

The Military Regime and Pakistan's Political And Administrative System: The Performance of Musharraf Regime in the First Year

Dr. Sohail Mahmood

As the Musharraf regime completes its first year in office, it faces a serious challenge on several fronts. Today, Pakistan's political and administrative system is faced with grave systemic failures and structural faults. Since these faults remained prevalent for too long, the political and administrative systems have seriously malfunctioned as a result. The Musharraf regime inherited a very bad political and economic situation. The past eleven years of democracy (1988-1999) had certainly failed to deliver. Obviously, the PML and PPP rulers were responsible for the failure. That much was certain and beyond any public disagreement. Personal failure was real and tragic, to say the least. Nevertheless, the political system had to be blamed as much as the rulers themselves. No doubt, there was great failure in the governance style of Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto. They both had developed paranoid personalities. Mediocrity, sycophancy, mismanagement had wrecked havoc with the administrative machinery of the state. There was complete confusion in the ranks of the top leaderships. Incompetence, sheer callousness, and reckless attitude of the federal ministers, and petty jealousy in the cabinet ranks had reduced the whole exercise of collective responsibility to a farce. Bickering over petty matters was the rule of the day. There was a lack of direction on the part of the two prime ministers. Both Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto had turned into egomaniacs. They lived in a world of self-delusion. The scene at the highest level became comic, if not tragic. Cronies were awash with praise at their slightest "achievement". More and more state efforts were being made under their names. We had the Prime Ministers run a relentless election campaign from day one. It seemed absurd and uncalled for. However, there is more to the story than just that. The

people of Pakistan had chosen them as our leaders and should therefore share the blame for their failures. It is a universal maxim that you get the leadership you deserve. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also taught this.

General Musharraf claims that he is "completely committed" to the timetables for elections in 2002 given to him by the Supreme Court of Pakistan and that he "cannot visualize staying on beyond that deadline".¹ He has also talked about the need of a "checks and balance" on any future prime minister to prevent him or her from abusing power. The quality of politicians needs to be improved, as they had been a "dismal failure", says General Musharraf.² Pakistan has in the last eleven or twelve years "gone down in all important areas"; the economy had taken a nose dive, and all institutions were in "total disarray" and had been "politicized and corrupted", according to General Musharraf.³ The military regime claims that it is desperately trying to turn around the country. It says that it is on the right track. Given its makeup, reforming the political, economic, and bureaucratic systems is a daunting task indeed. Some progress seems to have been made. After a year of rule, the regime has now consolidated itself. Although losing popularity, it faces no sizeable political resistance yet. But it does not retain the massive public support of the early days of the coup. Apparently, the peak of its popularity has ended. This was expected though. What are the lessons learnt from Pakistan's not-so-glorious history? More importantly, what needs to be done in Pakistan now and how? Lesson number one is to carefully put in place the political system requirements. Only then can the military returns to the barracks. It simply cannot leave the matter to be completed later by the politicians. According to popular perceptions, the military regime alone can do a few things. Some people have argued that General Musharraf should stick to some sort of minimalist agenda and do only what is most essential.

¹ *Pakistan Observer*, July 28, 2000.

² *Ibid.*

Others counter argued that the restriction is based on a false premise as it is void of true comprehension of the situation. The General is required to do whatever is necessary and wherever, without any restrictions or limits imposed on him, because to do so is not wise. We need bold leadership to turn around the country. Maybe, General Musharraf can do it. The nation hopes for the best. The most crucial areas for reform in the political system of Pakistan are:

I. A Checks-and –Balance System:

A checks-and-balance system is badly required to stop future abuse of power. In addition, the political system must be put under a strong foundation. Today, in Pakistan we have a presidential system. That much is nice. A presidential system is more suited for our purposes than a Westminster parliamentary type. Our Islamic legacy points out to a powerful single office of the Emir or Sultan. There is no need of a fragmentation of power at the highest level as is the case in a parliamentary system. We have here both a premier and president, which is unnecessary. In a parliamentary system, a prime minister can become a "dictator". Many premiers have been accused of having dictatorial tendencies, such as Margaret Thatcher and Indira Gandhi. The only difference between a dictator and a strong leader is the ideological perspective of the person making the evaluation. Opponents paradoxically perceive what supporters see as "strong leadership" as "dictatorship". Simply meaning that one might agree or disagree with the accusation of dictatorship on the grounds of his own ideological moorings. If he is with the prime minister, then he will look up to him as a strong leader. On the other hand, if he opposes him, for whatever reasons, then he will think of the person as a dictator. The point is that it all depends on individual preferences and that the notion of "dictatorship" is relative. Only a strong presidential system with a built-in system to check abuse of executive power can possibly work in Pakistan. We must improve quality of the Cabinet. A move towards a permanent presidential system will take care of the mediocrity problem in the Cabinet. Personal failure of ruling

MNAs has hurt us the most. Very few of them were capable to handle affairs of state. Yet, they filled the ranks of the Cabinet. This was done at the cost of the nation. In a presidential system, we can scout for the best talent available. That is a necessary condition for the revival of democracy.

The military regime needs to revamp the Parliament. This is very essential for the future working of the political system. Strengthen the Parliament for better future performance. Require that the Senate be popularly elected. End Presidential Ordinances and require that all laws, even if of an immediate nature, be passed by the parliament. Provide full media coverage for the proceedings of the parliament to educate the citizens. Strengthen the committee system, especially the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). Have a minimum education requirement for MNAs and Senators. Get rid of the Thirteenth Amendment, which was meant to stifle dissent within the ranks of the ruling party. Pakistanis have suffered from the results of this heavy handiness on the part of Nawaz Sharif. The people should not let it happen again. Let people in parliament speak their mind. After all, the people elected them for that very purpose.

II. Revamp the Political Party System

We badly need strong political parties that can deliver what they promise. Currently, it is well outright beyond the capability of an individual to deliver results. He or she cannot even comprehend the complexity of the age, let alone find appropriate solutions. Therefore, teamwork is a necessity. Groupthink can possibly work. A single individual just cannot. Pakistan has a weak political party system. It has been argued that political parties were weak simply because they were never given a chance to take roots in Pakistani political soil. Pakistan had been ruled by the military for nearly half of its history. There were two significantly long spells of military rule - General Ayub Khan (58-69) and General Zia's rule (77-88). Both are commonly considered as failures. General Musharraf current military rule had interrupted the growth of the system yet

once again. There is some weight in the argument. The counter-argument is that the military intervened only when the country was threatened from within and that the Army was a reluctant ruler of Pakistan. It was true this time also with General Musharraf seizing power in October 1999. Nevertheless, the military has cast a long shadow on the political party system in Pakistan. Most political parties owe their existence to the Army's Intelligence services. Such is the power of the Army that its support is widely thought to be indispensable for the establishment and continuation of political parties in the country. An underlying authoritarian culture in Pakistan makes this significant for politics. In other words, the democratic institutions, of which the political parties are one significant element, have never established themselves as they have done elsewhere, say India. Political parties, with very few exceptions, are undemocratic establishments with personalistic politics being the norm. Leadership is not chosen in democratic fashion nor is internal democracy practiced in any significant manner. There is mere lip service to democracy. Once in power they acted with authoritarian impulses and weakening internal democracy even further. Moreover, patronage politics and massive corruption in party ranks has eroded popular faith in the party system itself. Most seriously, parties in power have failed to deliver according to the expectations of the people, including their own ranks. Disenchantment with the two parties ruling Pakistan for more than a decade - the PPP and PML - was an all time high. Politics itself had been disreputed by the scandals of the main political parties. Popular perceptions about politicians as such were negative, at least more so than earlier. People felt that things had grown from bad to worse in the last period of civilian rule from 1988 (after Zia's death) to 1999 (when General Musharraf took power in October). Thus, politicians had political parties generally do not command the respect they might otherwise have commanded, in circumstances that were more positive.

