



MY BRIEF POLITICAL ROMANCE

What I Saw, What I Did

Meraj Hamayun Khan

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MPA (Ex) Provincial Assembly KP
Chairperson (Ex) Women Parliamentary Caucus



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To
Women
in the **Hope**
that they would soon
find their **Voice**

Acronyms

ADP	Annual Development Programme
AJI	Awami Jamhoori Ittehad
ANP	Awami National Party
APS	Army Public School
BC	British Council
BCE	Before Common Era
CII	Council of Islamic Ideology
CPA	Common Wealth Parliamentary Association
DCH	Diploma in Child Health
DRI	Democracy Reporting International
ECP	Election Commission of Pakistan
EU	European Union
FAFEN	Free and Fair Election Network
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FCPS	Fellow of College of Physicians & Surgeons
GS	General Seats
ICT	Information & Communication Technology
IPU	Inter Parliamentary Union
IT	Information Technology
Jl	Jamaat - e - Islami

JUI	Jamiat Ulema - e - Islam
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
LG	Local Government
MBBS	Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery
MOU	Memorandum Of Understanding
MPA	Member of Provincial Assembly
MRCP	Membership of the Royal College of Physicians
NADRA	National Database & Registration Authority
NAP	National Action Plan
NAP	National Awami Party
NCSW	National Commission for the States of Women
NGO	Non Government Organization
NPR	Net Performance Rating
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PAT	Pakistan Awami Tehrik
PEAD	Peace Education and Development Foundation
PCSW	Provincial Commission for the States of Women
PILDAT	Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development & Transparency
PIPS	Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services
PML (N)	Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz
PPP	Pakistan People Party
PSTs	Primary School Teachers
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
QWP	Qaumi Watan Party
ROB	Rules of Business
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNCHR	United Nations Commission for Human Rights
UK	United Kingdom
USAID	The United States Agency for International Development
WPC	Women Parliamentary Caucus

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Acknowledgments

Writing a book is harder than I thought and more rewarding than I could ever have imagined. I am really indebted to the special people around me who aided me in completing this book. Without their encouragement and support I might have given up the effort halfway through. My sincere thanks are due to:

My parents for educating and raising me into a sensitive and caring human being, and my siblings for being always available for counseling and guidance.

My best friend and life partner, Mr. Faridullah Khan, who cheers me up and encourages me not only to write but is always willing to critique and provide better wording when I get stuck.

Honourable Mr. Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao who pulled me into politics and gave me an opportunity to experience what I have written upon.

My beloved niece, Ms. Meena Khan, who spent her precious time for endless reading, commenting, and correcting the texts. Working with a professional editor was a new kind of education for me.

My very dear Mr. Mukammil Shah Yusafzai, Programme Director at De Laas Gul Welfare Programme, who is ever willing to join in my enterprises adding a new flavour to them. His expertise in graphs and statistical information was very helpful.

Mr. Muhammad Saeed, Chief Executive of Uni-Graphics for giving the final look and shape to this book.

Last, but not the least, all friends in Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), for financial support in printing.

Meraj Hamayun Khan

Preface

It is an old habit of mine to record my observations and experiences, so, at the conclusion of my tenure in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, it was expected that I would make an effort to put something on paper. In the beginning it was an informal piece based on facts as I saw them, but soon, without realizing it, I found myself writing the first book of its kind on the provincial legislature. With help from colleagues and management staff I was able to assemble and add information which would help newly elected members to settle in faster and immediately start working towards their objectives. It is hoped that this book will provide a coherent introduction to fundamental procedures.

It is also hoped that the management team in the Assembly will benefit by implementing some of the book's recommendations. The Secretary and his/her team might be able to create a more conducive environment for the interaction of the primary actors in the legislation process—lawmakers, secretariat staff, representatives from constituencies, donors and civil society organizations. A well-defined system of protocol and meetings will help in building better understanding among these groups which will positively impact on their performance.

About the Author

Ms. Meraj Hamayun Khan is a committed development professional and political leader with specialization in education and organizational development. As founder of the non - profit, De Laas Gul, she has pioneered several development initiatives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), gender empowerment and child protection,. She has also to her credit the founding of the high school, Meraj Private Academy, (currently LIMS), in Hayatabad.

Ms. Khan is the recipient of the Izaz-e-Fazilat Presidential Award in recognition of her contributions towards female education in rural areas. She was inducted into the Caretaker Provincial Government (Nov 2007–Mar 2008) with the important portfolio of Minister for Education. During the short term she helped restructure and improve the delivery system of the Department and its affiliated offices. She also prepared a comprehensive education plan to bring all children of the province into schools in the next four years.

Ms. Hamayun started her political career in August 1996 when she joined as President Women Wing in the newly created political party of Mr. Imran Khan, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. She started the Women Wing from scratch and mobilised women

voters for the support of the Party's candidates in the December 1996 elections. She also played a major role in organising the Party Convention in October 1997 after which she left the party and politics due to some differences with the Chairman and focused all her attention on her social work.

In January 2010, Ms. Hamayun restarted her political career on the invitation of Mr. Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao, President Pakistan Peoples's Party, (PPP Sherpao) later renamed Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) where she made rich contribution as member of the Central Executive Committee. She introduced the party on social media to spread the party's core values and political agenda which attracted new leaders and workers to the party. She was elected to the Assembly on a reserved seat for women. She was an active legislator especially after uniting all the women members to form the first Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) in the Assembly. This helped improve the contribution of women to Legislative business of The Assembly. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caucus was rated as the most active one among all the assemblies. Recently she joined Pakistan Muslim League (PML Nawaz).

Ms. Hamayun holds Masters degrees in English and Education and BS in Home Economics. She spends her time working in her home district, Swabi, and her adopted district Peshawar and the capital city, Islamabad.

1

The Beginning

It now seems so far back in time when I first stepped into the prestigious Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly (KP) on May 2, 2013 as a legislator of Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) on Women Reserved Seat 19. The excitement had dulled my feelings and perceptions and I felt as if I was sleepwalking. There was a thrill in the air and an excited chatter as each newly elected member stepped down from his/her vehicle at the entrance to the dome-shaped building and was greeted by other members. The media with their cameras and reporters and their ever critical eye were eagerly assessing us, which further added to my nervousness. I entered the impressive circular hall, with its gorgeously painted ceiling, in the company of my colleague and mentor, from Qaumi Watan Party and only friend at the time, Ms. Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli. She was not new to this, having served as a member under a previous government. However, even she was a bit taken aback at the sight of so many new and young faces. The hall, where tones must be subdued, resounded with their loud chatter, for youth must use its uncontrollable energy everywhere. The young can be totally oblivious to the norms and decorum of their surroundings.



