

CONFERENCES

Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) organized international, regional and national conferences on a variety of topics of national and international importance. Recommendations made after due deliberations and discussions are reproduced in the following sections.

RIGHTS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN SOUTH ASIA: LEARNING FROM MUTUAL EXPERIENCES

An international conference on “Rights of Religious Minorities in South Asia: Learning from Mutual Experiences” was organized by Islamabad Policy Research Institute in collaboration with Hanns Seidel Foundation on July 3-4, 2012, at Islamabad Hotel. Six speakers, Prof Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed¹ and Mr. Saleem Samad² from Bangladesh, Dr. Tanweer Fazal³ and Dr. Ram Puniyani⁴ from India, Mr. Nihal Rodrigo⁵ and Prof Dr. K. N. O. Dharmadasa⁶ from Sri Lanka and Mr. Channa Lal⁷, Mr. Raza Rumi⁸, Mr. J Salik⁹ from Pakistan participated in the Conference and put forward the following recommendations:

- As all religions preach peace, all efforts should be made to promote inter-faith harmony.
- Problems faced by the minorities should be considered as democracy’s problems.
- All undesirable developments with regard to rights of religious minorities need serious consideration by the authorities.
- We need to educate our youth about the rights of the minorities that our law guarantees to them.
- The United Nations should be asked to play its role in ensuring minority rights by governments in the interest of peace in the world.
- The United Nations should observe a Minorities’ Day, every year on the lines it observes other Days.

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² An Ashoka Fellow and Social Justice Researcher, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

³ Assistant Professor, Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India.

⁴ He works with Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai, India.

⁵ Former Advisor (Foreign Relations) to the President of Sri Lanka and Former Secretary General of the SAARC.

⁶ Editor-in-Chief, Sinhala Encyclopaedia Office, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

⁷ Representative, Hindu Community, Pakistan.

⁸ Director, Policy and Program, Jinnah Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan.

⁹ Former Minister for Minorities in Pakistan and Chairman, World Minorities Alliance.

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- The United Nations should incorporate a mechanism to monitor the violation of minority rights in member countries.
 - Like their human rights the political rights of the minorities should also be ensured.
 - For harmonious inter-communal coexistence, there is a need to understand the psyche of the majority and minority communities.
 - Government intervention is necessary to guarantee minority rights. Anything short of government intervention would not work.
 - Some recent negative developments in Sindh concerning Hindu families should be seriously investigated and necessary measures taken to ameliorate the situation as such reports bring a bad name to the country.
 - The problem of minority rights violation at one place causes reaction at other places. There seems to be a competitive communalism at work, which must be discouraged.
 - Religious propaganda demonizing minorities is very dangerous, and should be forcefully curbed.
 - Forced conversions must be stopped by law. Only voluntary conversions can have the sanction of law and the community.
 - Minority children must be excluded from religious education of the majority community. Even secular curriculums should be thoroughly filtered for eliminating intolerant attitudes or derogatory aspersions against religious beliefs.
 - Religious plurality should be promoted by repealing or amending laws and official procedures partial to minority communities.
 - The state should not use Zakat revenues to finance the activities of a particular sector creed within the country.
 - Textbooks should be purged of material that promote sectarianism.
 - Armed militias & militant organizations of religious groups need to be disbanded.
 - The existing ban on sectarian organizations needs reinforcement.
 - Laws against hate speech should be strictly implemented.
 - Jihadi publications supporting supra-state ideologies and sectarian agenda should be banned and the licences for such publications should be revoked.
 - There is a dire need to reform the Madrassah network in Pakistan.
 - Prayer leaders with known involvement in sectarian activities should be removed from positions of authority.

- Government officials and politicians accused of maintaining links with sectarian organizations should be investigated and, if found guilty, should be prosecuted.
- The government should appoint competent prosecution teams against those being tried for sectarian violence.
- The security of judges who hear sectarian cases should be ensured.
- The defence of minority rights should be considered non-negotiable.■

POTENTIAL AND PROSPECTS OF PAKISTANI DIASPORA

An international conference on “Potential and Prospects of Pakistani Diaspora” was organized by Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) in collaboration with Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) on November 14-15, 2012 at Islamabad Hotel, Islamabad.