General Musharraf has decided not to allow participation of political parties in the forthcoming local government elections. This is a mistake. Political parties are crucial to the whole exercise

of building true democracy through a "bottom-up" strategy. They cannot and should not be ignored. Political parties are useful mechanisms for the practical conduct of democracy. They fulfill essential functions to promote democracy in the nation. They recruit; mobilize public opinion for their cause. Parties educate public opinion and provide venues for its systematic orchestration. Most importantly, political parties provide platforms where serious discussion about political matters takes place and a consensus policy arrived at. One of the primary reasons for the failure of the democratic experiment in Pakistan can be attributed to the failure of its political parties. We need to rectify this shortcoming. What better place to begin than the Local Government. Political parties have a vital function in democratic governance. A political party is simply an aggregate of groups holding similar views that aspire to gain power over the state machinery to implement their priorities. They offer the public clear choices in the elections and are accountable to it. Upon winning elections, political parties form governments to implement their manifestos. Political parties offer the public with the means to participate in the political process. They serve as channels of communication between the people and government leadership. Political parties assist in recruitment of candidates for elections and canvass for them.⁴ Different parties can have different priorities but they have one thing in common: the appreciation of "politics as the art of the possible". Parties help to select candidates for elections, campaign for them, and provide winners with the support necessary to bring in tangible reform. Parties also help recruit members, articulate a program, and try to propagate it throughout the country. Thus, party politics is extremely important for a healthy democracy. Most importantly, local politics is the platform for entry on the higher levels. Future party leadership is nurtured at the local level. All strong political parties sponsor or have adjunct thinktanks to do research and provide like-minded intellectuals some space to use their abilities. The above account is theory only. Reality in countries like Pakistan

⁴ Phil Cocker, *Essential Topics in Modern British Politics and Government* (London: Tudor, 1994), 73-73.

is much different, however. The tragedy in the country is that its political parties are not even close to this requirement. Only the Jamaat-i-Islami has adopted this model somewhat. For a host of reasons, which need not detain us here, the Jamaat is not about to capture power in the country any time soon. We are therefore more concerned with the major parties, including but not limited to PML and PPP, have yet to move in this direction. No wonder they are ill prepared to implement their agenda. The required personnel are simply not there for the optimum use by the party. Hence the failure. Lesson number two is that only strong political parties can possibly deliver. By their very nature, political parties are tedious to build. The sooner the leadership begins the better for the country. Strong political parties are to be seen as essential institutions in any modern democracy. Next time around, let such parties compete against each other in a more sophisticated manner. The question is that can Pakistan's government afford to wait until they are built and then call for general elections. Obviously, building strong political leadership and political parties will take years not months. Then, what is to be done? Many feel that the Musharraf regime must do its best in the time allocated to it and pull out. Meaning that it should hold elections as planned – local in December 2000-May 2001 and provincial and national by 2002- in an impartial, fair and honest way and depart the political scene. Given its structure and makeup, the military is not suited for politics and can at best act as an interregnum or an interlude of sorts. The military regime's current disdain of political parties is largely unwarranted. This reflects the Musharraf regime's lack of comprehension of Pakistan's complexity. The argument that the party structures need to be reformed before allowing them re-entry into the political arena is not reasonable. Pakistan needs strong political parties and therefore their immediate & effective functioning is in the national interest. Since parties are by definition creatures seeking political office, their denial of adequate opportunity is tantamount of shunning them. Earlier experiments of building democracy undertaken by General Ayub and General Zia type were failures. Pakistan cannot afford to go on that road again. Remember conflict in politics is inherent. The

question is whether ideological conflict waged by political parties is any worse than conflict based on other grounds like ethnicity & faith. The critics of the regime warn that local government elections conducted on non-political basis will further fan the worst forms of ethnic and *biradari* conflicts in the country. Pakistan cannot afford such a situation from building up. Therefore, it would be more prudent to allow political parties to participate in the coming elections. The Musharraf regime must ensure that the Islamic Republic's Constitution, specifically Articles 62 & 63, are enforced in its true spirit. Enforcement of these provisions shall eliminate the corrupt from seeking political office. Nothing more is needed and the military regime should not second-guess the choice of the people of Pakistan. Democratic governance demands this. A detailed analysis of political parties and their role in building democracy is beyond the scope of this report.

The Musharraf regime should enforce democratic norms in all political parties. In fact, very few political parties are democratic internally. When there is no meaningful practice inside the parties, then how can the people expect them to behave in democratic fashion once in power? They should be required by law to practice what they preach. At the minimum, the military regime must forbid parties that do not practice what they preach. These must be suspect and therefore shunned. That is also an Islamic dictum. The irony is that all the major political parties in the country, PPP and PML included, are bereft of internal democracy. The contradiction in what they say and do is too apparent. Hence, the failure to deliver any meaningful democracy. It should be required that political parties practice democratic values in their operation. The party membership should annually elect the party leadership in a fair and transparent manner. The example of Quaid-i-Azam is before the people. He being a true democrat insisted in contesting the post of president of the Muslim League as per constitutional requirements of the party. This was even when the nation had reposed in his person their complete and unflinching loyalty and support. To him these internal elections were the essence of democratic behavior. Pakistan must today emulate his examples.

Building of disciplined party machines to build strong parties and thereby build strong institutions for the nation, is imperative. The Musharraf regime must guide the political parties to build within them strong democratic norms and values. Only then can they become the vehicles of the required transformation towards "true" democracy. It should allow only those parties to contest the general elections to be held in 2002. It be understood clearly that strong vibrant political operates are crucial to putting the democratic experiment back on track. Again, the sooner Pakistan begins the better for it.

The Current Party System

The two-party system established by the PML and PPP, which lasted for over a decade has been largely discredited. This explains the public support of the new military regime. The two-party system is now in a shambles. Benazir had been out of the country for several years and Nawaz Sharif behind bars since October 1999. The exile or the incarceration of the leadership had demoralized the parties and decapitated their ranks. The PML and PPP chapter seemed to be over. The two other parties that had counted in the last democratic period were the MQM and ANP. Both have suffered politically for various reasons. The heyday of ethnic politics in Pakistan also seems to be over. It seems that a new chapter is opening in the country's history. The Musharraf regime claims that it will promote a new style of politics in the country. It envisions a clean government and political system. The political parties most likely to fill the vacuum of the decapitated PML and PPP ranks, and thereby improve their own fortunes in the near future, are:

- i. Jamaat-i-Islami.
- ii. Millat Party
- iii. Tehreek-i-Insaaf
- iv. Pakistan Awami Tehreek
- v. Tehrik Jafria Pakistan
- vi. Jamiat Ulama e Islami

i. Jamaat-e-Islami

The Jamaat-e-Islami is the biggest Islamic party in the country. In addition, it is perhaps the best organized and most disciplined political party in the country. Maududi founded it in 1942 in Punjab. The party had displayed street power on more than one occasion. It had a strong, relatively speaking, presence in the urban areas of Pakistan. The party had never had much success in electoral politics and was not expected to capture more than a few parliamentary seats in future elections. However, it had disproportionate political weight than its past electoral success would suggest.

