattern of the country.

One interesting thing to note is while climate change brings negative consequences for markets, it also gives rise to new market opportunities as well. Literature establish that a moderate change in climate is likely to result in land expansion for crop production in some regions (Jorgenson et al, 2004), opportunities for product innovation (green production), expansion in new insurance markets (UNEP FI, 2002) etc. More importantly, developing countries being ranked low on carbon emissions have a tremendous opportunity of establishing a carbon market. These however need substantial investment/finance to support climate and environment-friendly production processes, infrastructure, services etc. Governments along with the multinational organizations can support such initiatives to ensure climate resilient growth in developing countries, particularly in ASAL regions.

Continued on Page 13
Green Technology for Sustainable Growth in Transportation

By Huma Dad Khan

The issue of green revolution is echoing everywhere around the globe. What if Pakistan adopts green technology to cope with rising diesel import bill that is deteriorating the country’s trade balance account? Can we encounter the environmental hazard due to greenhouse gases emission by outdated, inefficient engine technology with high sulphur content? What will be the major impact on transport sector’s performance after introducing such technology? These are the questions to be answered under a study on green technology for sustainable growth in transport sector of Pakistan. The study, being conducted by SDPI, would highlight as to how this technology can reduce diesel oil imports that lead to gain in balance of payments, lessen greenhouse gas emissions, and improve the country’s transport sector performance by efficient vehicles with clean fuel.

Transport is an important sector of Pakistan’s economy contributing about 8.6% to the GDP while 6% contribution goes to the total labour force employed. In the total energy spectrum, transport sector consumes about half of the petroleum products, and its share remain still dominates. Pakistan’s transport sector is heavily dependent on petroleum products, which consumes bulk of High Speed Diesel (HSD) oil with increasing number of vehicles plying on the roads.

About 95% of oil in transport sector consists of HSD oil with marginal share of other fuels. Among 18.68 million tons of petroleum products consumption in the year 2011-12, transport sector consumes almost 49.6 per cent of the total products as compared to power and industrial sectors’ share of 40.7 per cent and 7.6 per cent respectively. During 2011-12, Rs 272.9 billion worth of diesel is imported for transport sector consumption.

Bulk of high content of sulphur is present in diesel oil. High sulphur content is the main contributor to air pollut-
In a recent meeting at SDPI with experts from South and Central Asia, some key challenges and ways outs in trade in energy came to light. This region, which is home to one-fifth population of the world, has a huge number of people living below the poverty line with low per capita energy consumption.

Given the critical situation of this region in the wake of US withdrawal from Afghanistan and establishment of new governments in the South Asian countries, it is important to bring all the stakeholders together to jointly discuss the way forward for this energy deficient region. Energy is not only required to boost the economy but it also enhances social development. Before addressing issues pertaining to energy trade, it is crucial to reform the institutional architectures in this region.

There is a unanimous agreement that trade brings mutual gains for every party concerned and thus would be a win-win scenario for South Asia. But, the challenges are multifaceted such as the issue of obsolete infrastructure, security threats and lack of political will. These issues have hampered the process of energy connectivity in the past and will continue to do so until they are duly addressed. A number of participants of the meeting stressed that the governments should stay away from the energy sector, as it will make it too politically sensitive issue and allow the private sectors to lead. The trade in energy must be treated as a business, therefore, the role of private sector should be encouraged in multilateral projects and let profits drive this venture. The lack of interest of the private sector emanates from the various apprehensions about the returns on investment. If private players start investing, then it will be a responsibility of the government to ensure peace and harmony in the region to protect the investment of their stakeholders.

The goal to move towards economic empowerment and multilateralism is vital for long-term development. In energy trade, price and energy security are the two key issues. The governments in South Asia should now welcome the idea of open markets to attract infrastructural investments and ensure security. China has made huge investments and has created the largest energy pipeline. Project of a transmission line to import electricity has already started, posing tough competition to Central Asian states. We should try to resolve the issues through market based approach to match the speed of our neighbouring countries like China. Unlike Europe, there are several unresolved issues, which make integration in the Central and South Asia region difficult. Thus, to begin with, we should focus on areas in which the regional governments have no interest.

Afghanistan can play a pivotal role in the success of regional cooperation in energy. Therefore, Afghanistan needs to take care of prevailing corruption, form a devoted government with defined objectives and strong political will, and implement a transparent mechanism for energy governance.

In addition, there is a need to exploit non-conventional sources of energy to boost trade and investment in South Asia. The trade should be guided by research. We need to identify the issues and come up with effective reforms that are specific to this region. Interests of both the producers and consumers should be taken into account with respect to energy trade. Projects like CASA 1000/TAPI project should not be the immediate goal but the government should ensure ‘ways and means’ to involve businesses in the transportation of energy. A two billion dollar transmission line from upstream countries to South Asia is the major obstacle.

The new governments in Pakistan and India have reassured their increased interest in energy sector. India has had a look-East policy, which now must be complemented with the look-West policy. Western India has surplus energy, which can be exported to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Joint efforts from India and Central Asian states can help reduce energy poverty in these countries.

Looking towards the west, Iran-Pakistan cooperation has a huge potential. In the South Asian markets, every country has a certain role to play. Iran has both natural and fossil energy resources, which await exploitation because of the existing sanctions against it.
Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio

Anam A. Khan

Track II consultations by global experts recommend a series of jointly conducted studies by relevant institutions of India and Pakistan to produce a knowledge base for decisions to be agreed by the two countries. To achieve confident and cooperative decision-making across jurisdictional borders for effective and equitable management of shared water resources Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (AUSAID) designed the Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio (SDIP). SDIP aims to tackle some of the basic development challenges in South Asia region by strengthening trans-boundary cooperation to promote all-encompassing, robust and resilient economic growth. The primary goal of SDIP is to promote water, food and energy security in the basins of three Himalayan rivers namely Ganges, Indus and Brahmaputra.