Thirteen speakers Dr. Marta Bolognani,¹⁰ Ms. Nadia Sajjad,¹¹ Ms. Saira Rehman,¹² Dr. Azam Chaudhry,¹³ Prof Dr. Moonis Ahmar,¹⁴ Professor Dr. G. M. Arif,¹⁵ Dr. Sabiha H. Syed,¹⁶ Dr. Vaqar Ahmed,¹⁷ Dr. Abid Qayum Suleri,¹⁸ Mr. Zubair K. Bhatti,¹⁹ Prof Dr. M. A. Kalam,²⁰ Dr. Els Van Dongen,²¹ and Dr. Muhammad Hafeez²² participated in the Conference. The Speakers made the following recommendations:

- The multiple transnational connections between British Pakistanis and their country of origin should be fully exploited enabling the

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¹¹ M.Phil Scholar, Department of International Relations, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, Pakistan.

¹² M.Phil Scholar, Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

¹³ Associate Professor, National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

¹⁴ Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Karachi, Karachi, Pakistan.

¹⁵ Joint Director, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Islamabad, Pakistan.

¹⁶ Executive Director, Migration Research Group, Islamabad, Pakistan.

¹⁷ Deputy Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan.

¹⁸ Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan.

¹⁹ Senior Public Sector Specialist, World Bank, Islamabad, Pakistan.

²⁰ Professor of Eminence-Designate, Tezpur Central University, Tezpur, Assam, India.

²¹ Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

²² Principal, Aitchison College, Lahore, Pakistan.

diaspora to contribute its maximum in times of the country's need as when natural calamities befall the land.

- The diaspora option is a tool which can contribute to the economic development of a country. Government should devise policies, and programmes to encourage overseas skilled workers to increase foreign remittances.
- Diaspora networks should also be used to enable Pakistanis to provide the benefit of their skills and expertise and the transfer of technology.
- Since the sense of Muslim identity in Pakistani diaspora of 2nd and 3rd generation is getting less pronounced, the cultural aspects should be promoted to strengthen the ties with the motherland.
- The current contribution of foreign remittances is more than four (4) percent of GDP, and in some periods, they have become the major source of foreign exchange reserves. This should be encouraged and the tax structure related to remittances should also provide incentive for migrants to send more money. This may require amendments in the current Income Tax Ordinance.
- To optimize the number of migrants the government's migration policy should also be revised to bring down migration costs and enhancing migration benefits by enforcing social security coverage, welfare measures, protection of migrants in foreign countries and their useful employment on return.,
- A contributory welfare fund can be created for all registered migrants to insure them in case of accidents etc. The Community Welfare Attaches' in the Embassies of Pakistan can also help in protecting migrants' rights in disputes with their employers. This is important especially for less educated migrants who are not aware of their legal rights. In this regard diaspora engagement at both ends i.e. country of residence and country of origin is necessary. Also the governments of sender and receiver countries should cooperate in protecting diaspora laws and rights.
- A centre for study of Pakistani diaspora should be established for keeping record of Pakistani diaspora and facilitating resolution of their problems.
- The major part of the remittances being sent to Pakistan goes towards consumption expenditures, followed by debt repayment, construction/renovation of houses, expenses related to weddings/dowries for children, purchase of real estate, starting a business and finally on performing Hajj.. In this context Pakistani diaspora should be motivated for investing in education and other development projects as well. Government should facilitate

investment procedures and create avenues for secure and profitable investments by the diaspora.