This can be explained by the fact that the party sees itself as more of an Islamic movement with a global agenda than a political party in Pakistan. Its network has now spread to North America (ICNA in the USA and Canada) and Britain (Islamic foundations). The party has a thinktank - the Policy Institute in Islamabad headed by an eminent scholar. It also has links with several parties or Islamic movements in the Middle East, namely the Muslim Brotherhood based in Egypt and Sudan. The party's public relation exercises are comparatively sophisticated. Over the years it has built a modern media service.

The Jamaat has consistently advocated the cause of Islamic "revolution" in Pakistan. It believed that the Islamic world was a single *Ummah* united by religion. There was no separation between politics and religion in Islam. It had been consistent in its demand that the *Shariah* (Islamic law) was the guiding framework for all activity, economic and political. An Islamic "revolution" was legitimate but within the framework of the political system. The Islamic movement would usher into an Islamic state through disciplined activism. The movement would gradually take over the state apparatuses when the party itself comes into power.

ii. The Millat Party

The Millat party was founded a few years back and is headed by former president, Farooq Ahmad Leghari. It has not contested elections so far. A close associate of his, Javed Jabbar, was taken in the Musharraf cabinet. However, he had to leave the Musharraf government in October 2000. The party was supportive of the direction the military regime was taking. Now that the PML and PPP had been discredited, it is expected to do well in the coming elections. Ideologically it was centrist with emphasis on reforming the political and economic system of Pakistan.

iii. Tehreek-i-Insaf

Imran Khan founded the Tehreek-i Insaf some years back. The party stands for youth, reforming the system, Islamic moderation, clean politics, and end to exploitation and corruption. It contested the 1997 elections for the first time. It did not win any seat, however. The party is expected to do relatively well in the coming elections.

iv. Pakistan Awami Tehreek

Allama Tahirul Qadri founded Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) a few years back. Tahirul Qadri had an academic background in law and, about a decade ago, established the Minhaj ul-Quran Islamic Institute in Lahore focused on Quranic Studies. Today there were several Minhaj ul Quran branches in the country. Qadri has written several books on Islamic subjects. Later, Qadri ventured into politics by establishing the Pakistan Awami Tehreek. The PAT relied on the earlier religious network established for launching its political activity. It was a small but well organized political party.

v. Tehrik-i Jafria Pakistan (TJP)

Tehrik-i Jafria Pakistan is a very small political party of the Shiites in Pakistan. It is favorable of Iran and believed to have links with

the Iranian clergy. It believed in Islamic egalitarianism and social justice. It is well organized. The current head is Sajid Ali Naqvi & is considered a moderate. The TJP is a sworn enemy of the Sipah-i-Sahaba, the extremist Sunni organization. The two have opposed each other and several hundred killings have resulted from these clashes since the late 1980s.

v. The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam

The Jamiat Ulema-e Islam was a sectarian Islamic party based on the Debandi maslak (school of thought). It has influence in NWFP and Punjab. Today it is a regional player in NWFP where it had once been in power in a coalition government in the early 1970s. It is expected to win a few seats in its stronghold. The influence of the party is not from its electoral position but from its network of Islamic seminaries, known as *madrassahs*, running into the hundreds throughout the country. Some of these seminaries are imparting quality Islamic education. Others are more involved in sending volunteers for jihad in Afghanistan & perhaps Kashmir. The party has close links with the Taliban ruling Afghanistan.

III. Improve the Electoral System

The electoral system is faulty and needs to be overhauled. The country must discard the current FPTP system in favor of the Majoritarian system as practices in France and Australia.⁵ Many political parties like Millat Party, Jamaat-i-Islami, Tehreek-i Insaaf, etc. were in favor of a Proportional Representation type system, however. The Musharraf regime has strengthened the office of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) to enforce new rules for election campaigning in the coming local government elections. It is expected that the CEC would apply newly eligibility criteria, in accordance with Article 62 and 63 of the Constitution. Some of the new rules pertain to dismissal of incumbents upon finding of false personal asset declarations, criminal records, history of default in

payments to state utility services, and banks, etc. The Musharraf regime is making registration requirements more transparent and easy for the general public. The military government had already embarked upon a campaign to provide identity cards to eliminate bogus voting and thereby ensure fair and honest elections. It is also in the process of re-demarcating the electoral constituencies at the Union Council level. Although a good beginning has been made, further reforms are required. The regime should make the position of CEC even more powerful than now. The office should be equivalent to the power and prestige of its counterpart in India.

Other recommendations include:

- Enforce term limits for candidates. A maximum of three would do. This would ensure new blood in the country's political system.
- Make voting in all elections compulsory.
- The state should bear the expenses of all election campaigns at all levels - local, provincial, and national- at least partially if not fully.
- Invite foreign monitors to oversee elections and report in terms of fairness.
- Allow political parties to fully function in the coming local government elections. The Musharraf regime is making a mistake in banning the participation of political parties in the coming elections. The mistake be immediately rectified.
- Promote debate among candidates in the state media, especially television.

IV. Restructuring the Federation

Pakistan, being a pluralistic society with significant social cleavages, needs to adopt the Canadian model of a decentralized federal setup. The military regime must plan for the eventual weakening of the Center and the strengthening of the regions or provinces. More provinces need to be created. The regime must begin now by the partition of Punjab into at least two parts – North and South Punjab. Later Sindh can be partitioned into two parts

also. One Muhajir dominated (Karachi) and the rest to be Sindhi dominated. Later, a Seraiki belt be carved out of South Punjab and a Potáhar belt in north Punjab. Then, carve NWFP into two parts – one Pathan-dominated and the other non-Pathan (Hindko, Hazara, etc). The present FATA and Northern Areas will become full-fledged provinces. Ultimately, Pakistan shall have ten to twelve provinces. This shall happen in a span of about five or six years. Why do we advocate the partition of Punjab first? Pakistan is unlike any other federation in the world where one constituent part - Punjab -dominates all others both politically and economically. More importantly, other three provinces are now beginning to resent this domination and are increasingly voicing their concerns about it. These apprehensions were only accentuated in the last PML rule. In the months before the coup last October, 1999 there was already brewing a strong public sentiment against the Nawaz Sharif's "Lahore Takht" and Punjabi domination. Pakistan has suffered once before. Obviously, it does not have the luxury to avoid tough decisions any more. Only the military government can do this as it is considered to be above ethnic politics. The people trust the Musharraf regime to take such action in the greater interest of Pakistan. Also, obviously, a civilian leadership cannot take such measures because of the political backlash in Punjab. It should be remembered there is nothing sacred in the present step. After all, the British Raj, for their own strategic purposes created it more than a century ago. Plus, as the Russians dominated the Soviet Union (Russia was the biggest and most powerful of the 15 republics in the Soviet Union) the Punjab dominates the Pakistani republic. All know what happened to the Soviet Union. Let not history repeat itself in Pakistan. Therefore, a division of Punjab into two parts is in order.