Speaking at Budget Session 2017

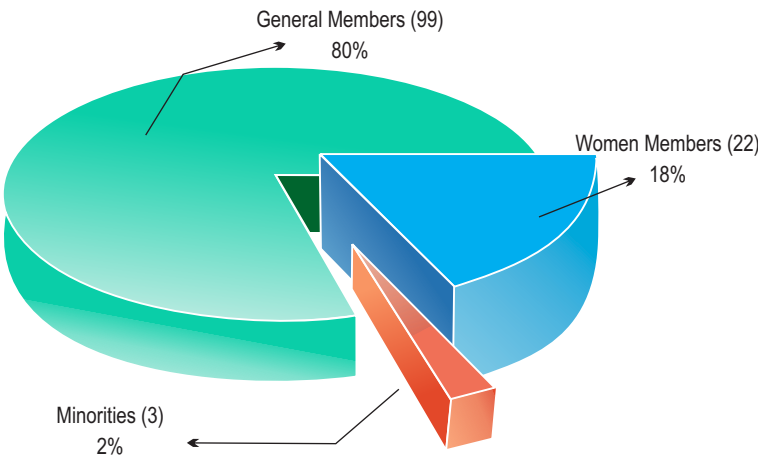
So began a short period in my life in the highest office of the province among 'family members' brought together through public voting to decide how best to run the affairs of the province. I was thankful to my Chairman, Mr. Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao, for this opportunity and looked forward to an exciting time learning a new science and mastering new techniques of advocacy and oratory. The 'course books' given to us included the Constitution of Pakistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Rules of Business, and Privileges of the Assembly Members.

We were a diverse group of 124 members belonging to different regions and different political parties. There were 22 women and three non-Muslims. Among the group were 99 members who were especially jubilant in exchanging greetings, having won their places through the rigors of an election campaign. The rest of us had been indirectly elected by different political parties to reserved seats for women and minorities. From Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) there were two of us, MPA Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli and myself. From the treasury benches there were 12 female members whereas the total from the opposition were 10. A total of seven political parties had representation.

Table 1.1

Assembly Members	Members
General Members	99
Women Members	22
Minorities	3
Total	124

Chart 1.1



To say that the majority of us were ignorant of the importance of our role and responsibilities would be a gross understatement. Even those of us who were highly educated could not distinguish between a Resolution, Call Attention Notice or Adjournment Motion. Nor did we know what the oversight responsibility of a legislator meant. All this was because there is no formal training conducted by the Government or political parties for prospective members of the Assembly. The country's education programme also does not prepare one for this technical and very intricate job.

The bells were ringing, which reminded me of my days in Presentation Convent School, my alma mater and first employer. Since the Catholic Church and the school were situated in the same premises, we would hear the bell ringing for the morning mass and we would also look forward to its ringing to announce recess and the closing of school. It was a melodious sound which relieved the dullness and monotony of lessons. We vied with each other to get a chance to pull the heavy bell rope, which was connected to a bell in a special tower. In the Assembly the bell rings to announce the starting time of the Sitting, prompting members to leave everything and seat themselves before the Speaker enters and begins proceedings. If the quorum is incomplete the Speaker asks for the bell to be rung for a few minutes to alert remaining members on the premises. Especially towards the end of our tenure, quorum was a big issue, probably due to pressures from constituencies as members started preparing for the next election. Many sittings had to be adjourned without even starting due to the absence of members from the government benches.

2

The Parliamentary History of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly is the legislative body of the government of one of the four provinces of Pakistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, previously known as North West Frontier Province (NWFP), renamed under the constitutional amendment in 2010. Peshawar is the capital of this province. The province is divided into 26 administrative regions called districts. Each district in its turn is demarcated into political constituencies, national and provincial, the number of which depends on the registered voters residing there. In the delimitation plan of 2018, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) approved the ratio of 350,000 population (with 10% variation up and down) per provincial constituency and 750,000 population (with 10% variation up and down) per national constituency. Provincial parliamentary elections are held every five years. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has 99 provincial constituencies and 35 national constituencies.

According to the *Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN)* report 2017, the total population of the province is 26,392,939, with 13,266,586 men and 13,126,353 women. Of the total, registered voters number 14,015,689, with 8,006,654 men and 6,009,035 women.

The province is rich in natural resources such as forests, minerals and rivers. It is also home to majestic mountains, glaciers and lakes, making it a popular tourist attraction. Unfortunately due to weak management and corruption it has remained an undeveloped region of the country. Hosting a record number of Afghan refugees over three decades has depleted the scarce resources and the long drawn-out 'war on terror' has caused irreparable damage not only to the already poor infrastructure, but also to the spirit and morale of the people, especially the young. The first decade of the 21st century witnessed large-scale migration from the province to the federal capital, Islamabad, or for those who could afford it, to Europe, Canada and the United States.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly is located in the heart of the historic city of Peshawar. Peshawar is an ancient city situated at the eastern end of the famous Khyber Pass. It has a unique culture shaped by the waves of diverse groups of conquerors who passed through this region, and after annexing it, moved on to conquer Delhi and establish their rule in India. The Pakhtuns who currently govern the city and the Province established their rule only during the reign of Bahlul Lodi in the 16th Century though several Pakhtuns dynasties had ruled over India during the period 12-15 centuries. This area seemed to have been only a resting ground for the conquerors who were aiming at taking control over Delhi, the capital of India. When Sher Shah Suri, the grandson of Ibrahim Khan, a trusted general of Bahlul Lodi, founded the Suri Empire at Delhi after overthrowing the second Mughal king, Humayun in 1538, he focused on development of the region. Sher Shah was a gifted administrator, strategist and a brave general. In his short span of seven years rule - he was killed in an accident in 1545 - he reorganized military and economic systems, introduced Rupiya and improved the postal system. Emperor Humayun called him Ustad i Badshahan (Mentor of kings) because of the wealth of his reforms which the Mughal kings adopted. It was during this

period when the Delhi-to-Kabul Shahi Road was extended as a northwestern extension of the Grand Trunk Road through the Khyber Pass and Peshawar and as far as Kabul. It was a period of fast economic growth.

The history of Peshawar dates back to 539 BCE. This makes it the oldest city in Pakistan. It was known by the Hindi Sanskrit name, Purushapura, meaning the city of men. It was the western capital of Gandhara Mahajanapada. By the 2nd century BCE it had become a busy Indian city of learning. About that time it was annexed by Persian Achaemenid Empire and, sometime later, by Alexander. His successor, Seleucus Nicator, ceded it to the Maurya dynasty but after the fall of this dynasty the control of the region went to Indo-Greek (reign: c. 321 – c. 297 BCE). This was the period when Greek culture, beliefs and symbols were introduced and amalgamated with Buddhist systems. That influence and the diffusion of Indo-Greek culture is still visible in the Greco-Buddhist art even though they had disappeared in Peshawar as a political entity around 10th century following the invasions of the Indo-Scythians. However it is possible that some pockets of Greek populations remained for several centuries longer under the subsequent rule of the Indo-Parthians and Kushans.