- Fiscal incentives should be provided to the returning migrants who wish to set up small and/or medium scale businesses. These may take the form of tax breaks or other related initial concessions.
- Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) already working for the diaspora should further expand its functioning and provide services such as investment advice to the returning workers, helping potential investors, providing loans to the dependents of deceased workers and developing housing facilities for migrants.
- Pakistan embassies should encourage mutual interaction among diaspora through organizing national days and events and facilitate them in organizing themselves in some kind of social and welfare organizations abroad. By having better mutual interaction and relations they would be able to use their influence in the host countries to enhance Pakistan's soft image abroad and lobby for Pakistan to reinforce its diplomacy to advance its foreign policy objectives. ■

PAKISTAN-BRAZIL RELATIONS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

A conference on “Pakistan-Brazil Relations: Opportunities and Challenges” was organized by Islamabad Policy Research Institute in collaboration with Embassy of Brazil at the Embassy premises on October 10, 2012. Three speakers Dr. Sohail Khan,²³ Mr. Jamil Ahmed,²⁴ and Mr. Zulfikar Ali²⁵ participated in the Conference and put forward the following recommendations:

- There are no irritants to jeopardize mutual relationship between Pakistan and Brazil, hence the relationship is prospering. Still motivation is needed on both sides to further boost the ties. The country is full of opportunities and Pakistan should make use of these opportunities.
- People to people contact are more important than state level ties in that they create an abiding understanding. Through student exchange programmes for which Brazil has lot of space this process

²³ Director General America's Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan.

²⁴ Commercial Advisor to Embassy of Brazil in Pakistan and Chairman, Trade Delegation, Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

²⁵ C.E.O Parthenon General Contractors.

of achieving deeper and longer lasting understanding and awareness can be expedited.

- Currently, Pakistan's exports to Brazil are limited; these include mainly textiles, surgical instruments, and handicrafts etc. The private sector in particular can establish trade ties with Brazil which has a liberal trade regime.
- There is lack of contact between the business communities on both sides but the Brazilian Embassy is very active in bridging the gap between the investors on both sides. South America is emerging as a continent of opportunities. Pakistan should exploit the opportunities there.
- At the government level, the foreign and commerce ministries concluded an agreement with MERCOSUR, which would lead to preferential trade agreement (PTA) with the MERCOSUR members and partner countries. Pakistan is also working on building institute-to-institute relations so that the commercial activities can move fast without bureaucratic hurdles.
- Like Brazil, Pakistan should also give five-year visa to Brazilian businessmen. ■

PAKISTAN'S INTERNAL CHALLENGES AND RESPONSE

A national conference on "Pakistan's Internal Challenges and Response" was organized by Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) at IPRI Conference Hall, Islamabad on September 4, 2012. Three speakers, Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani, ²⁶Lt. General (R) Kamal Mateenuddin²⁷ and Prof. Dr. Naheed Zia Khan²⁸ participated in the conference and made the following recommendations:

- The first priority of the leadership and institutions is to break and clear the clogged lines of communications.
- Pakistan is no more just a country but a nation, the challenge now is of governance. Governance is a central question for societies that attain the status of a state.
- The imbalance between a dynamic society and a static state structure is a key challenge for governance; the society is growing at a great pace. The state cannot achieve stability until it learns to move with the society.

²⁶ Chairman, Gallup Pakistan and Professor, Department of Political Science, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

²⁷ Member, Board of Governors, IPRI.

²⁸ Dean, Faculty of Law, Commerce & Management and Administrative Sciences, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi.

- The reasons for lawlessness in Pakistan are multi-dimensional ranging from economics to bad governance. Economic growth that is attuned to addressing the urgent problems of the people alone can bring about a positive change.
- Intolerance in every respect has reached the tipping point. Every citizen irrespective of faith or religion should have equal rights in Pakistan.
- The security problem in Baluchistan has to be solved by Pakistan itself. The social injustice in the Baluchistan province has to be addressed first.
- Pakistan should present a united national response to US drone attacks.
- The national discourse in English newspapers should also be carried by the Urdu dailies to make the common people take part in that discussion and understand the problems of the society as a whole.
- The different educational systems are a source of deprivation for the poor who cannot benefit from getting their children educated. Uniform educational system is a must to mitigate the differences in the wages of people.
- The idea of freedom of expression is not followed in letter and spirit in Pakistan. The fear that engulfs the freedom of speech has led the progressive ideas fade away.. Free and fair discussions are the only way of getting the society harmonized and achieve stability.■

FUTURE OF PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS

A national conference “Future of Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations” was organized by Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) at IPRI Conference Hall, Islamabad on October 24, 2012. Four speakers Mr. Lutfur Rehman,²⁹ Dr. Tahir Amin,³⁰ Mr. Fazal-ur-Rehman³¹ and Mr. Ayaz Wazir³² participated in the Conference and made the following recommendations:

²⁹ Radio Producer and Expert on Pak-Afghan Border Issues, Islamabad, Pakistan.