Along with the trans-boundary issues of sharing and management, water in South Asia faces many challenges. Climate change has also, in turn, deteriorated food security situation in the region. Accelerating growth in South Asia has also led to increase in demand for energy further increasing the imbalance in demand and supply of energy. Inter and intra-regional politics also plays an important role in defining these insecurities of water, food and energy.

Regional cooperation seems to be the only solution to improve the grim situation of depleting resources in South Asia. The benefits from such cooperation will include: economies of scale, resolving trans-boundary trade issues, regional infrastructure and other cross-border issues.

SDIP holds partner organizations from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan, to achieve its goals. The programme will undertake policy research, CSO mapping and outreach, media mapping and outreach, policy advocacy and policy dialogues. Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), a partner from Pakistan on the programme and specialist in policy advocacy will be analyzing policy implications on SDIP thematic areas like food, water and energy along with providing support and specialized local advice on other dimensions.

The first phase of the programme is to expand networks throughout the region by linking itself with relevant strategic partners and conducting policy research on SDIP issues. During phase 2 the consortium will engage in policy advocacy and will disseminate information gathered in the first phase. The last phase will focus on high-level policy dialogues at local, sub-national, national and regional levels to influence change and enhance regional cooperation in South Asia.

Pakistan is a crucial partner in the programme due to its strong presence in one of the three river basins. Indus river originates on the Tibetan Plateau and empties into the Arabian Sea after flowing across northern India, Jammu and Kashmir and the entire length of Pakistan. 47% of the river falls in Pakistan, 39% in India (and Kashmir), 8% in China and 6% in Afghanistan. The Indus River System is the lifeline of Pakistan. The country depends on the Indus, especially for its agriculture which is even today backbone of the economy.

Pakistan and India after numerous debates, conflicts and agreements signed the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) in 1960. The Treaty has been successful solution to the dispute referred to as “the most important water treaty in the world”. It has survived to stay intact for 50 years even though the two countries are agreeably known as hostile neighbors. Unfortunately, recent events have stressed the Treaty. Researchers agree that the Treaty has gaps: there is no provision in the Treaty on how the parties should respond to climate change and its effects. It does not address the issue of water quality or industrial and agricultural pollution, deforestation and environmental flows in the eastern rivers allocated to India. Furthermore, the Treaty does provide information on watershed management, proper management of groundwaters or examination of cumulative effects of projects such as the hydroelectric generation.
What is in the budget for masses?

Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri

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hough the government is taking some bold steps towards documentation of economy, political ambitions and number crunching leave little for ordinary people.

Federal budget 2013-14 was perceived as the one which was prepared by caretakers and technocrats with the consent of the PML-N, mainly to qualify for the IMF’s Extended Fund Facility (EFF). The budget presented last week although is the second for this government, in real terms it is the first for the PML-N. For the last many years, budget speech and finance bill present two different worlds. The speech reflects political ambitions while finance bill is about number crunching, overestimating revenue, understating politically motivated expenses and attempting to reduce the fiscal deficit.

Let us analyze the speech first. The government is taking some bold steps towards documentation of economy. Non-tax compliant persons and non-NTN holders would have to pay the cost of non-compliance in the form of double advance tax on different items; including first and business class air tickets, purchase of immovable property and higher advance tax on interest income and dividends, cash withdrawal, and car registration etc.

Likewise, making NTN a compulsory condition for seeking commercial/industrial electricity and gas connections is a welcome move which (if implemented effectively) would help in documenting the economy. An awareness campaign that adjustable taxes may get adjusted towards final tax liability would also improve the number of tax returns filed.

The government seems to be serious in bringing retail sector in the tax net through dividing the retailers into two tiers. The high end retailers would have an electronic cash register of approved specifications and airfreight subsidy for horticulture produce from Gilgit-Baltistan. For government servants, the budget was about increase in salary, pension and minimum wages whereas for corporate sector it was about getting 1 per cent reduction in their corporate tax.

So what is in the budget for common masses? The things which matter for ordinary persons i.e., fuel prices and electricity prices are no more in the realm of budget. They get revised every now and then, apparently by “autonomous” regulatory bodies OGRA and NEPRA. The reduction in WAPDA/PEPCO subsidy by 34 per cent would mean that electricity tariff would increase to the tune of 15-20 per cent in next fiscal year. Masses would also get affected by indirect taxes which still form 59 per cent of the FBR taxes. These indirect taxes, including customs duties, sales tax and federal excise hit the lower middle and middle income class the worst. The maximum burden of petroleum levy, gas development surcharge and gas infrastructure development cess (38bn in last budget and 145bn in this budget) is to be again borne by the middle income group.

Now let us look at the number crunching. The budget exercise is done to match revenue with the politically motivated expenditures (not the other way around) with a view to meet a specific fiscal deficit target. According to SDPI’s analysis of taxpayers’ directory for 2012-13, about 250 companies paid 1/3rd of total direct taxes, whereas 45 companies paid more than 25 per cent of the total direct taxes. Imagine the fact that 26,600 or 41 per cent of registered companies filed tax return with zero tax. These figures yet again necessitate a major overhaul and restructuring in the FBR as well as in tax collection mechanism.
Last year, the FBR’s tax collection target was reduced by Rs200 billion. It is in this context that 23 per cent increased target over last year’s revised target seems overambitious rather slightly unrealistic. There is excessive reliance on withholding taxes and withholding tax agents (WHTA). However, how much of these WHTA would pass on to the FBR is anybody’s guess. This approach will not result in tax-net broadening.

Under the fiscal prudence approach, the finance minister had done a block allocation of Rs200 billion in the outgoing budget. This allocation was to be released had the FBR achieved its target of collection Rs2475 billion. It is very logical to have such block allocations, curtail your expenditures if there is reduction in your income. However, guess who had to face the brunt of the FBR’s missed target? Correct, development expenditures. Before one wonders that why people whose development matters had to suffer on part of the FBR’s inefficiencies, it is pertinent to note that our current expenditures are so inflexible that there is hardly any cushion for budget cut. Thus, development expenditures always bear the brunt in case of any fiscal shortfall.