V. Revamping the Public Services

The world is caught in a new era that is characterized by high rate of change. Governments have to keep pace with the great sea of changes enveloping them. These changes are taking place everywhere. These changes, highly complex in nature, have created

enormous problems for all systems of governance, especially in poor developing countries. Government systems can age and become irrelevant for solving current problems, or in benefiting from opportunities available of late. Restructuring of entire administrative systems is the need of the hour. Pakistan can learn from mistakes committed by others. Many countries have progressed remarkably in the march of re-engineering government systems. Experiments in altering public sector institutions have employed different institutional models. Re-engineering government involves restructuring public organizations and civil service systems. Organizational sizes, purposes, accountability procedures, authority distribution patterns, even organizational culture are changed. In order to achieve efficiency, effectiveness and fairness in public organizations fundamental change is required. In addition, these changes must be undertaken in such a manner which ensures the development process remains unhampered by lapses and shortcomings in present administration structures. There is increasing worldwide emphasis on restructuring of government because of its failure to deliver according to expectation of citizens. People complain that bureaucracies are behaving in an eccentric and haphazard manner. Thus, in many parts of the world, reorganization of civil bureaucracy has become an urgent need. However, it is not easy. Political forces supporting organizational status quo are usually stronger than those favoring the reorganization effort. Generally, bureaucrats and politicians the world over defend their turf and are reluctant to give up power and status.

Pakistan has a weak administrative apparatus. Problems with the administrative setup include poor planning, waste, mismanagement, inefficiency, and the absence of a work ethic. Malfunction is the norm and not the exception in the bureaucratic structure of the country. Overlapping of jurisdictions and the absence of clear-cut demarcations of authority and administrative control has wrecked havoc with government performance. Independent observers agree that the overall performance of the

gap between policy-making and policy-execution is wide partly due to the politicization of the bureaucracy and the generally low quality of state personnel. Government restructuring is haphazard and ill planned. Even after more than fifty-three years of independence, the civil service has not been able to come out of the shadows of the colonial era. Colonial administration focused on law and order, the extraction of taxes, and export of primary commodities. The social and economic needs and desires of the 'native' population attracted minimum concern. Power was vested in the hands of a small elite. Although, the colonial legacy varied from country to country a common set of features can be identified: ambiguity about the roles and relationship of politicians and public administrators; a tradition that senior civil service appointments should be allocated to generalist administrators, rather than to those with some specialisations; limited consultations with the public and little recognition for a role for the media; a reluctance to provide information to those outside of the administration; an emphasis on written communication and processing paper; an undue emphasis on the role of the office, rules and procedures rather than accomplishment of assigned tasks. To some extent, the colonial style of administration is still in vogue in Pakistan. Thus, the country is falling behind the times. That is dreadful. Several previous attempts at reform failed to make a difference. Red tape and mal-administration is now legendary in public administration. The requirements of the contemporary era dictate the need for establishing an effective and efficient public administration. That much is obvious.

All agree that bureaucratic red tape in the civil service is now legendary. People are sick and tired of administrative inefficiency, unresponsiveness, and arrogance. As regards governance in Pakistan, the World Bank notes that the country faces problems, which includes the waning effectiveness and capacity of public institutions and weakness of local governments and other civil society organizations. These factors have severely reduced the effectiveness of public expenditures, undermined macroeconomic

management, debilitated the environment, and worsened the other structural problems.⁶

The efficiency and effectiveness of government departments are getting worse not better, with very few exceptions. The need for re-engineering the system of governance is being felt by many in Pakistan. It is unanimously agreed that the existing system is failing to deliver the services demanded by the public. Every one acknowledges this stark fact. Perhaps, never in the history of Pakistan has public perceptions been so negative about the bureaucracy. Problems have piled upon each other with no quick solution in sight. Obviously, there is some hyperbole in the print media that adds to public frustration and anger at government agencies. Nevertheless, public frustration is real and increasing. Pakistan needs serious civil service reforms. The previous Benazir and Nawaz Governments were not serious about the issue. The work of previous commissions, groups need to be consolidated, reviewed, and implemented. Unnecessary duplication must end. For example, the Nawaz Government had two organizations working on the same reform agenda – the Commission on Administrative Restructuring under Fakhr Imam, MNA and the Good Governance Group under Ahsan Iqbal, then Deputy Chairman Planning Commission. Such duplication of efforts needs to be avoided in future. Scarce resources must be prudently spent.

The military government should emphasize governance over every thing else. The failure here is apparent. Generally, capacity of state departments is weak. Public organizations are operating inefficiently. Most are malfunctioning. Red tape is legion. Policies are not effective and sometimes left unimplemented. Disillusionment and despair rules the corridors of the bureaucracies. The crisis is real. A serious problem for administrations, especially in the developing countries, is the widening gap between governors and governed and between the administrators and administered.

⁶ Country Brief: Pakistan (World Bank web page)

The Musharraf regime was expected to turn around the government bureaucracies soon. If left unintended, most will crumble. The Musharraf regime was expected to concentrate on a few vital institutions like the Advocate General, Election Commission, Accountant General of Pakistan, State Bank, and CBR, Military Intelligence services, and National Accountability Bureau (NAB), etc. But this did not happen. After a year of the Musharraf regime, the government apparatuses are still in a mess with no easy solution in sight. A careful study of the problems of governance may yield insights of what is wrong in government and why? A detailed analysis is needed for the purpose. It has not yet happened. The Musharraf regime has failed to stem the tide of bureaucratic malfunction in Pakistan. The country is actually racing against time.

A pertinent problem that needs to be addressed is the issue of downsizing. The present 30 or more divisions can be merged to create more viable and efficient units of government. For example, we need to merge the Education with the Science and Technology Division to create a new ministry of Education and Science as in Germany and Britain. In addition, the model of Japan's MITI can be adopted here also. We can and should combine Divisions of Commerce and Industry into one larger entity. We need to create a powerful Planning Commission under the Chief Executive to undertake strategic planning on a more scientific basis. The Statistics division can be merged into it. Other mergers can include the merger of Economic Affairs Division and Finance Division. Let the Pakistan Revenue Service (PRS) concept be implemented, as once planned during the second Nawaz Government. A powerful and independent PRS with a distinct élan is essential for successful revenue collection. The railways, airline, shipping, and land transport can all be combined into one powerful Transport ministry. In short, a detailed scrutiny of the entire government is required.

The Musharraf regime is expected to develop the human resources of the country on a priority basis. It should concentrate on training and capacity building of individual officers in the bureaucracy. Ensure adequate compensation to attract talent in the public service. Simply preaching for better performance without material incentives will not work. It seldom has. Therefore, compensate for hard and honest work. A system of rewards and incentives is needed. Personnel management reform to cater to the general problem of mismanagement, laxity, corruption, loss of work ethic and other related issues needs to be emphasized. For the operation of effective, efficient, and responsive public service a wide range of reforms are needed.

VI. Revamp the sprawling Intelligence Setup

Gradually merge existing intelligence agencies into just two-one with an external focus and the other with an internal one- like in the USA. We recommend this on the ground of greater efficiency because there is an urgent need to eradicate endemic corruption in the bureaucratic structures of the country. A strong intelligence system is extremely vital to achieve this aim.