Peshawar was the capital city in the empire of the Kushan king, Kanishka. The Kanishka Stupa standing here was believed to be the tallest building of the world such was its glory and the status of its development until the raid by the White Huns. Under the Mughals it got back its past glory by becoming a busy trading center connecting Afghanistan and the countries beyond with Delhi. It was Akbar the Great, who named the city as Peshawar, meaning 'The Place at the Frontier' or 'Near Water'. Emperor Akbar was one of the mightiest rulers of India. Under him all regions of India, including Peshawar, thrived. He expanded the bazaars to encourage trade and the fortifications ensured security from invasions. Instead of conquerors India

now attracted intellectuals, artists, scholars, traders and scientists from all over. However, it was not a peaceful region. Pakhtunkhwa tribes were at constant war with Delhi for one reason or another. Khushal Khan Khattak, the Pashtun warrior poet, was born in Nowshera, near Peshawar, and his life was intimately tied to the city. Initially a supporter, later on he became an implacable foe of the Mughal rulers, especially Aurangzeb. The region passed through several more invasions between the Mughal rule and independence in 1947. First it was annexed by the Durranis of Afghanistan in 1757. Next came the Sikhs of the Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1818 who stayed on till 1849. The historical Bala Hisar is believed to have been constructed by Ranjit Singh. The British rule was the last one ending on August 14, 1947 when an independent state, Pakistan, was carved from India.

With this backdrop of the complex culture that the city has inherited, it is not difficult to understand the peculiar and unique environment and practices prevalent in the KP Assembly. To this day Peshawar plays a crucial role in regional politics due to its location as the gateway to the rest of the country and its cultural links with Afghanistan and Central Asia.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly is situated on the busy Khyber Road opposite the only four-star hotel of the provincial metropolis. Situated between the Old Peshawar City on the east and the newly developed centres, University Town, Campus and Hayatabad on the west, this part of the capital is known as the Cantonment. Cantonments were large areas taken over and developed by the military in the major cities of Pakistan (56 in total with ten in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) during the British regime. The infrastructure here is better, the air cleaner and the roads less congested. It is also the most secure part of the city because of the presence of large numbers of security agencies. However, during the past decade too many barricades and checkpoints have appeared, making it very difficult for

commuters and pedestrians to travel. The Khyber Road gate is the main entry point to the assembly premises, the other three gates are closed due to the security situation. Khyber Road, lying parallel to the Mall Road, Saddar Road, and Sunehri Masjid Road, forms the main artery connecting the eastern and western side of the city. It is actually the extension of the famous old Grand Trunk Road built by the Pakhtun genius warrior king mentioned earlier, Sher Shah Suri, who assumed power for a brief period after crushing the second Mughal Emperor, Humayun, to connect Kabul with Calcutta, the two ends of his kingdom.

Legislative business in the province predates the creation of Pakistan. In 1901 the North West Frontier Province was declared as Chief Commissioner Province and in 1932 its status was raised to Governor Province with a Legislative Council created under the Act of 1919. It had 40 seats out of which 28 seats were for Muslims and the rest for nominated members. The inaugural session of the Council was held on 19 April 1932 in Victoria Memorial Hall. In 1937 the Government of India Act 1935 was enforced in the province and the NWFP Legislative Assembly was formed with a total of 50 seats, General 9, Mohammedan 36, Sikh 3, and Landlords 2. The first general election took place between 1–10 February 1937, with 179,529 voters, approximately 14% of the population. The present building was also constructed around 1937.

The first session of the Assembly was summoned on 14 April, 1937 for oath taking at Victoria Memorial Hall, Peshawar City. The session was chaired by Khan Sahib Abdul Majid who had been appointed as Chairman by the Governor. Malik Khuda Bakhsh Khan was elected the Speaker and Khan Muhammad Sarwar Khan the Deputy Speaker. The first session of the assembly in the present building was held on 17 March, 1939. It was addressed by the Governor of NWFP, Nawab Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayum Khan. Nawabzada Allah Nawaz was

elected the Deputy Speaker. The Legislative Council was suspended on 10 November, 1939 due to differences of members on the War Resolution and Governor Rule was enforced which lasted till 25 May, 1943 when it was revoked and Mr. Sardar Bahadur Khan was elected as Speaker and Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan as Deputy Speaker.

A general election was held on 3 January, 1946 and the Assembly was summoned on 12 March, 1946. Nawabzada Allah Nawaz was elected the Speaker and Lala Girdheri Lal as Deputy Speaker. They held these positions till 22 August, 1947.

After Independence the first election was held on 15 December, 1951 and the session of the Assembly was summoned on 10 January, 1952. Following the declaration of One Unit on 3 October, 1955, when the country was divided into West and East Pakistan, the Legislative Assembly building was declared as Peshawar High Court. In 1970, through West Pakistan Dissolution Order 1970, the Province of North West Frontier (NWFP) came into being and under Legal Framework Order 1970 the Legislative Assembly was renamed the Provincial Assembly. The first session of the Provincial Assembly was summoned on 2 May, 1972 in the hall of the Pakistan Academy for Rural Development, University Town. The Assembly Secretariat was shifted to its present building in 1987.

During the period 1972-2013 i.e. 41 years, eight elections were held but it was only the Assembly of 2008 - 2013 that could complete its constitutional tenure of five years. Assembly 2002 - 2007 was dissolved just two days before completion after a successful no confidence vote against the Speaker. Before the Election of 2002, the Chief Executive of Pakistan, General (Rtd) Pervez Musharaf increased the number of seats in the Assembly to 124 with a composition of 99 general, 22 women reserved and three reserved for minorities. During martial law in the period 1955-1985 parliamentary business was suspended.

The old Assembly Hall, built in the style of the British Parliament with wall paneling and benches, is reminiscent of the days of the British Raj. Though small in size (seating for 50 members only) it has a special charm and a classical feel. On 13 April, 1948 the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, attended a session of the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa—North West Frontier province then- in this hall. A new Assembly Hall was built and inaugurated on



Old Assembly Hall currently called Jirga Hall

December, 2006 by the then Chief Minister, Mr. Akram Khan Durrani. The old hall is now known as Jirga Hall and roughly and carelessly used for serving refreshments to the male members or holding meetings with groups from outside. The Speaker expressed a desire to declare it as a national heritage and preserve it, but there were no practical steps taken.

The Assembly is administratively a very private and totally political institution. Despite its position as the most important institution in the province, it currently has no clearly defined rules and policies for management. All decisions regarding routine management and appointments are at the discretion of

the Speaker, who has immense powers which cannot be questioned or debated. There is no criteria for appointment and promotion. There are no service rules for assembly employees; some employees spend 12-15 years in the same grade without hope of promotion, while others gain rapid promotions without justification.

Although there are some 539 employees engaged to bring efficiency to the Assembly, the needs of the MPAs (members of the Provincial Assembly) are not being met because the staff's lack of education and experience results in a low quality of service. There is no legislative wing and drafting section to assist members who are eager to get work done or introduce innovation. The political appointments, made in their dozens, are a hindrance instead of support to the efficiency of the Secretariat. These 'extra' employees stand idle in the corridors chatting or staring at whoever is passing by. For women especially it is uncomfortable to have to find an 'opening' in the crowd to go to their work area.