Let us assume (and hope) that the FBR achieves its revenue target for the next year, and the government collects Rs3945.5 billion from tax and non-tax revenue, but, as per the 7th NFC Award, 57.5 per cent of the divisible pool or Rs1720 billion would go to provinces, leaving Rs2225 billion with the federal government as net revenue. The federal government would have to take care of current expenditures (Rs3130 billion), foreign loan repayments (Rs333 billion), and development & net lending (Rs806 billion). The huge deficit would get bridged by borrowing (external loans, domestic financing, public debt, and public accounts).

Markup payment makes 38.26 per cent of current expenditures, and if we include foreign loan repayment in these figures, it would turn to 48 per cent of current expenditures. Defence affairs and services make another 20.2 per cent, and adding military pensions to this figure means 25 per cent of current expenditures. Both of these expenses cannot be compromised and are already Rs300 billion more than the net federal revenue. Rest of the current expenditures (subsidies, civil pension, grants and transfers, and running of civil government) and all developmental expenditures are met through borrowing.

The Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) is the main instrument for providing budgetary resources for development projects and programmes. It is the lubricant for development engine, but for last many years it gets slashed to reduce the fiscal deficit. This year the government has approved an overall size of PSDP at Rs1175 billion (federal 525 billion, provinces 650 billion). My major concern is not the allocation. I am more worried about the releases and subsequent spending. Even after downward revision, the PSDP funds for the current fiscal year could neither be released nor spent completely. Rather the spending performance of provinces, who are responsible for social sector delivery, is dismal.

In the first 10 months, both the Punjab and Sindh spent 31 per cent each of their PSDP funds while KP and Balochistan spent 25 per cent each of their PSDP funds. The federal government ends up getting blamed for what is no more its mandate now, i.e., poor quality of social sector development in the province.

To sum up, routine finance bills are based on too many “ifs” and “buts” and this is yet another routine finance bill. I have been analyzing the budgets for over a decade now and cannot see any major departure from the previous budgets rather the budget would have been the same if it were to be presented by a government led by the PPP, the PTI, the MQM, the JI or any other political party.

However, the budget speech of finance minister did contain some out-of-the-box initiatives. One hopes that some of the initiatives announced by him are implemented to bring informal economy in the tax net.

— (Courtesy The News, Islamabad dated 15th June 2014)

Misplaced priorities and Vision 2025

By Haider Abbas

Pakistan’s existing policy frameworks contain a number of exceptional goals and objectives, including an improved quality of education, elimination of all types of disparities and imbalances, and significantly improved enrolment rates. However in current policy structure, Pakistan is away from achieving this vision.

The Vision 2025 document has positioned human resource development at the top of national agenda by capitalizing on existing social capital, strengthening it and improving the human skill base of the population to optimally contribute to and effectively benefit from economic growth.

Unfortunately, like previous budgets, an analysis of current year federal budget reveals how the wellbeing of citizens has been ignored by allocating more than 18 per cent of national budget to defense. Even in today’s world of knowledge based societies our allocation for health and education are pathetically low in the region.

According to the federal budget 2014-15 document, the education and health sectors have once again failed to receive their due share. An amount of Rs74.031 billion has
been allocated to both sectors registering an increase of only 1.5 per cent as compared to the previous year, which pales into insignificance if population growth and inflation hovering around 9 per cent are adjusted.

Of a total amount of Rs74 billion, a paltry sum earmarked for education, only 13.5 per cent goes to the health sector indicating the authorities’ myopic vision of reforming the health sector.

In addition, the financial bill for the year 2014-15 has once again shattered the hopes and dreams of the poor. This bill consists of ambitious development schemes such as metro buses, metro trains, and motorway from Karachi to Lahore. The dilemma of the government is the result of poor planning, inaccurate distribution of funds, for instance, the building of metro buses rather than hospitals and schools.

In the PSDP for 2014-15, major investment is envisaged in energy sector, followed by transport and communications. Out of total 1175 billion, only 12.5 billion has been allocated for the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

While on the other hand, under pillar one of Vision 2025, the government promises that a larger share of the GDP, at least 4pc to education and at least 3pc to health, would have to be earmarked to achieve universal primary education with 100pc net primary enrolment, increase higher education coverage from 7pc to 12pc and increase proportion of population with access to improved sanitation from 38pc to 90pc.

Looking into all these facts, the current resource allocations by the government do not show any political will to prioritize human development to achieve the goals and objectives of Vision 2025. In its current shape, Pakistan is the embodiment of a security state where human development barely attracts attention.

On the whole, the budget is far from ‘poor-friendly’ and presents claims completely divorced from reality. The myth of macro-stabilization and its consequent trickle-down effects have shattered and the lot of the poor has not changed. The misplaced priorities coupled with shotgun approach to allocations will worsen the economic crisis confronting the country in coming years.

At this critical juncture, the government needs to stabilize the economy, rebuild severely eroded credibility, close the fiscal deficit, re-establish confidence in public institutions and improve the investment climate. In parallel with its macroeconomic stabilization programme, the government also needs to develop a comprehensive strategy for structural reforms as a part of Vision 2025.

Pakistan must respond to such challenges effectively, since all nations now aspire to become knowledge economies. This calls for change in mindset incorporating a quest for excellence, so that Pakistan can redefine and transform its institutions and structures of the state, as well as national policies, strategic priorities and long term benchmark within the overarching for Pakistan in 2025.

In order for the visioning process to be successful, the vision needs to be affordable. Indeed, the assumptions we make our population growth, economic growth, and education’s share in various government budgets may butt up against the margins, but if we treat them as realistic assumptions, and adjust our vision over time to the emerging realities, the goals may be entirely achievable.