VII. Reform the Subordinate Judiciary

The GOP is considering major reforms in the subordinate judiciary. A report by Asian Development Bank on the subject, plus proposals submitted by provincial law ministries and bar councils, combined in a final document has been submitted to the Chief Executive. The said document contains the following proposals:⁷

- (1) Resolve public complaints against negligent practice by lawyers through a formal Disciplinary Committee mechanism. The committee consists of a High Court judge and senior members of the bar.

⁷ *The Friday Times*, June 21-27, 2000, 4

- (2) Control mushroom growth of private law colleges. Improve entrance requirements to law colleges. Require a written bar examination for permission to practice the profession. Establish National Education Council for the purpose.
- (3) Advance promotion of subordinate judges. Half of the strength of the High Court should be judges elevated from the subordinate judiciary.
- (4) Improve quality of subordinate judiciary. No appointment of Additional District and Session Judges from the bar.
- (5) Tighten entry requirements for civil judges. Only advocates with a minimum of 2-4 years are eligible for appointments as civil judges.
- (6) Reduce the time-period for the decision of a case by reducing the number of appeals granted under normal case litigation.
- (7) Improve the salaries and other benefits of the subordinate judiciary.
- (8) Appoint a Judicial Ombudsman with all the powers to redress the genuine grievances of the litigant public and lawyers community against the judiciary. The Ombudsman is given powers to recommend action including termination of services of judicial officers.
- (9) The improvement of physical infrastructure of the court systems. Provide better housing facilities to the officials.

After approval of the program, the ADB shall presumably be involved in its implementation. Revamping of infrastructure facilities, including an IT component, has already been discussed in GOP forums. Implementation of the reform plan should not be delayed.

VII. The National Reconstruction Bureau's (NRB) Local Government Plan 2000

Notwithstanding the apparent contradiction between a military government advocating democracy, the NRB plan, should be given

serious support. Given the past grave failures of all governments in Pakistan's history, the Musharraf regime must still be given the benefit of the doubt. The NRB plan can prove revolutionary, if properly and earnestly implemented. On the other hand, given the history of Pakistan, the implementation of the devolution plan can be easily doubted. The people have heard of this before. Nevertheless, it can be a real breakthrough for the country. The overall direction of the Local Government Plan (hence after the Plan) is correct. The approach is commendable. The "bottom-up" strategy is certainly workable. Other than a few minor problems, the Plan is indeed remarkable. We wish it be implemented not for the sake of the military regime but for the sake of the nation. Remember this is the most serious thrust at devolution yet. The people want real change in the country and the military regime has to deliver. Pakistan will be richer for the devolution exercise. Although the military regime is flexible on the final shape of the Plan. There are many complex issues still to be worked out. The Plan's briefness and lack of essential details is uncomfortable. As the popular saying goes, "the devil is in the details" and the details are surely missing. Thus, the main problem with the Plan is not what it contains but what it leaves out. In all fairness, the NRB faces a stupendous task well beyond its human capacity and limited means. Therefore, all the more reason for civil society and international agencies to lend a helping hand. The people owe the military regime their full cooperation because if it fails the country fails also. Ordinary people really do not have much of a choice in the matter. They cannot wish away the Musharraf regime any time soon. Therefore, make the best use of it and the opportunity provided to fill in the gap at this crucial juncture in the nation's history.

To analyze the Plan requires some general theoretical understanding of the concepts of local government, decentralization and devolution of power. Moreover, a historical background of Local Government in Pakistan and the context of the reform plans is also required.

Theory of Local Government, Decentralization, and Devolution

The current movement to decentralization has been fueled by disillusionment with the administrative and policy-implementing capacity of highly centralized governance systems. This has especially been the case in terms of efforts to promote economic development activities through centralized planning.

Local governments matter most for the daily requirements of the common people. From the perspective of the ordinary people what does the state do that will make a real difference in their lives? How do you bring them the fruits of good governance in a most effective manner? We are strongly convinced that we could do this by creating an effective third tier of government. This tier has to be provided sufficient resources and capacity to meet public needs. Kaelin explains that the

Too often, the central governments activities at the local level are not driven by demand from the local citizens, but rather are imposed on them by agencies that have developed ideologies within the context of the interests of the central government. The people at the local level do not feel any ownership of the activities and may even reject the "gifts" imposed on them. Such lack of responsiveness by the population may come less from the activity itself and from the way it is imposed.⁸

Centralized systems fail because of a number of factors. First, the problem faced is that of low response by the people. The government activity has been directed from above rather than from demand below. It is common that the local people reject these gifts from the central government simply because they have not been involved in the decision-making process and therefore do not feel that they own these projects. Second, officials employed by the

⁸ See unpublished report by Walter Kaelin, "Legal Aspects of Decentralization in Pakistan", Pakistan UNDP/SDC, 1998

federal government lack knowledge about local problems and needs. They do not understand differences in local needs and conditions because the knowledge happens to be thinly distributed across the entire community is not available to the central planning agency. Even the greatest central planning agency cannot decide whether, in a particular local village case, improving the irrigation system or expanding schooling is more significant at a specific time. Only the local government can decide these things.⁹

The Good Governance Imperative

Decentralization goes hand in hand with good governance. Without good governance, effective decentralization is not possible. What is good governance in the first place? The simplest meaning will be the ability to translate state policies into ground reality so that it makes a difference in the betterment of society. The term implies broadly issues of government effectiveness, accountability, transparency, and adherence to the rule of law. The idea of governance is a broader than that of government. The primary characteristics of government include first the constitution, then the government itself, meaning the three basic wings, which are legislature, executive and judiciary, while governance involves established connections between these formal institutions and the broader civil society. Good governance is also to be understood as having a normative connotation and includes the hopes, aspirations, and predilections of the governed. Increasingly, among international organizations, governance is used as a concept to both provide a broad overview of and describe the way societies manage themselves. Governance has also been described and dealt with in terms of how to improve the functioning of the actual political/administrative system extant in a particular country. The term used has been "good governance." This has typically meant concern about civil service reform; the encouragement of efficient

⁹ Ibid.

governmental organization (which frequently means the downsizing of government bureaucracies); and the strong encouragement of transparency and accountability in government. The concept of governance means the activities, manner and management through various modes of exercising the power of government. Simply put, the government is the authority and the governance is the process through which the policies of the government is executed and implemented. Thus, the term of government implies the exercise of authority in managing and controlling the functions of the members of the body politic and directing the total affairs of the state for promoting the causes of common welfare. In any democratic country, elected representatives of the people are meant to reflect the wishes and aspirations of the people in the governance of the country. The essentials of good governance are: transparency, free flow of information, community voice, an effective public service, and a commitment to fight corruption. Moreover, ownership is always an important consideration. Governments must be in a position of leadership; the people must be consulted and involved. For sustainable development to occur public participation must be ensured. In an age of scarcity, good governance has become the issue of our times. It is agreed that a state must achieve a high level of good governance because lack of capacity to carefully monitor and implement, otherwise good policy designs, will hamper and distort development. The essential components of a good government are:

- (a) Good governance, which is dependent upon the existence of a participatory process and the consent of the people.
- (b) Accountability of the government for its actions, which is dependent upon the availability of information, transparency of decision-making and the presence of effective mechanisms to call individuals and institutions to account. Competence of the government, which is the capacity to formulate appropriate policies, make sound and timely decisions, and perhaps most importantly implement them effectively.