The Assembly has a vast covered area and comprises a four-storey main block, including a basement with different administrative sections. On the ground floor are the old and new halls, the chambers of Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Leader of the Opposition, Chief Minister, women, the offices of the Secretary and senior officials of the Assembly. The first floor has, on one side, the conference room and offices of the legislative section and, on the other, the library and a few administrative offices. The uppermost floor is for galleries and recording. A building housing offices and a bank is on the right side of the gate and the mosque on the left. The front is a lawn where national festivals are celebrated. Recently, construction work on a three-storey building has begun, to create offices and parking space for the ever-increasing personnel and vehicles. There are about 539 employees working in a structure which can comfortably house only half that number, but no one dare question the political appointments that are effected by each new Speaker, thus swelling the number.

3

Legislative Business

According to its website, 'The Assembly Secretariat contributes in the domain of "PARLIAMENTARY" oriented business to the advancement of society through legislative research, creative activity, constituents' inquiry, and development of knowledge on the functionaries of the members' of Parliament and Cabinet. The Assembly preserves and promotes past, current and futuristic scope of legislative norms and best parliamentary practices to achieve local and millennium goals. The Assembly also serves the citizens through public participation through visits and provision of public record related to MPAs and organizational structure of the employees. The Secretariat is dedicated to the production of quality human resource for the knowledge-driven orientation and understanding of the people of Pakistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular'.

A member of the legislative assembly has three core responsibilities:

1. To legislate, i.e. draft bills to table in the sessions for improving governance systems or/and address critical issues faced by the public.

2.	To oversee the implementation of the bills passed by the assembly
3.	To represent her/his constituency in the assembly

In addition to these I think he/she must also learn to effectively and impressively represent the assembly at different forums. For women and minorities there is the additional responsibility of representing their special groups and trying to remove injustices and discrimination in the system.

Assembly business comprises legislative and non-legislative business. Legislative business encompasses bills that are tabled for debate, whether by government or a private member. If a bill is approved by a parliamentary majority it is sent to the Governor for approval before it becomes a legal document called an Act. A provincial assembly can table bills only on those subjects which are not mentioned in Schedule 4 of the Constitution or those which might be present in the list of the Constitution but for which a federal law has not been passed yet. Government Bills are introduced by a minister and private bill may be tabled by any member. Both need a simple majority to be passed. However, a bill proposing amendments to an existing bill requires 3 quarters majority. The first bill that is tabled in the new Assembly is the Finance Bill, the mother of all the bills that are to come later. This bill lays down the basic principles and objectives of the Government's development programme for the year and the allocated expenditure for each sector. The debate over the Finance Bill can stretch over a long period as members, especially from the opposition, try to give Government a tough time. Failure in passing this Bill could be the end of the Government, therefore members from the treasury are very tense and no one is allowed to absent herself / himself during voting on "cut motions". Cut Motions are actually

demands from members of the opposition - members of the Government may also join in but it is not encouraged - to reduce budgetary allocation for each department. It is a tedious exercise requiring full attention and patience to hear each argument in favour and against. Due to time constraints and the importance of timely approval of this bill, the Speaker may use his power to 'guillotine' motions, which means in layman's language cancellation of the remaining motions.

Non-legislative business comprises questions, resolutions, call attention notices, privilege motions and adjournment motions. These are the tools used by members to express their views, beliefs and actions, which they feel are needed to improve governance and ensure efficient delivery of services to the populace. Through this process legislators can also initiate debate on urgent and crucial problems faced by their constituents.

The process of drafting a bill is long and tedious. After the identification of an issue consultations are held with specialists of the subject. Several drafts are generated before the submission of the final copy in the assembly secretariate which forwards it to the law department. The law department analyzes the draft from a constitutional point of view and considers the financial implications. Once the draft is approved by the law department it is ready to be tabled in the Assembly. Members are given three days to submit their amendments. The bill is then debated in light of amendments and when the House is satisfied with the final text, the bill becomes an act or law ready for implementation by the concerned department/s. Bills drafted by private members are submitted in the Assembly Secretariat which sends them to the relevant department. The department then engages the law and finance departments to analyze the bill and when they are satisfied with the content of the bill the process inside the House is initiated.

The dates for holding assembly sessions are decided by the Speaker and the Secretary is responsible for publishing the date, starting and ending time, in the gazette and also sending written information to each member. Opposition can requisition a session if they feel there is urgent need for debate on a certain issue but acceptance of the written requisition is the prerogative of the speaker. Sessions can be held on any working day. Thursdays are especially reserved for business tabled by a member in a private capacity. The other days are all used for government bills, resolutions and other business. However, the leader of the house can request to entertain some other business. The Sitting cannot start if the quorum is not complete. It is adjourned after the debate on the day's agenda is completed. Assembly is prorogued for an indefinite period when the business is completed.

Sessions are attended by members, senior officials of line departments whose issues are included in the agenda, members of the media and the general public. The Assembly Secretariat and security personnel are all on duty and vigilantly watch the proceedings. Due to the prevailing law and order situation, the roads leading to the Assembly on all sides are also heavily guarded. All of these arrangements increase the expense, so the output must justify this expense.

There is a set agenda for each sitting which commences with recitation from the Holy Quran followed after which members leave applications are called for approval. This is followed by one hour fixed for dealing with questions raised mainly from the opposition. These questions provide a rich insight into the working of a department, but the question must be carefully worded and presented so as to extract meaningful information from the department. If a response from the minister does not satisfy the opposition the question may be referred to the standing committee of that department.

Standing Committees are the backbone of an Assembly as it is here that members can thoroughly air their views and take decisions after an intense consultative process. There were a total of 36 standing committees, each consisting of nine members, and their purpose was to deeply examine different dimensions of an issue raised in the Assembly Sitting and decide how it may be resolved. There was a standing committee for each development department, and for areas such as privileges, law and rules of business, and finance. The Speaker wields supreme power informing these committees and makes full use of it. The Assembly Rules clearly state that membership of a standing committee should be made according to qualifications, and membership lists should be prepared by the Speaker and the Leader of the Opposition before seeking the House's approval. However, a stipulation in the rules allows the Speaker to unilaterally decide the membership after getting permission from the House.

Standing committees are critical tools for legislative oversight of the executive. During my tenure as legislator from 2013 to 2018, I was initially a member of three committees: Law and Parliamentary Reforms, Elementary and Secondary Education, and Rules of Law. Later I was made a member of the Committee on Privileges and on Assembly Rules of Business. I was also appointed as the Chairperson of the Standing Committee of Science and Technology and Information Technology, increasing the tally to five committees. The process of formation of a committee was arbitrary; some members were placed in nine committees while others got only three. Assembly rules prescribe that members are nominated on the basis of their suitability to the committee and later elected by the House but there is also a provision to give power to the Speaker to make the appointments. In our case, the Speaker used the provision and asked the House whether he was allowed to appoint members of the standing committees and, without waiting for the response, he announced, 'The ayes have it'. The

result was that those familiar with assembly systems joined the choicest committees and the rest of us were placed wherever the Speaker deemed it fit. The same process applied to the election of the chairpersons who should be elected by the House, giving due consideration to qualifications and experience; instead the Speaker overruled the stipulation and appointed the Chairs himself.