A review of budgetary allocations for social sector projects in PSDP

By Muhammad Zeshan

The Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) is the basic tool, which determines resources allocated for the development projects. It aims to achieve the macro, meso and micro development targets set by the government. After the budget allocations, the development projects and programmes are started.

For the year 2014-15, the National Economic Council (NEC) has approved Rs1,175 billion (i.e. 4% of GDP) for PSDP, which the government claims is higher by 1.7% compared to 2013-14.

However, the PSDP in various sectors has been reduced significantly. The budget 2014-15 of the commerce division is decreased by 53.2% than the revised budget of 2013-14. In the same way, the budget of industries and production division is decreased by 17.4%, the budget of ports and shipping division is decreased by 59.4%. With this decreased
budgetary allocation, raising the growing infrastructure needs would be quite difficult for these ministries especially for the commerce ministry, which experienced a half-cut in its budget.

Various power plants in Pakistan, including Uch and Mangla, are getting enormous breakdowns. Further, the Lakhra Coal Plant, the only coal based plant in the country, has been disbanded. Similarly, the Thar Coal project is also in the doldrums. Despite having access to the world’s largest sweet water reservoir Himalayas, Pakistan is becoming a water scarce country, and its cultivable area is decreasing.

Most of the water is lost in canals due to seepage, poor transmission, illegal cuts, and theft. The budget of water and power division has been reduced by 19.6% while the budget of WAPDA has been decreased by 16.4%. The reduction in power sector division would make it difficult to raise water and power infrastructure to meet the future targets.

Pakistan’s overall literacy rate is around 37.8%, i.e. 50% male and 24.4% female. The low literacy rate among women doesn’t allow them enter the labour force. In this situation, only 38 million of Pakistan’s total population constitutes its entire labour force. Despite having this lower literacy rate, the government has reduced the budget of Higher Education Commission by 10.8% compared to previous revised budget, while the budget of the science and technological research division has been decreased by 53.9% compared to the previous revised budget.

The decomposed analysis of PSDP reveals that the federal PSDP for 2014-15 is around Rs 525 billion, higher by 23.5% than the revised estimates of 2013-14. In this PSDP, share of Federal Ministries/Divisions is around Rs 296 billion, which is higher by 4% than the revised estimates of 2013-14. The PSDP of corporations is around Rs 175 billion, which is higher by 6.4% than the revised estimates of 2013-14. It allocates Rs 12.5 billion to the Pak Millennium Development Goals and Community Development Programme, Rs 36 billion to the Federal Development Programme/Projects for Provinces and Special Areas, Rs 5 billion for the Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority (ERRA), while the provincial development programme for the year 2014-15 is around Rs 650 billion, which is higher 66.7% higher than the revised estimates of 2013-14. These expenditures would be facilitated through the heavy bank borrowing of Rs 228 billion.

The ongoing military operation in the country has displaced millions of people, who abandoned their homes, properties and lives stock. It becomes more important after the launch of military operation in North Waziristan. However, there is no strategy that how the government is going to address the scary civic effect that lies ahead. The annual budget statement shows no allocation for the Relief, Rehabilitation Reconstruction and Security of IDPs. Further, no money has been allocated for the Prime Minister’s Interest Free Loan Scheme, and for the Citizen Damage Compensation Programme.
Mr Narendra Modi took over the control of world’s largest democracy on May 26. The oath-taking ceremony of the 15th Indian prime minister was attended by almost all the South Asian state leaders, including Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Of course, it was the biggest show in terms of regional get together as well as amid Pakistan-India peace process, which has been breathing under the cold waters since one and a half decades. During his first speech as the new prime minister, which he made extempore in Hindi amid the foreign dignitaries as well as Indian leadership, Narendra Modi, claiming to have been carrying the genes of optimism in his DNA, said: “Disappointment does not just gel with me..... And for traversing a constructive path, it is important and essential to be an optimist.” If Mr Modi remains true to his words, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s participation in the Indian premier’s sworn-in ceremony must be taken as a good omen.

Besides being the icon of Hindu nationalist parties due to his close ideological harmony with the right wing as well as his long-time association with the Hindu nationalist group, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Modi is known for his different political posturing and nurturing of different groups and school of thoughts in and outside India. Business community looks at Modi as a competent, capable and business-friendly manager and leader, who can steer the country’s economic growth in right direction. Minorities, especially Muslims see Modi as a mastermind behind Gujarat riots and killing of thousands of Muslims.

On the global front, Modi is faced with the same fate. Many governments have banned his entry to their respective countries in the backdrop of Gujarat riots. Although, the European Union has lifted the ban, the US was not inclined to give any concession till recently. However, the situation is now changing after the changing political scenario in Afghanistan. That’s why, US President Barak Obama has called Modi and congratulated him on his election as the prime minister of India. On top of that Modi is the only prime minister, who has visited Israel and has es-
tablished deep relations with Israeli political and business communities. Also, a good number of Israeli businessmen are already enjoying the highly supportive environment in Gujarat state. Israel is also pinning high hopes to further strengthen ties with India, the possibility of which has increased after assuming power by Modi and its allies.

In contrary, a number of states see the rise of Modi with different angle, although they are not expressive at this point of time and are observing situation very carefully. Pakistan is one of them. But, at the same time, Pakistan’s case is a little bit different from rest of the world. With a 65-year long history of animosity with its neighbouring India, now Pakistan is more careful and vigilant before taking any position. PML-N leadership wants peaceful and cordial relations with India, as expressed by the prime minister time and again. Despite the fact that an year earlier, Indian prime minister declined the Pakistan government’s invitation to attend the prime minister’s oath-taking ceremony, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif choose the other way.