³⁰ Chairman, National Institute of Pakistan Studies University (NIPS), Islamabad, Pakistan.

³¹ Director, China Study Centre/East Asia, Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI), Islamabad, Pakistan.

³² Former Diplomat of Pakistan to Afghanistan.

- An inclusive government in Kabul with adequate Pushtun representation should be formed and should be recognized by all stake holders.
- Pakistan's sensitivity to Indian involvement in Afghanistan must be given due weight by the concerned powers.
- Pakistan should stick to its principled approach on broad power sharing among all Afghan ethnic groups and facilitate that goal without interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan..
- Pakistan should not support Taliban as it did during the 1990s because that would annoy regional and international community and would consequently disturb Pakistan itself.
- Pakistan should not wait idly for the US exit. Time is now to develop a broad and clear approach and to seek a consensus among regional and global powers. Pakistan should play active role toward that end.
- Pakistan can support Afghanistan by sharing responsibility through multilateral mechanism. Pakistan, Afghanistan and China should participate in several development projects to strengthen the Afghan economy. As far as social sector is concerned, Pakistan should come forward by providing assistance in education.
- There should be emphasis on making a friendly Afghanistan and not a friendly government there. Let the Afghans decide their future and reach the solution and we should rather support and facilitate them. We have to treat them as a sovereign independent nation like we did before the Soviet invasion.■

WATER AND ENERGY SECURITY IN PAKISTAN: THE WAY FORWARD

A national conference on “Water and Energy Security in Pakistan: The Way Forward” was organized by Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) at IPRI Conference Hall, Islamabad on December 20, 2012. Three speakers Dr. Vaqar Ahmed,³³ Dr. Shaheen Akhtar³⁴ and Mr. Muhammad Mustansar Billah Hussain³⁵ participated in the Conference and put forward the following recommendations:

³³ Deputy Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan.

³⁴ Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Faculty of Contemporary Studies (FCS), National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad, Pakistan.

³⁵ Assistant Research Officer, IPRI.

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- Joint techno-economic evaluation of opportunities and determination of pre-requisites.
 - Establish financially sustainable energy entities, promote competition and ensure cost-reflective pricing of energy goods and services.
 - Develop project-specific legal/institutional arrangements.
 - Seek advice and support from multilateral institutions particularly in drawing experiences from Southern Africa Power Pool, Nordel/Nord Pool and electricity trade in Europe.
 - Pakistan should move away from a technical paradigm to a socio-centric paradigm that stresses a combination of demand & supply side management of water resources in the Indus Basin.
 - There is a stronger need to establish an authority with special focus on water management in Pakistan as there is no specialized department working in this area.
 - India should provide satellite telemetry in the Indus water system for real-time hydrology data on rivers it shares with Pak as this will remove mistrust between the two countries about sharing river waters.
 - There should be transparency in data sharing regarding the construction of storage facilities.
 - Pakistan needs reorientation in its energy policy.
 - Conservation and generation should be simultaneously pursued.
 - Further diversity in fuel mix is needed.
 - Dependence on furnace oil should be reduced.
 - Only Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline can resolve the issue of fuel deficiency and reduce dependence on furnace oil in near term.
 - The US pressure on the Iran Pipeline should be resisted.
 - Safety should be the top concern with regard to nuclear power generation.
 - Pakistan should prefer power generation by other means and nuclear power generation should be the last resort effort.
 - Wind and solar energy technologies should be utilized to diversify the energy sources and should make them the big contributors in electricity generation capacity in future.■