The effectiveness of the committees depends on the dedication of the chairperson and members. During this tenure there was a feeling that the committees were failing to strengthen the oversight function of the legislators. Meetings were not held or the absence of members led to the issue of quorum. Committee meetings have to be planned and coordinated efficiently. The Chairperson, the members, the line department and the assembly section responsible have to work closely before and after a meeting to make progress on an issue. However, I was told, the Assembly management was under a lot of stress during the formation of committees due to repeated changes; until the very end, they said, they were not sure where each member was. The Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment 2010 also added to the troubles of the Assembly



Chairing Standing Committee Meeting

Secretariat as the Government, in total disregard for the Amendment, appointed ministers, advisers and a large number of parliamentary secretaries who, according to parliamentary rules, could not be included in a Standing Committee.

In addition to the standing committees there are always some select or special committees formed for the special function of building a consensus on a bill or a crucial issue on which the House is divided. A very important committee is the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), which is chaired by the Speaker and which, unfortunately, despite our repeated requests, does not have any female membership. There is therefore no discussion from a gender perspective and, as discussions and decisions are not shared with women, they remain ignorant of the proceedings.

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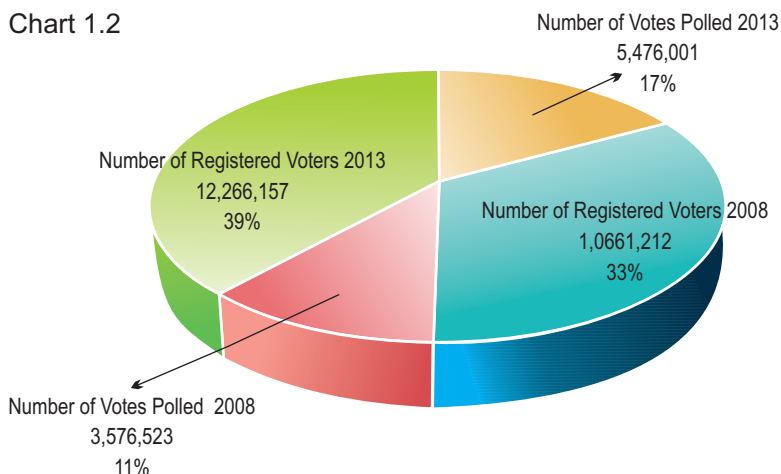
The Assembly 2013 - 18

The 2013 election was a historic event in the country. For the first time a constitutionally elected government had completed its five years tenure and power was being handed over to a new government through a process of election. There was a lot of excitement and enthusiasm as there was more awareness about the importance of voting. Young and old, women and even children were involved in campaigns. Banners and billboards added colour to buildings and streets and freshly composed poetry endlessly filled the air. Living was fun. The following table shows the comparison of registered and polled votes in 2008 and 2013:

Table 1.2

Number of Registered Voters 2008	1,0661,212
Number of Votes Polled 2008	3,576,523
Number of Registered Voters 2013	12,266,157
Number of Votes Polled 2013	5,476,001

Chart 1.2



Elections to the national and provincial assemblies were held on the same day, 11th May, 2013. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province total votes polled were 5,476,001 (male 7,008,533 and female 5,257,624) for 35 National Assembly seats and 99 Provincial Assembly seats. For the provincial 99 seats there were 2287 candidates. For the reserved seats, 22 for women and three for minorities, the contesting political parties submit lists of their nominated candidates to the Election Commission. When the result of the 99 general seats is finalized and announced, then the Election Commission calculates the formula (number of general seats against one person from the list) for election on the reserved seat. In the 2013 election four general seats could get one reserved seat for women. Since my party, QWP had won 8 general seats, therefore two of us, Ms. Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli and me, secured seats.

For the reserved seats for women there were 229 candidates nominated by different political parties whereas for the three seats reserved for minorities there were 70 candidates.

The Inaugural Session of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly was held on 29 May, 2013 in which all the members took oath. Elections for the new Speaker and Deputy Speaker were held the next day. Both positions were won by the Government nominees, Mr. Asad Qaiser and Mr. Shahid Qureshi respectively and they took oath the same day. The position of Leader of the House was subsequently won by another PTI nominee, Mr. Pervez Khattak, in the election held on 31 May, 2013, while MPA Moulana Lutf -ur- Rahman of Jamiat Ulema -e- Islam became the Leader of the Opposition.

For the constitution of the Standing Committees of the House a verbal resolution moved by Mr. Israrullah Khan Gandapore, Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs, was passed on 2 June, 2013 which empowered the Speaker to constitute the Committees under Rule 193 of Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Procedure and Rules of Business 1988.

4.1 The Management

The Speaker's job is a technical one. There are many rules to follow in addition to understanding the Constitution and legal terms of the bills introduced in the assembly sessions. As such he/she has to have an excellent working relationship with the assembly management. The assembly bureaucracy includes the secretary at the top and the special secretary and additional secretaries working under him, followed by the section officers, assistants and so on. During my tenure the post of secretary was filled by Mr. Amanullah Khan, who had from the rank of junior clerk to an elevated position and generally kept a low profile. Upon Mr. Amanullah Khan's retirement Mr. Nasrullah Khattak assumed the role. I found him to be a courteous and agreeable Secretary who did not move a finger without first getting approval from the Speaker. There was, however, a certain amount of tension surrounding his appointment.

Elsewhere in the Assembly suspicions of favouritism compromised the working environment, for example in the selection of candidates for foreign travel as part of the capacity development programme. Nevertheless, some were 'favoured' for good reasons. One of these was Special Secretary, Mr. Attaullah, who had a reasonably good command of English and a vast knowledge of parliamentary history and the Assembly as an institution, and was involved in all consultations with the Speaker. In addition to being an adviser to the Speaker, he headed the Department of Information and Technology and took pride in introducing technology to assembly business with assistance from the provincial Information Technology (IT) Department. Under this initiative, an e-governance mechanism was introduced in the Assembly, setting the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly apart from the other provincial legislatures. It was aimed at raising awareness and harnessing the potential benefits of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in supporting the Parliament's basic values of transparency, accessibility, accountability and effectiveness, as well as its representative, legislative and oversight functions. Latest models of computers are installed at the seat of every member, with core legislative modules on questions, resolutions, call attention notices, bills, order of the day, debates and other relevant parliamentary business available to them.

In the legislative division, another management employee who deserves praise is Senior Secretary, Mr. Kifayat Khan Afridi, whose face somehow expressed his purity of soul and innocence of mind. His small office was cosy and comfortable and his advice always very frank and balanced. It was a pity that he was ignored during the promotion process. Another gem of a person, both academically and personality-wise, was Deputy Secretary Mr. Hidayatullah Khan. His interest and knowledge of legislation and the whole assembly business was matched only by Mr. Afridi. Mr. Hidayat had a slight edge over Mr. Afridi due to his language skills, especially written and spoken English, the

language of assembly correspondence. A good Speaker would have united all these wonderful people who were his rich assets and together they could have greatly improved the working and efficiency of the assembly systems. Unfortunately, the jealousies generated by unwise policies caused a visible deterioration in management structure.