Before reaching any conclusion on the pretext of future relations between India and Pakistan, we need to analyze the rise of Modi, who is a staunch believer of RSS philosophy. He was at the forefront of the movement that was launched to demolish Babari Masjid and later rewarded as the chief minister of Gujarat. During his tenure as the chief minister, he built up his image as a business friendly leader while keeping up his identity as the staunch Hindu nationalist. However, smartly he managed to highlight himself as a development friendly leader and succeeded to access the central stage while portraying himself as a business-friendly leader. In 2014 general elections, 1,334 big industrialists supported BJP as compared to 418, who supported Congress. In 2012, TATA family wanted Modi to be the premier and Amabnies followed the suit among others. It seems Modi has followed the same path which Hitler adopted to capture the world. Hitler influenced the local business community to invest in his campaign and in turn he will look after the economic interests of national business community. Hitler delivered on this front by expanding his rule from Russia to France, and killed hundreds of thousands of Jews. Similarly, Modi termed Muslims as the root cause of all evils in India, attacked Babari Masjid and facilitated the killing of Muslims in Gujarat.

In this current scenario, Pakistan must devise its foreign policy options on two counts. First Modi’s association with RSS and hardcore Hindu organizations may stir opposition in the country and undermine the peace process, which we had witnessed in 1999 on the occasion of the then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s visit to Lahore. Second, the changing scenario of global power structure, which has been considerably changed after the fall of USSR. In this situation, Pakistani policy makers need to be extremely vigilant, innovative, focused and well-versed with the foreign policy skills and its implementation. A right set of policy tools both at national and international level can help tackle these problems. Nawaz Sharif’s meeting with Modi is a right step in right direction which delivers a message to the world that Pakistan is a peace-loving and development-oriented country. Now, the ball is in the court of Modi government what commitment it shows towards the peace process.

End of Game or New Social Agreement …the choice is ours

A state with weak internal situation and external pressures require dedicated efforts and planning from its leaders. The tide might be high but there are still opportunities that can help it go a long way at national, regional and global level

By Mone Saleem

For the first time in the history of Pakistan, media is openly divided on the issue of an independent role of security forces. The split mainly occurred after an attack on Geo TV anchor Hamid Mir in Karachi on April 19. The divide from within is being analyzed as an issue of serious concern that might shake the upper corridors of power. Media, which was considered to be an independent opinion maker and a watchdog for the accountability of government functioning, is now not only created a rift in the public opinion but also itself facing the question of misuse of its role and function. However, the war is going on which in fact is based on certain economic connotations of some interest groups within the media organizations. The rift is posing yet another challenge to the notion of coexistence in the society which is already threatened by intolerance for many ethnic and religious identities.

Apart from this, the country’s socio-economic fabric is weakening as it is threatened by the wide spread internal insecurities such as terrorism, sectarian and ethnic violence, kidnapping for ransom, rampant corruption, extortion (Bhatta mafia), land mafia, etc. According to estimates, terrorism alone has cost the country over US $100 billion along with over 50,000 people who have been killed in the terrorist attacks.

Karachi, the economic hub of the country, has been bleeding since a long due to target killings, murders,
bomb blasts, etc. All sorts of mafias prevail there that have plagued the city. Industrialist and business communities have made their way out of the country. The whole country from Khyber to Karachi is facing an anarchy like situation where seems the writ of government nowhere. Such a situation is deepening the existing dividing lines and may also become a breeding ground for many insurgencies backed by the new emerging players in the region to get benefit out of it.

Of course uncertainty leads to vulnerability as the present state of state institutions can no longer prevail ultimately leading to an absurd destiny.

Equipped with atomic power and burdened with $63 billion loans, Pakistan is considered a failing state in the world political arena. In order for Pakistan to get back on track, there is a need to understand the underlying core reasons that have caused the unrest and insecurity in the country.

These issues did not come about today rather they have their roots in our history. The only difference is that the latent has become visible. In the 80s, the cold war spread a wave of religious extremism, which was used to counter the then USSR. Post-cold war era left fundamental lacuna in the socio-economic fabric. It was introduced with the culture of sectarian violence, and religious extremism that culminated into Talibanization in 2001. Moreover, illegal economy based on the sale of arms and drugs was strengthened. The Mehsud group had declared in May 2014 that Taliban are involved in criminal activities, including bank robberies, extortion, abduction, etc. The most unfortunate part of this episode was that the state was helpless and seemed reluctant to take any action against terrorists till recently. People were becoming more and more insecure and threatened day by day.

In Pakistan, the security is viewed from the lenses of military power than the human needs. The socio-economic deprivations have caused grievances among different groups such as religious, ethnic, have-nots, etc. The accumulation of wealth in few hands has led to hegemony not only over the economic resources but also in the policy corridors. The power structure has been disrupted by a few secondary actors, who have started exploiting the aggrieved for their own interest such as religious groups, ethnic identities and territorial demarcations. These groups acquired power through propaganda and adopted violent means to achieve their targets. Many believe that sectarian violence and terrorism have also some links to these deprivations.

A state with weak internal situation and external pressures require dedicated efforts and planning from its leaders. The tide might be high but there are still opportunities that can help it go a long way at national, regional and global level. First and foremost the leadership has to define the country’s security and place people in the centre of it. Following reforms need to be enforced immediately if we want to save the country from a regulated chaos.

- Education system needs to exclude narratives that divide the nation and promote hatred on religious, ethnic and language. Moreover, education needs to be made fundamental right of all citizens and means to fulfill this right should be provided to the masses.
- An inclusive growth and development policy and strong implementation strategy should be introduced at all levels
- Non-violent means through speedy justice should be provided to the masses
- A complete overhaul of bureaucracy while curtail their powers and holding them accountable before common masses is the need of hour.

Fundamental to achieve the above would be a new social agreement among the relevant stakeholders. This agreement should be based on the principles of equity and human rights and discourage discrimination of any sorts. The inability to have the social agreement can lead towards failure. Now is the time to make a choice between the new social agreement or end of game.