(c) Rule of law and respect for human rights. The government has to guarantee groups and individuals their security and their basic human rights. It has to provide an enabling framework for economic and social activity and to permit and encourage all types of individual participation.

Governance plays a consequential role in enhancing productivity levels and better income distribution. It is dependent on the well functioning of public institutions. Setting the right priorities, formulation of appropriate policies and their effective and efficient implementation for public welfare is elementary to good governance. It is a given that only an effective, responsive, transparent, participatory and efficient public administration structure can possibly secure favorable implementation of government policies. The World Bank identifies four major components in governance. They are as follows:¹⁰

1. Public sector management: The government must manage its personnel and financial resources effectively through appropriate reporting, budgeting, and accounting systems and eradicate inefficiency.
2. Accountability: public officials must be held responsible for their actions. This involves effective auditing, decentralization, accountability to consumers and a role for non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
3. The legal framework for development: sets of rules, known in advance, that are enforced. Conflicts be resolved by independent judicial bodies and there should exist mechanisms for amending rules when they no longer serve their purpose.

¹⁰ Sources: ODA (Overseas Development Administration) (1993) 'Good Government', Technical Note no. 10 (London: ODA); World Bank (1992) Governance and Development (Washington D.C.: World Bank).

4. Information and transparency: there are three main areas for improvement, (i) transparency as a means of preventing corruption; (ii) publicly available information for policy analysis and debate and (iii) information on economic efficiency.

Generally, international donor agencies have come to emphasize that governance is the essential issue in project aid. For example, USAID has noted "the finest planning and budgeting system in the world are of little use, if there are not quick and accurate means to track progress and to know the relationship between the planned events and actual events".¹¹ James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, in an address to the Bank's Board of Governors said:¹²

We need a new development framework. What might countries look for in such a development framework? First, the framework will outline the essentials of good governance - transparency, voice, the free flow of information, and a commitment to fight corruption, and a well-trained, properly remunerated civil service... Ownership matters. Countries and their governments must be in the driver's seat, and, in our experience, the people must be consulted and involved. Participation matters - not only as a means of improving development effectiveness, as we know from our recent studies, but also as the key to long-term sustainability and to advantage.

There is no single model or form of good governance, nor is there a single structure or set of structures. It is a broad, dynamic, complex process of interactive decision-making that is constantly evolving and responding to changing circumstances. Although bound to respond to the specific requirements of different issue areas, governance must take an integrated approach to questions of human survival and prosperity. Recognizing the systemic nature of

¹¹ "The Effectiveness of Aid to Pakistan" (Islamabad: Economic Affairs Division, GOP and UNDP, 1990) 1998, A. 9.

¹² *The Nation*, March 10, 1998.

these issues, it must promote systemic approaches in dealing with them.

Local Government in Pakistan: Historical Context

Soon after the coup in October last, General Musharraf had elaborated a seven point agenda to address the institutional crisis and advance national reconstruction. One of the seven points pertains to devolution of power to the grass roots level. The military regime claims that the past top-down approach needs to be modified with a vital bottom-up segment duly incorporated in the development strategy. Accordingly, there is a need for an effective third tier of government backed by sufficient resources to meet public needs. The principle of subsidiary is to be practiced wholeheartedly for meaningful results. Thus, the regime realizes that decentralization and devolution of power is essential for the efficiency and effectiveness of public service. In addition, the development of the third tier of government is also vital for democratization and public welfare. The GOP recognizes the need to increase effectiveness and efficiency of its administrative system. Lack of timely, reliable, and accurate information is considered as a constraint in efficiency of government operations. The GOP is prepared to launch a major institutional reform initiative to introduce accountability in the administration. It is keen to provide information that is previously denied to the public. This is to ensure accountability and transparency in its administrative system. The GoP realizes that the on-going and planned interventions have to be designed and implemented within a strategic framework of reform initiatives.

The Musharraf regime needs to decentralize and devolve power in a planned manner. Some experimentation is necessary. Failures are inevitable given the lack of capacity at the lower levels of government. The capacity at the local level is very inadequate. It will take time, resources, and great attention to build it. Elections at the local-level are to be held by May 2001. This is to be followed by provincial and then national elections. National

elections are to be held last by 2002. No date has been given for provincial and national elections yet. The Musharraf regime needs to do this exercise in phases by gradually consolidating gains at the lower level and then proceeding upwards at the next higher level.

Currently, the Plan does not include the following issues:

- (i) The manner of interaction between the districts and the provinces
- (ii) Financial autonomy issues. Exact working of the new provincial finance commission.
- (iii) Taxation issues in reasonable details. For example, the formulas for direct or other grants from provinces and the federal government.

Another weakness of the Plan is its penchant for fixing unrealistic quotas for various sections of the population in the Local Government councils. If the purpose is to empower henceforth disadvantaged groups then there are other methods like affirmative action available. Why does the USA not employ quotas to empower women and other ethnic minorities like the Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans? Quotas have been used in India for sometime for the empowerment of women, dalits, and other minorities but the question is whether the program has been successful or not? What evidence does the NRB have to suggest that quotas do the intended job? Quotas in principle are violations of the basic democratic rights of the people to choose whom so ever they desire. The State must not second-guess the public in deciding for them in whichever way, including quotas. If the people want to elect someone from one category only, say males and not females, then let them do it. Let the franchise be as wide as possible with no limitations, even those imposed for the sake of empowerment of a disadvantaged group. This is a basic philosophy of democracy and not subject to compromise. We need to explore this issue further. However, this task is again beyond the scope of the paper.

Proposals for the Reform of the State District Machinery

There is a general apprehension that good governance requirements are not being met. Governments in many countries, including Pakistan, are trying very hard to improve efficiency, transparency, and accountability of their personnel and agencies. What are the causes of government failures? How best to improve governance? How can the public sector be made more efficient and effective? These issues are being debated earnestly the world over. The contemporary challenge is to formulate a reform strategy in which sequencing and prioritization are carefully laid out in advance. For example, goals, objectives, and performance criteria of government agencies must be elaborated before any structural change is incorporated in the design of the system. Then, only a few critical agencies have to be taken up for detailed reforms. Early success, though modest, is critical for building credibility of government reform measures. At this late stage, it would be sufficient to make the following improvements:

(1) The women quota at 33 % is unrealistic and must be scaled down, at least in the backward rural areas. Despite what the GoP would have us believe, the simple fact is that there are not enough good women candidates available in many parts of the country to do the job. This is an observation of ground reality and should not be seen as discriminatory in any sense of the word. For various historical, religious and cultural reasons this quota is simply unattainable in most of Pakistan. Leaving the seats vacant until suitable candidates are found who contest to win the seat is a meaningless gesture. Why not to simply lower down the quota to make the desired possible?

(2) In addition, the 2% quota for minorities is unrealistic also. A very large part of Pakistan does not have enough resident minority population to warrant this quota. Here the quota be lowered further, say 1%, or even abolished altogether, depending on the situation. The Plan be down-to-earth practical and realistic about the changes that it desires to introduce in the country.