4.2 The Leaders

The elected legislator who heads and controls the affairs of the assembly is called the Speaker. The speaker is elected by the members of the house soon after they have taken oath as legislators. Mr. Asad Qaiser of PTI was elected on 30 May, 2013. Mr. Asad Qaiser is a simple, 'countrified' man from village Marghuz, Swabi District, from where he gained his early education. After graduation from Government College, Swabi, he joined the school which his father had set up in his village and began his political career with Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JI). He was elected Nazim of Kotha College, Swabi, as a candidate of Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba in 1984 where he served for two years.

He joined PTI after its formation in 1996 and was nominated as district president for Swabi in the same year. He became the president of PTI, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2008, a position in which he served until 2013. He rose to prominence after the 2013 elections, when his party nominated him for the position of speaker of KP Assembly. He was said to aspire to the position of KP chief minister, and there were rumours of a great deal of tension between him and Mr. Pervez Khattak, the other contender who had recently joined PTI. It was alleged that with great difficulty and the personal intervention of the party chief, Mr. Imran Khan, the issue was resolved and Mr. Asad Qaiser agreed to become the Speaker.

Mr. Shahid Qureshi, a member from Kohat, was initially elected to the prestigious post of Deputy Speaker, but since he desired to be a Minister, the party gave him the portfolio of Minister of Law. After his position became vacant election to the post of Deputy Speaker was held again and the government nominee, Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani—a mature lady with no political knowledge or experience—won with ease. Born in Mardan, Dr. Roghani holds the degrees of MBBS from Pakistan, DCH from Glasgow, FCPS (Hons) from Pakistan and MRCP from Ireland. She is an honest and hard-working woman with a quick temper, who was sometimes accused of being too dictatorial and treating others as if they were school children. For us women, however, her appointment was very welcome because she encouraged us and gave us time to participate in the assembly debate. Her office also gave us some extra space to meet and discuss our issues. She took advantage of our skills and experience and we gladly helped because we were gaining experience and knowledge. Thus it was that MPA Amna Sardar and myself found ourselves being involved in all the duties of the Deputy Speaker, and I was frequently given the opportunity to chair the meetings of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Rule of Law.

The second election the assembly holds after that of the speaker is of the chief minister, the leader of the house and the head of the government. Since PTI had a majority along with the voters of its coalition partners, Jamat-e-Islami (JI) and Awami Jamhoori Ittehad, (AJI) it was easy for Mr. Pervez Khattak to win and become the Leader of the House. Born in Nowshera, Mr. Khattak was educated in the prestigious Aitchison College, Lahore. He belongs to a well known political family of the province so his training and grooming as a politician started early. In his 36-year career he has had many successes, never losing elections in his constituency. As the Chief Minister, he followed a policy of peaceful co-existence with the federal

government headed by the rival party, Pakistan Muslim League (N). However, his support for peaceful talks with Taliban and anti-terrorism policy led to conflict with the Centre.

Mr. Khattak carried out several healthcare reforms, such as introducing the Health Insurance Scheme, the Sehat Sahulat Programme for poor people and an 'Insulin for Life' fund. Reforms in the police service to empower and give autonomy were also noteworthy. However, there was no significant progress on human rights issues, especially discrimination against women and the protection of children through efficient implementation of laws and policies. The much maligned 'VIP culture' was toned down and financial management addressed, but not to the point that is needed for a developing country like Pakistan. The financial accountability introduced by Pakhtunkhwa entitled it to an extra Rs.1.5 billion (\$150 million) from the federal government.

Mr. Khattak's Government tried to work with religious ulema (clergy) in order to implement his reform agenda of education for all. This required engagement with religious scholars and institutions to convince them to adopt the government curriculum in the madrassahs (religious schools). However, the policy of madrassah reform especially the funding of Darul Uloom Haqqania, renowned for its links with the Taliban, was heavily criticised by many.

The opposition and the bureaucracy also disapproved of his late working hours, which impacted on women in particular—his meeting time was after 8pm, which is unacceptable to women as it clashes with family time and is also against the culture of meeting men, no matter what their rank, in the evenings. Along with this there were accusations of nepotism and favouritism, and relatively low attendance in the latter years of the period in question. Despite these perceived shortcomings, I rate him as a shrewd political leader on the

basis of the fact that he successfully prevented the dissolution of the Assembly on several occasions. He worked under a great deal of pressure, having to balance the demands of his own party leader and the coalition partners. He also proved his aptitude for political 'wheeling and dealing', getting all of his nominees elected during the senate elections.

In a parliamentary system the leader of the opposition holds a special status. Together with the speaker, he/she is responsible for the assembly calendar, agenda for the sessions, nominations for standing committees, and taking decisions on relevant house issues. During my tenure Maulana Lutf -ur-Rehman was the Leader of the Opposition as his party had secured 17 seats and he had the strong backing of his party chief and elder brother, Moulana Fazl ur Rehman. He is a soft-spoken and extremely courteous person who would never ruffle feathers or antagonize anyone. As such he made life easy for the Speaker and it seemed to us that there was no opposition in the House.

Next in line to the leaders of the house and the opposition are the parliamentary leaders of all the political parties represented in the assembly. During this tenure there were therefore six parliamentary leaders in addition to the Chief Minister. Sardar Aurangzeb Nalotha headed the third-largest group, Pakistan Muslim League (N). He was well respected by his colleagues and members of the other political parties. Mr. Sikander Hayat Khan Sherpao, the eldest son of Mr. Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao, the Chairman of Qaumi Watan Party (QWP), was the Provincial Chairman as well as parliamentary leader of QWP in the Assembly. Intelligent, polite and highly educated, Mr. Sikander Khan was well respected by the ruling party as well as opposition members. Female members appreciated the fact that he extended respect to all who associated with him. As a parliamentary leader, though, he did not leave a notable record of achievement. In my opinion, he was quite content to leave much business to his mentor and

guide, MPA Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli. Mr. Muhammad Ali, the parliamentary leader of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), will be remembered more for his absences than any worthwhile contribution to assembly business. The vacuum created by his absence was competently filled by MPANighat Orakzai.

In my opinion, the most potent and memorable performance as a parliamentary leader was that of Sardar Hussein Babak of Awami National Party (ANP). His oratory skills, his choice of words, the content of his speeches and his gestures were admirable. He spoke with the confidence of a leader of the house or opposition, even though his party had only five members. He was forthright and clear-headed and never failed to point out the lack of transparency in proceedings, the sad neglect of assembly rules and traditions, the failure to hold private members' days and other such issues. In the last Sitting he was angered by the failure of the House to elect a new deputy speaker as well as by the proposed name for the Caretaker Chief Minister given by the leaders of the House and Opposition without consulting other parliamentary leaders and gaining parliamentary approval. He referred to media reports of large funds being allegedly received by the leaders from the proposed candidate, which was setting a dangerous precedent and which could prevent hard-working, genuine political leaders with a weak financial position from joining government.