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References:

Research communication (RC) is one of the essential parts of research—as the communication aspect works at all stages of the research process. RC functions best with scientific research that encompasses both a traditional focus on exploring, building, and disseminating the knowledge content in the academic domains, and an innovative and broader focus on maximizing the conditions for the application of research for progressive and improved outcomes. In addition, it puts particular focus on ensuring the accessibility of research findings and results by communicating and disseminating in diverse ways varying according to the different categories of researchers and users. The diversity in the means of communication as per the users, researchers, and target audience maximizes and enhances the impact of research outcomes.

Last month SDPI team attended a communications workshop in Dhaka, Bangladesh, that was arranged for three South Asian think tanks they included Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Institute of Governance Studies (IGS), and Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI). During the whole training workshop, the participants explored new ways of thinking about think tank research communications, different channels and tools available to them, how to organize communication teams and related issues.

The training workshop provided a deep and different perspective of the whole circle of RC. Along with many other constructive lessons what we got to understand was that RC occurs in the existing context of rapidly developing capacity, accessibility, convenience, and integration of information and communication technology (ICT). ICT provides academic institutions and thinks tanks with the means and tools to reach out to multiple audiences. RC in itself is a whole research cycle and methodology using an iterative, well-designed, and properly managed process for incorporating multi-stakeholders’ needs and demands. Moreover, the research cycle of RC helps in producing strategies to incorporate communication, monitoring and evaluation, and dissemination process into research management.

This report covers the ideas that have emerged from the training workshop along with learning experience and suggestions. Nothing gained from overcrowding is at the top of my list of learned lessons. Overcrowding whether in the form of publications, news packages, blogs, newsletters, or news bulletins always tend to confuse the audience. So instead of going for two or three separate news bulletins go for one comprehensive news bulletin—this again depends on the research scope of think tanks. Similarly, between a blog and an op-ed chose one as it not only saves time but also has a greater impact.

Communication tools used by think tanks must be flexible but not entirely random and should avoid isolation. An isolated tool (a paper published on its own) is as good as nothing. Likewise, never organize an event that is not filmed or recorded.

For RC, the thinks tanks should establish a set of rules as it makes it possible to test new tools. Within those sets it would become easy for the think tanks to make changes like introducing and removing tools just to check what their effects would be. For instance, use EventBrite to organize an event just to see if it makes a difference; or try to contact journalists via Twitter instead of email and see if more shows up.

Digital Strategy can support communication in think tanks. It refers to delivery of electronic information using
internet and computer technology. Furthermore, the think tanks should start exploring how the new digital tools can help them for research purposes. Similarly, contract-driven think tanks may first consider improving project management by digital tools. Think tanks must look into the digital tool of communication for the purpose of advocacy and outreach.

They should consider developing indicators for measuring the impact of the communication tools—this would be helpful in accessing the activities and their impact. For instance, for Monday seminar at SDPI, the indicators may include: number of participants, characteristics of the participants (number/percentage of students, policymakers, opinion leaders, etc), relevance of the topic to the audience present, count number on the websites, coverage in the mainstream media (e.g. number of newspapers, TV channels, etc).

With all the technological advancement, the use of innovative tools and channels to reach new audiences can enhance the impact of research outcomes of think tanks. Also, there should be emphasis on the production of video-case studies, documentaries, news packages, etc because if a picture is worth thousand words then a video is worth a million.

Think tanks should use the technology of vines—a vine is a short video sharing service for digital communication. The most promising use of vines for think tanks could be in the form of datavines, i.e. short video based data visualization.

Good networks and contacts with different stakeholders should be established as they allow the think tanks to work with others, reach out to new audiences, and possibly access new resources. In the same way, using barcodes, ISSN numbers and QR codes can help professionals and readers find and track all publications such as papers, books, reports, etc.

There should be a dedicated communications team within the organization, which make it possible for at least one person to keep them focus on each channel. Also, maintain good internal relationships (within the communications team as well as with other unit heads and senior management) – is important as the communications team needs the support from other units so as to work as one.

Additionally, for managing the media it is not enough to send an invite. Journalists need to be managed, invited with sufficient time, called and reminded by email and text before the event. Keeping follow up for the said matter is also important.

Recently a lot of weight is given to live-streaming; however, it is not enough. Alongside live-streaming think tanks need to offer moderation, comments, encouragement for others to participate online, etc. It takes time to build an online audience but it can be helpful to capture people’s attention (so that they may go back to the video after the event) or reach foreign audiences –or audiences far from the events.

As a whole, the workshop was an excellent opportunity both in terms of learning new communication tools and synchronizing them for effective outcome as communication holds a center stage in all the activities performed by SDPI which includes seminars, trainings, dialogues, talk shows, consultative meetings, BBRM, conferences, public events, discussions, etc.
Muhammad Asim, a 9-year-old schoolboy, used to wake up early in the morning and rush to get ready for his school located in village 81 W.B, Vehari district. For him, the Government Boys Primary School was not only a place where he would study but also an institution where he could learn the art of reading and writing. According to his teachers, he was a hardworking and brilliant student. He loved his school because it had a huge playground where he could play with his classmates. The only thing, which bothered Asim, his classmates and schoolteachers was the absence of a boundary wall of the school. It created a sense of insecurity among them. Moreover, only two classrooms for 1-5 grades was also a matter of concern for them. They often talked about the lack of facilities in the school. The head of school had lodged several requests with the authorities for the construction of the boundary wall but no one listened to their complaints. Time was going on.

In 2013, SDPI in collaboration with Department for International Development (DFID) launched a project under Ilm Ideas in Vehari district to address the issue of low enrollments and dropouts through participatory school governance. Initially, SDPI formed accountability committees in some select areas to implement the project. The members of the committees included Nambardars, political workers, local leaders and social activists. Bashir Bhatti, the Nambardar and ex-chairman of Union Council, was also the member of a committee. After 2013 general election, Mr Bhatti called on PML-N MNA from Vehari, Tehmina Daultana, and asked her to help provide finances for the construction of boundary wall. The request was entertained and a 1236-feet long boundary wall at a cost of Rs 1.8 million was completed within two months. After summer vacations when students returned to their school, they were surprised to see that their school boundary wall was under construction. They were all happy on this new development.