Utopian thinking will damage its credibility. Thus, a revision is desirable in the quota area. Again, the Provincial Governments and not the NRB shall decide.

(3) Similarly, the quota for peasants and workers seats is also unreasonable. Why have them? We can empower workers and peasants through other means like forming powerful workers and peasant movements, unions, and the like. Other than this quota proposal, what is the Musharraf regime to empower peasants and workers in the country? In fact, precious little. Let the military strengthen peasants and worker organizations through other direct action rather than this gesture of acknowledgement given in the NRB Plan. It is advisable to scuttle this one also.

(4) We do not need the post of the Deputy Nazim. The functions of acting as a stand-by and second of the mayor is unnecessary. Do we have deputies in other levels of government like deputy governor, or deputy chief executive? Then why at the district level? The argument that the deputy mayor would preside over the assembly is also unwarranted. The assembly can elect its own presiding officer for that matter. Why do we need an outsider to do the job? Wasting public money in creating unnecessary positions should be avoided. Pakistan cannot afford such extravaganzas.

(5) The job description of the Nazim be further clarified by including the following:

- (i) Translation of policy into specific action plans for delivery of services.
- (ii) Monitoring and evaluation.
- (iii) Networking across functions: formation of task specific teams that will facilitate work and not become victims of the "Departmentalism" phenomenon.
- (iv) Outside representation.

(6) There were 13 departments envisaged in each District Administration.¹³ Later, they were consolidated to just ten. The following adjustments are made to improve the working of the District Administration.¹⁴

(i) The Departments of Literacy and Education can be merged as they have tasks in the same functional domain. The new department is called Education Services. The Department shall also be responsible for public libraries and vocational or technical schools.

(ii) The term “social development” is vague. Moreover, the term development is used frequently elsewhere. The Department of “Social Development” is renamed as Social Services Department. Note this is only a name change for bringing greater clarity to the business of the department. The Department shall carry out the work of Institutional Development, Cultural development, Cooperatives, etc., as already given.

(iii) Add another new Department of Public Transportation and Engineering.

(iv) The Department of Environment should include public health, solid waste disposal and refuse collection services.

(7) A Departmental Committee System is set up. All Departments to have Departmental Committees, which will serve as a link between the Department and the public. These Committees shall report to the District Assembly and should meet monthly.

(8) The Plan is very sketchy in a number of areas. For example, it says that the district government shall “gradually move toward a

¹³ The departments are: Finance, Planning and Budget, Public Works, Health, Literacy, Social development, Information Technology, Revenue, Agriculture, Education, Commerce & Industry, Law, Environment, and Magistracy. See *Devolution of Power & Responsibility: Establishing the Foundation of Genuine Democracy - Local Government Proposed Plan*, Government of Pakistan, National Reconstruction Bureau, May 2000, 40.

¹⁴ Ibid., 42-50, 52, 53, 54.

corporate governance driven by an entrepreneurial approach”¹⁵ We assume that a corporate structure is envisaged as opposed to a bureaucratic Department structure. The details are missing here.

(10) The Office of the Nazim is the single most responsible entity at the district level. Therefore, the Nazim should be better equipped to handle his or her job. For the purpose, the Nazim’s Office shall include a “Modernization of Public Services” Unit. The Nazim will be its nominal head. As the unit entails a lot of detailed work, the District Coordination Officer would head the day-to-day running of this unit, however. The purpose of the Unit is to create a more effective and efficient organizational structure to deliver public services by adopting known management principles. Within a reasonable time-period, the unit shall operationalize the following measures in all Departments: (a) mission statements, (b) departmental standards, (c) departmental targets, (d) Value for Money (VFM).

(11) There is a need to establish the management capacity at the local government level. For this training facilities have to be augmented.³⁷

(12) A pluralist approach to government is preferable because each province is encouraged to try out various policy innovations at the level of the district. The NRB should establish a national forum where experiences of different local governments are discussed.

(13) The Constitution should be amended to give proper constitutional security to local government. The current constitutional provision for local government is extremely weak. Actually, it is hardly more than a mention in passing and no more. Local governments have to be protected from future dissolution and suspension in order to ensure continuity. Local governments cannot function properly if their very existence is in jeopardy.

¹⁵ See The Devolution of Power & Responsibility: Local Govt. Plan, GOP, NRB,

(14) No excessive control by the higher levels of government. Planning procedures to be simplified and made quicker. Provide many opportunities to local governments to prioritize. Local governments will not be required to get approval for expenditures undertaken above a reasonable level. Local initiative is to be encouraged. Therefore, the possibility of independent deployment of resources is increased. The GoP will provide necessary support for tackling the issue.

Clear delimitation of powers and jurisdictions at the local level. No overlapping of primary jurisdiction between the local and other higher governmental levels. Demarcation of municipal, development, and other functions, especially in urban areas are undertaken on a priority basis. For example, in Lahore all agencies like ISA, TEPA, LDA will come under the Lahore Municipal Corporation under the control of the Lord Mayor. To the credit of the Govt. of Punjab, Lahore is already moving in the desired direction. Other cities need to follow the Lahore model.

(15) Strategic planning for the establishment of new cities and towns to commence immediately. The Planning Commission and all provincial governments should be involved.

(16) The merger of cantonment areas into city limits for better integration of public services. All military bases to be shifted well outside city limits. In future, there shall be no military bases inside city limits.

(17) Launch a District Roundtable Program to augment the capacity and competency of district and local governments in coping with newly assigned tasks, especially in the conservation area. This is explained further below.

(18) The required capacity could only be built gradually in a phased manner. A situation where local governments are given extended powers and responsibilities without the required capacity

building will lead to dramatic failure, which can and should be avoided. Therefore, great care is given to institution building when pursuing the parallel decentralization strategy.

(19) The GoP claims to give great importance to developing an Information Age government in Pakistan. Progress in the field is hampered because there is no central coordinating agency. The Government should create an Information Age government. It should employ new technology to meet the requirements of business and citizens, and not fall behind technological developments. The District Government shall seek to modernize the business of government itself. The District Government's goal is:

- Furnish modern, efficient, and appropriate means for business and citizens to communicate with government and to obtain services
- Make government a learning organization by developing a modern mechanism to store and disseminate information.
- Continue to work in partnership with business and the NGO sector to promote better IT use
- Establish a secure Internet within the government. Provide onward links to provincial and local authorities

The planned IT infrastructure will facilitate the provision of value-added services, enhancement of performance and improvement of decision-making. Tasks of the IT Departments should also include:

- Establish an efficient record management system in the public service. Information is now speedily retrievable by those requiring it. Unnecessary delays will be eliminated. At the federal level, computerized file management system is being introduced in key ministries like Finance and Planning. On-line records management system will be introduced in various Departments like transport, police, education, health, etc. Improved records

management systems will guarantee that a fast retrieval of records through “one-stop facility” is created for essential services.

➤ Make more uses of the Internet. The IT Department should have its own web page. The Government of NWFP already has one. This should be linked to all the districts. Some of the major functions of the Internet web page system are as follows:

- The public should be able to download all codes regulations from the Internet address. Citizens should also be able to access the following type of information: a complete profile of all government Departments and ministries giving their functions, top personnel, current laws governing their administration, service rules and regulations; various important publications of the Departments and their addresses including those of branch offices.