From the treasury side no minister or member left a mark; I would say that they will be remembered more for their absence, or for the immaturity and indiscipline they displayed when present. Questions were left unanswered or deferred due to absence of the respective ministers, who shirked their responsibility under the constitutional proviso of 'collective responsibility' and left the Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Arif Yusaf, or the Minister of the Public Health & Engineering Department (PHED) and the Information Department, Mr. Shah Farman, to respond to all the questions or issues that came up for debate.

4.3 Highlights

During the first parliamentary year ten members were elected in bye- elections for the seats vacated due to multiple reasons. The seats of three members, Mr. Imran Khan from Mardan, Mr. Farid Khan from Hangu, and Mr. Israrullah Gandapore from Dera Ismail Khan, fell vacant due to their martyrdom in terrorist attacks on 18 June, 22 August, and 16 October, 2013 respectively while minority member, Mr. Soran Singh, lost his life in a targeted attack. The seat of Arbab Akbar Hayat Khan was vacated due to his sudden death. Four seats fell vacant due to the disqualification of Mr. Yousaf Ayub from Abbottabad due to fake degree, Mr. Qaimos Khan from Swat, Mr. Behram Khan of Dir, and Mr. Javed Khan of Swat. The seat of Sardar Mehtab Khan was vacated when he resigned and took oath as Governor of the province and that of Mr. Sirajul Haq when he resigned and was elected to the Senate.

The second session of the parliamentary year 2014-15 was the longest in the history of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly. It started on 23 October 2014 and went on for seven months.

As 70% of the members in the Provincial Assembly were serving for the first time, the Secretariat of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly conducted a survey through the Steering Committee on Capacity Building formed for this specific purpose in 2015 to identify challenges hampering effective legislative proceedings. On the basis of the findings and recommendations of the survey it was decided to launch a project for strengthening the capacity of KP Assembly and its members, with support from the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project was to include, as value addition an exposure-opportunity led by British Council to the Scottish Parliament, Westminster and Tynwald Parliament to learn about their best practices and improve the parliamentary proceedings of KP Assembly.

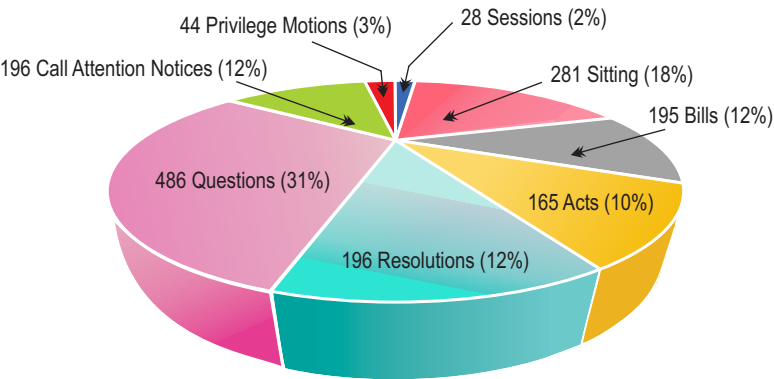
An initial scoping visit was conducted by a delegation of KP parliamentarians, which had representation from all KP political parties and the British Council (BC), Pakistan, and based on its findings, it was decided that the British Council would facilitate exposure-visits to the three parliaments. Consequently in July 2016, KP Assembly signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the British Council Pakistan, establishing the 'Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Parliamentarians' Capacity Building Programme' for 18 months. During these exposure visits for learning purposes, delegates would receive orientation on core themes such as good governance, parliamentary practices and business rules, accountability procedures and e-governance.

The key statistics of legislative and non-legislative business during our five-year tenure (May 2013 - May 2018) are listed below:

Table 1.3

S. #	Business Category	Frequency
1.	Sessions	28
2.	Sittings	281
3.	Bills	195
4.	Acts	165
5.	Resolutions	196
6.	Questions	486
7.	Call Attention Notices	196
8.	Privilege Motions	44

Frequency



Of the 165 Acts 81 related to new subjects, whereas 85 were amendments to previous Acts. The 81 new Acts included 22 Acts which were directly linked to public welfare, such as:

Table 1.4

Name of Act	Year
KP Senior Citizens Act	2014
Injured Persons and Emergency Act 2014	2014
Protection of Breast Feeding and Child Nutrition Act	2015
Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 2015	2015
Prohibition of Employment of Children Act 2015	2015
Lissail-e-Wal Mahroom Act 2015	2015
Prohibition of Interest on Private loans Act 2015	2015
Blood Transfusion Safety Act 2016	2016
KP Commission on the Status of Women Act 2016	2016
Free and Compulsory Education Act 2017 etc.	2017

The 85 acts for amendments are particularly interesting to study as they comprise several amendments to the same acts, raising questions about the quality of the original legislation. For example, the KP Local Government Act 2013 had to be amended six times, while the KP Ehtisaab Commission was amended five times.

Some 22 of the Acts, including the following, were those which, if implemented in their true spirit, would strengthen the governance system and improve service delivery:

Table 1.5

Name of Act	Year
KP Local Government Act 2013	2013
Right to Information Act 2013	2013
Ehtesab Commission Act 2013	2013
Right to Public Service Act 2013	2013
Farms Services Centres' Act 2014	2014
Public Private Partnership Act 2014	2014
Delimitation of Local Councils Act 2014	2014
Health Care Commission Act 2014	2014
Prevention Of Conflict of Interest Act 2014	2014
Whistle blower Protection & Vigilance Commission Act 2014 etc.	2014

Quite a large number of Acts were passed under pressure from employees' unions and pressure groups to regularize employees who had been appointed on special contracts or on an ad hoc basis in different departments, a practice which goes against rules of governance and the policy of strengthening of institutions, and which consolidates the existing system of political appointments and nepotism.

The data shows that the KP Assembly prioritized health and education in legislation during the five-year period: 15 bills on education were passed, along with 16 on health. Corruption and accountability were also increasingly tackled, with 10 laws passed in this area. However, analysis by the print daily *The News* shows that the PTI Government in KP failed to pass any laws on issues like tax reforms, the criminal justice system and special persons' rights, despite lofty promises in the party election manifesto.

The statistical figures are impressive, a reflection of the Government's seriousness in developing a transparent and efficient governance system through legislation. However, with a little bit more discipline and effort in planning and preparation on the part of the Speaker and his team members as well as the elected members, the proceedings could have been even more productive, informative and interesting. In the absence of appropriate planning and checking in advance, time and money spent on an Assembly Sitting can be a total waste of precious resources. During my tenure, delays in starting the proceedings had become routine and attendance of members per session was approximately 58%.