The routine life in the village was going uninterrupted, but Master Ghafoor was worried because Asim was absent from the school since the summer vacations. Belonging to a poor family, Asim was the only one among his four sisters and seven brothers, who had joined the school. His father, Muhammad Hanif, and brothers sold Islamic books in the buses. Master Ghafoor visited Muhammad Hanif to know as to why Asim was not coming to the school. Muhammad Hanif told him that Asim was suffering from typhoid and now he could no more afford to send him to the school. Master Ghafoor tried to convince Mr Hanif telling him the importance of education, but in vain.

In fact, Asim’s family was unable to afford the expenditures of his education and wanted him to work along with his father and brothers to increase the income. All this saddened Master Ghafoor. He, however, never gave in and highlighted the issue before the accountability committee. Mr Bhatti took the initiative to convince Asim’s father. One evening Master Ghafoor along with school head, Nambardar, and SDPI Social Mobilizer visited Asim’s father and succeeded to convince the latter that it is the only education that can alleviate poverty otherwise poverty travels through the generations.

Asim got re-enrolled with the efforts of schoolteachers and accountability committee. He was so excited on this rejoining and reunion with his old friends. Within a short span of time, he managed to cover all the previous lessons with his untiring efforts, and appeared in the annual examinations. Luckily, he got first position with 70 per cent marks. His father was so proud when his son received the award in front of all the villagers. He realized that he was wrong. All this changed the old mindset of Mr Hanif. The timely action of Master Ghafoor saved the destiny of a family. Now younger son and daughter of Mr Hanif have been enrolled in the public school.
SDPI’s 17th Sustainable Development Conference (SDC) titled ‘Pathways to Sustainable Development’ will be held from 9—11 December 2014 in Islamabad, Pakistan.

About the overarching theme

At the previous Sustainable Development Conference in 2013, scholars, researchers, parliamentarians, practitioners, professionals and experts debated over the missed opportunities and lost chances; of being off track; of not achieving the goals; and not investing in the present to nurture a positive future for the generations to come. They debated whether the regional governments were able to deliver what they had promised; whether they were able to bring about a long lasting peace within the countries and between borders; and were they able to improve upon the poverty score, health, education, and, human rights. The proactive role of civil society and media was appreciated which keeps on reminding us of promises made and goals to be achieved.

The thrust of the policy recommendation that came out of the SDC in 2013 was that South Asian countries need urgent reforms and a meaningful role by the civil society to look at their own declaration and seek solutions. Stress was made on reciprocity and maturity to resolve all outstanding issues among South Asian neighbours, especially between India and Pakistan. It was further emphasized that gender balance is necessary to achieve sustainable development and inclusive growth in South Asia.

Building on from where we left off last year, we need to see the role of emerging leadership. At the seventeenth SDC, we would like to see what the changing and developing political scenario will bring to the region.

Leadership change in China (March 2013), Pakistan (May 2013), Iran (December 2013), Bangladesh (January 2014), India (May 2014), and Afghanistan (very soon) would prove to be significant in shaping the pathways to sustainable development in this region. What posture does this new leadership adopt, and how will it affect development outcomes in the region, has to be predicted. We also need to review how the developed world would be engaging with the new governments and how this would in turn shape development in South Asia.

The region needs political and executive leadership that has a commitment to strategize for peace and human security and raise tangible safeguards for the political economy of the region while engaging with the primary stakeholders, the people. Year 2014 also marks the completion of 20 years of the concept of ‘human security’. Dr Mahbub-ul Haq, the former finance minister of Pakistan, had formally conceptualized the approach in UNDP’s Human Development Report 1994. With the MDGs deadlines fast approaching in 2015, the United Nations Secretary General recommended human security to be used as an overarching theme in Post 2015 Development Framework (January 2014). It is important to critically evaluate the implications of this recommendation.

Some of the questions that may be debated during the Seventeenth SDC include but are not limited to:

- How can different stakeholders, especially the governments, civil society and private sector, engage differently to define new pathways to sustainable development?
- Can the new governments follow the pathways to sustainable development and bring about a positive change?
- Will the emerging leadership improve mutual trust and confidence within South Asia?
- Will they be able to take on the daunting challenges and deliver where our previous governments failed to do so?
- How external factors will support / bar them from delivering on their mandates?
- Will there be sustainable economic growth; and, sharing of energy resources across the region/s? How will the new leadership address the environmental challenges; and, ensure food security?
- Will there be good governance, long lasting peace, growth and development?
- Will the nation states be in a position to address issues pertaining to terrorism and insecurity; human rights; speedy justice; threats of nuclear weapons; ecological disasters; negative impact of climate change; etc.?
- How will the emerging leadership address challenges pertaining to gender inequality and rights of the marginalised?
- Can human security be a panacea to our development woes?
- Will this region rise up to be a force to reckon with?
- And finally, are we, the broader civil society, policy think tanks and academicians ready to be part of the solution?

In this conference, researchers, academicians, scientists, policy makers, legislators and experts from different fields will be able to recommend policy interventions, share best practices, and present workable solutions to the emerging
challenges discussed above; and, under the sub-themes of the panels. The focus is South Asia and its neighbouring regions, but we welcome contributions from other regions, highlighting the success and/or failure stories, which may serve as lessons learnt for South Asian countries. Within the above overarching theme, a number of panels based on sub-themes will be organized.

Conference format
There will be two to three keynote plenary sessions in which prominent keynote speakers will be invited to address significant areas as highlighted in the overarching theme. The plenary each day will be followed by concurrent sessions / panels on sub-themes. The plenary will last for one hour and 30 minutes while the duration of each panel will be two hours with three to five presentations.