- The information should include description of the services, the relevant conditions, forms used, payments charged and the names, designations and telephone numbers of contact persons; latest tender advertisements issued by the big Departments; current news which are considered to be of importance to the public.

➤ Create a District Management Information System, which will carry information that will help the police and the line Departments to improve their working. The idea behind this initiative is to enable the district teams to work more efficiently and effectively by having timely access to all information related to their specific fields.

➤ A Development Communication System to fill the vacuum of information flows between various Departments, and between the provincial and district governments. There is a need for establishing a resource agency that will provide information on all activities in the area of development. The development communication system will collect, analyze, disseminate information relating to development issues, activities and processes. The objectives of the communication system are:

- (i) To promote debate on development issues among various target audiences
- (ii) To provide a unified, cohesive voice on development activities
- (iii) To develop linkages with current development communication systems employed by various Departments and agencies and to induct them into the new system in a phased manner
- (iv) To build an in-house technical capacity for developing communication modules, especially for the electronic media

Issue of Federal Funding

Local governments are usually dependent upon higher level funding to meet their requirements. In some cases, they receive money for general functioning and in other cases; they receive money for a specific service the local government agrees to provide for a higher-level government (provincial or federal).¹⁶ Much like its counterparts elsewhere, the GOP shall also make the following transfers:¹⁷

- Block transfer
- Matching grants
- Specific purpose grants

The details of these transfers have yet to be spelled out. A number of points are made here:

A) Block Grants

In the next few years, it is envisioned that most of the money for the district governments shall come from the federal government. It

¹⁶ Kurt Thurmaier, "Local Government Budgeting", *International Encyclopedia of Public Policy and Administration*, *op cit.*, 1301. •

¹⁷ NRB plan, 60

will take time for the districts to acquire the capacity to become self-sufficient. In the meantime, the federal government has to not only bear most of the burden of the district governments but also equip them with the technical capacity to become self-sufficient later on. Without the direct intervention of the federal government, districts will never achieve their goals. Therefore, every district should be given a minimum block grant of Rs. 500 million per year from the federal kitty. In addition, another block grant is based on population criteria to be worked out by mutual consultation of all provinces. Since Punjab has the biggest population and therefore can muster the biggest share of the funds, the voice and concerns of the minority provinces must be considered. Baluchistan and Sindh have felt neglected. What we are suggesting here is a framework to study the felt needs of the minority provinces. This is largely a political exercise and not a technical one pertaining to revenue sharing as such. A detailed analysis of the weaknesses in the federal set up is again beyond the scope of the paper. Sufficient to state here is that a simple formula based on population criteria alone may not be desirable.

As far as block grants are concerned, they are lump-sum transfers and only the Local Governments shall decide on how to use the money. At least, this is the theory. In actual practice, this money will be subject to a minimum number of federal guidelines, which will govern the spending. For example, the federal government can require that funding be released only when certain principles of good governance like transparency, openness in decision-making, and fairness have been met. In addition, the spending departments have complied with given Standard Operating Procedures and Rules of Business given by the federal government.

B) Categorical Grants:

Other than the block grants, the Federal Government should also make categorical grants in vital areas such as environment to augment the services in the field. The categorical grants are somewhat different than the specific purpose grants because they are given to a category of services and the local government has

some leeway to spend them. They are situated in between block and specific purpose grants.

These grants are not without attached conditionality, however. For example, the federal government shall give out directives or formulas to direct the Local Government's Environment Department to function in a desired way and more importantly to uphold certain minimum standards of service delivery. The federal government shall first prescribe maximum limits of air and water pollution tolerable. In collaboration with the local Environment Department, it also then measures the air and water in each locality to determine whether limits have been broken or not. The specified indicators are periodically checked by the Environment Department and reported to the federal government. The locality establishes a "need" when pollution levels exceed maximum tolerable limits. Only then, the funding is made for a specific program to clean up the air and water to the desired levels. It is up to the Local Government to decide how the actual clean up shall happen and who shall do it and what cost and period. Thus, the Federal government shall not interfere in the details of the actual working. The local Environment Department should be better equipped to carry out the task. The advantage of these categorical grants is that while the federal government channels funds to areas of high priority for human development, the local government controls actual spending without outside interference. Obviously, the Federal government shall provide technical services for the purpose as our local governments are not equipped to handle such highly technical tasks as environmental monitoring and clean up.

Local Revenue Sources

(a) Charges from the use of all local services. The World Bank suggests "the cost of providing local services should be recovered, to the extent possible, from charges on the beneficiaries".¹⁸ In

¹⁸ *World Development Report*, UNDP, 160.

addition, most of these service charges like water, sanitation, waste disposal, recreational facilities, health, education, are increased for growing the local revenue base.

- (b) A Local Rate be imposed on property which be graduated. All the private property be placed in one of six or eight bands, and assessed by government valuers. Lahore city already has some valuation categories in place for fixing stamp duties. The richer neighborhoods shall pay several times more than the poorer ones. Specifically, for every Rs. 100 minimum per marla paid by the poorest areas, the richest areas shall have to pay Rs. 600-800 per marla. However, exempt the poorest of the poor from the local rate. Thus, slum-dwellers and other "katchi abadis" shall not be taxed for the time being.
- (c) The Local Government is permitted to lease out land and impose a nominal tax on transfer of all real estate property.
- (d) A motor vehicle license tax is imposed.
- (e) A tax is imposed on permits of gun licenses.
- (f) A tax is imposed on all building permits.
- (g) The Local Government is able to borrow money from the capital market in the shape of public bonds. The World Bank and other international agencies can be tapped for assistance in the field.
- (h) Tax all property transfers at the rate of 1% of value.

Obviously, one cannot foresee the specific agenda for various districts. The problems are diverse therefore, the solutions shall also vary. The actual work of the Roundtable shall have to ground in the concrete reality of the district itself. Moreover, the very concept of a Roundtable shall have to be popularized. Where the mechanism is very unfamiliar, much more effort needs to be undertaken to make the exercise fruitful. Most importantly, we do not have to reinvent the wheel. What is tried and tested must be implemented in all earnest. In addition, waiting for the district governments to be grounded will take some time. We cannot and should not wait for that to happen. The GOP in collaboration with IUCN should go ahead and institutionalize the Roundtable mechanism right now. As given above, the first roundtables are

scheduled for coming November. Let every district initiate the program. Any further delay would prove costly. Pakistan cannot afford to waste any more time.

Where next? After a year of the Musharraf regime, the government apparatuses are still in a mess with no easy solution in sight. A careful study of the problems of governance may yield insights of what is wrong in government and why? A detailed analysis is needed for the purpose. It has not yet happened. The Musharraf regime has failed to stem the tide of bureaucratic malfunction in Pakistan. The country is actually racing against time. Given the complexity of Pakistan's situation, only dedicated and persistent hard work can turn the nation around. The task is difficult and tedious. It requires a reasonable gestation period. Single-minded focus, dedication, sincerity, and courage are required. The people expect General Musharraf to lead the nation into a new era. History shall judge General Musharraf on what he made of a golden opportunity to turn around Pakistan. The performance of the first year in office has not been spectacular, to say the least.