Dates to remember
Submission of abstracts: 15 August 2014
Submission of documents by Indian and Bangladeshi passport holders: 1 September 2014
Submission of Conference papers: 3 November 2014

Call for abstracts
Under the overarching theme, a number of panels based on sub-themes will be organized. Panel write-ups will be uploaded on the Conference website. Speakers are requested to submit their abstracts matching the panel sub-theme. For details of the panels, authors’ guidelines, submission deadlines, etc. please continue to visit our website: www.sdpi.org

All abstracts will go through a software review for originality and if cleared will be reviewed by an editorial committee. Only those speakers with short-listed abstracts will be informed and will be requested to submit their papers by the deadline.

Panels for the forthcoming SDPI’s Seventeenth Sustainable Development Conference will revolve around the following themes: climate change, environment, human rights, economic growth, trade, education, energy, minority rights, governance and more. For updates you may visit our website www.sdpi.org/sdc.php.

About the past SDCs: SDPI has organised sixteen Sustainable Development Conferences (SDCs) since the inception of the Institute in 1992. It is a flagship event of the Institute that not only provides a forum for SDPI’s own research but also invites other researchers and academics from the region to share their work and engage in dialogue with fellow panellists and the audience. The SDC series is also a prime conference in South Asia with a major focus on this region. In fact, it sets the tone and discourse for sustainable development in South Asia.

In the past SDCs, speakers have been invited from different regions and not just from South Asia. Some of the countries besides those in South Asia that have been represented include Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, China, Germany, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Iran, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Oman, Philippines, Palestine, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the UAE, UK and the USA.

Over the years, the conference series has grown and expanded in terms of participation from the audience. SDPI’s Sixteenth SDC showcased 27 panels and two plenary sessions: opening and closing. In these sessions, 161 panelists participated from Afghanistan, Australia (via Skype), Bangladesh, Canada, Ecuador, Finland, Germany, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand (via Skype), UK and the US. Of the 161 participants, 122 were speakers, 56 special commentators, chairpersons and guests of honour.

While six months are spent in organising the conference itself, another six months following the conference are spent in the publication process of the peer reviewed and edited anthology based on the papers presented. The papers go through extensive software and peer review; revisions are made by authors where necessary; and, once approved by the referee, an edited manuscript is prepared and sent to a publisher. The anthology is then launched at the succeeding conference. The synopsis of the anthologies can be viewed at SDPI’s homepage: www.sdpi.org. This year, our anthology titled “Creating Momentum: Today is Tomorrow” will be launched at the occasion of the Seventeenth Sustainable Development Conference in December 2014.

For further details, please contact the SDC Unit at SDPI: Ms Uzma T. Haroon, Senior Coordinator (uzma@sdpi.org) Ms Imrana Niazi, Coordinator (imrana@sdpi.org)

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Speaking on the occasion, SDPI Executive Director Dr Abid Qayyum Suleri appreciated the work carried out on mercury issue. He assured the government of SDPI’s fullest co-operation and support in phasing out mercury use to protect the public health, especially that of children. Mohammed Mobashir, SDPI presented a brief on the World Environment Day.

In the first activity, Dr Mehmood A. Khwaja, SDPI’s Senior Advisor Chemicals & SID, presented the report that aims to improve, evaluate and revise the syllabus content in Dental Teaching Institutions in Pakistan with regard to mercury amalgam. He said that lack of awareness and inappropriate knowledge to the practitioners resulted in increase in mercury vapors in the air. Moreover, it has been observed that many dental professionals do not use preventive measures, he said, and suggested a proper mechanism of mercury waste management. Referring to the survey conducted for the study, Sadaf Nawaz, the co-presenter of study, said that 98% respondents wanted revision in curriculum related to use of mercury. Anusha Shirazi suggested involving Higher Education Commission (HEC) in review and revision of the curriculum offered at dental teaching institutions in the country.

Asif Shujah Khan, the former director-general of Pakistan Environment Protection Agency, said that both the political and bureaucratic systems should be involved to overcome mercury dispersion. He suggested that SDPI should take a step forward and launch a national level mercury reduction campaign in collaboration with the government. He also emphasized that Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) must be carried out before the start of any project rather than after it.

In the second activity of skits competition, PAEC Model College (Nilore) won the first prize, Roots International School (Westridge Branch) got the second prize and Dar-e-Arqam (Alipur Farash) stood third amongst all. The award for the distinguished performances went to Islamabad College of Arts & Science, Out of School Children School, and Kids City High School (Kahuta). Mashood Ahmad Mirza, Joint Secretary/DG, Ministry of Information and National Heritage, who was the chief guest of the competition, said it...
His Excellency,
Mian Mohammad Nawaz Sharif,
Prime Minister of Pakistan,
The Prime Minister Secretariat,
Islamabad, Pakistan

Your Excellency,
Subject: Petition – Mercury Specific Legislation to Safeguard Public Health and Protection of Environment

Greetings from Sustainable Development Policy Institute!
The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) has been working to phase out the use of mercury from Pakistan. Mercury is a toxic and hazardous pollutant and a persistent threat to human health as well as environment. Most recently, 140 countries signed an agreement in Geneva to reduce mercury use and control its emission and release by the end of 2020. In this regard, SDPI conducted a study, which indicates the level of mercury at selected sites is 8-20 times higher than the permissible limits. “In the light of above study, SDPI has submitted a list of first 1,000 signatories supporting the petition against mercury to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif urging him to consider legislation against mercury poisoning across the country,” he added.

*Full Text of Petition to PM with 1000 signatures is given below.

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Prime Minister of Pakistan,
The Prime Minister Secretariat,
Islamabad, Pakistan

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Sincerely Yours,
One thousand (1000) signatories
C/o Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

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