Governance, economy and Local Government (LG) were other priorities for the Khyber governments. Legislation approved included the Right to Public Services Bill 2014, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Private Schools Regulatory Authority Bill 2017, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Bill 2013, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Bill 2013, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Promotion, Protection and Enforcement of Human Rights Bill 2014, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Free Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education Bill 2017, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Bill 2015, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Protection of Communal Properties of Minorities Bill 2014, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Senior Citizens Bill 2014, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of

Women Bill 2016, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Bill 2017, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Interest on Private Loans Bill 2016, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prevention of Conflict of Interest Bill 2016 and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ehtesab Commission Bill. All these bills received rich accolades from the public and raised their expectations of the newly inducted Government. However, progress on implementation was nil in all cases, except for the Right to Information Act 2013, which is globally acknowledged as the third-best in the world. The Local Government Act 2013 was also much needed legislation, which was put into use almost immediately in the 2015 local government elections. Due to this Act 44,000 men and women were elected to village, tehsil and district councils; devolution to the grassroots had at last taken place. However, the Act was amended six times during the remaining years of the tenure, raising questions about its many structural gaps. The Ehtisaab Commission Act 2013 was introduced with great fanfare, but before it could take off, chinks appeared and infighting among the legislators, the departments responsible for implementation, and the members of the Commission led to its eventual demise.

Politicians from opposition parties were skeptical about the legislation tabled during this tenure, calling them 'bills of bureaucracy' and not of the legislators, hence the difficulty in implementation. According to Mr. Saqibullah Khan Chamkani, Vice President of Awami National Party (ANP), bills drafted purely by the bureaucracy are more for their own protection and advancement rather than the good of the public. This happens, according to him, when parliamentarians are ignorant about their role in parliamentary business and weak in handling a powerful bureaucracy.

As a woman, it is a matter of great pride and joy for me that women lawmakers contributed more than one-fifth of the Assembly's agenda during the period May, 2013 – February,

2017. They submitted 693 (20%) questions, eight (16%) adjournment motions and 47 (14%) call attention notices, demonstrating their interest in the Assembly's core function of overseeing the executive performance. They also represented public issues and aspirations through resolutions. Women sponsored 46% of the resolutions brought before the House. They also contributed to the legislation by sponsoring six out of 17 Private Member's Bills'. (FAFEN Report for the Period May 2013 – February 2017)



Submission of Resolution

Details of the Report are given on next page:

Legislation Details of the FAFEN Report for the Period May, 2013 to February, 2017

LEGISLATION

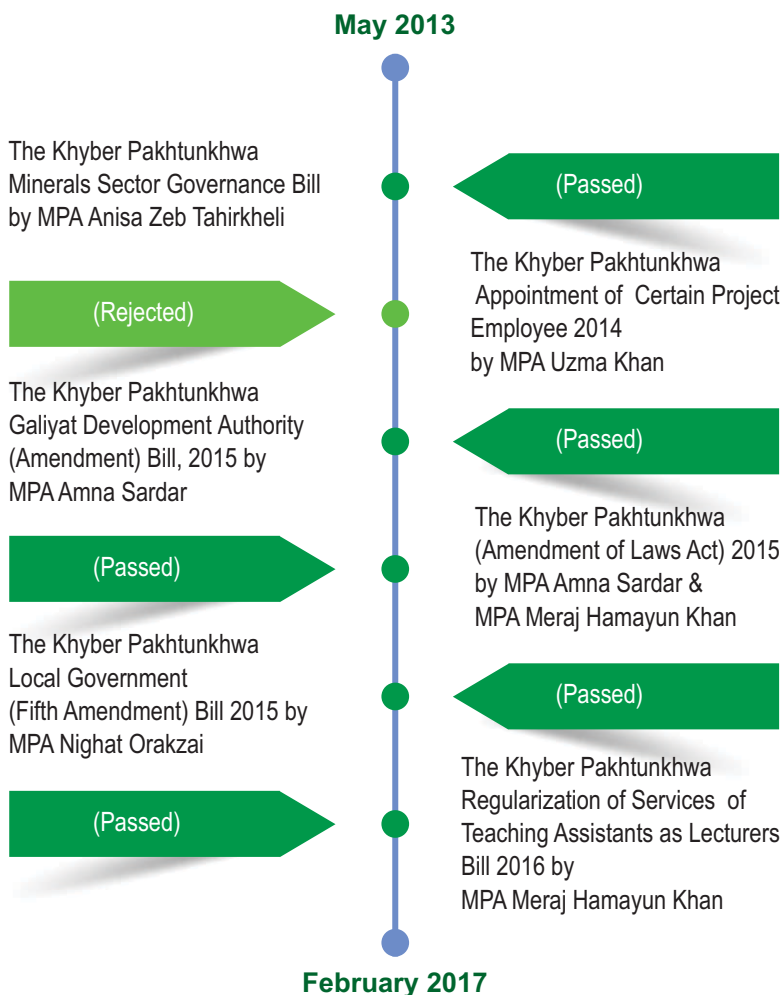


Table 1.5

Resolution	Numbers
MPA Nighat Orakzai	28
MPA Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli	24
MPA Meraj Hamayun Khan	15
MPA Amna Sardar	14
MPA Uzma Khan	13
MPA Fouzia Bibi	6
MPA Najma Shaheen	6
MPA Yasmeen Pir Mohammad Khan	6
MPA Zareen Riaz Khan	5

Resolution Chart

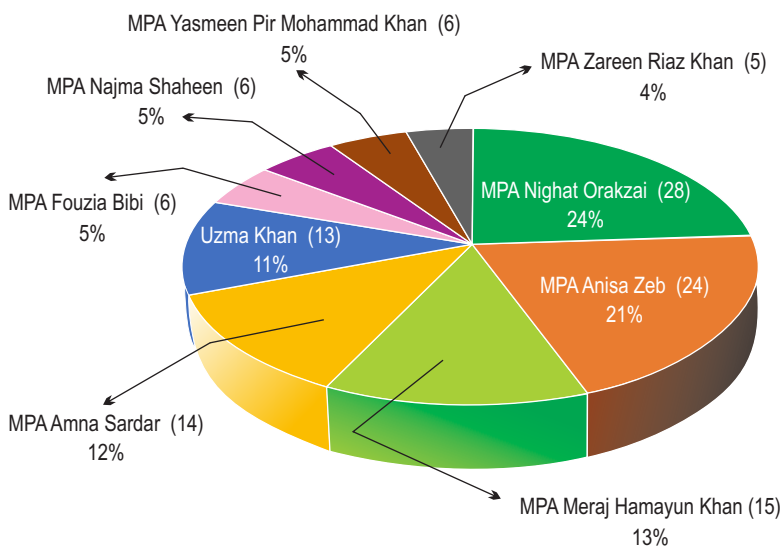


Table 1.7

Questions	Numbers
MPA Sobia Shahid	195
MPA Najma Shaheen	193
MPA Uzma Khan	120
MPA Meraj Hamayun Khan	101
MPA Amna Sardar	21

Assembly Questions Chart

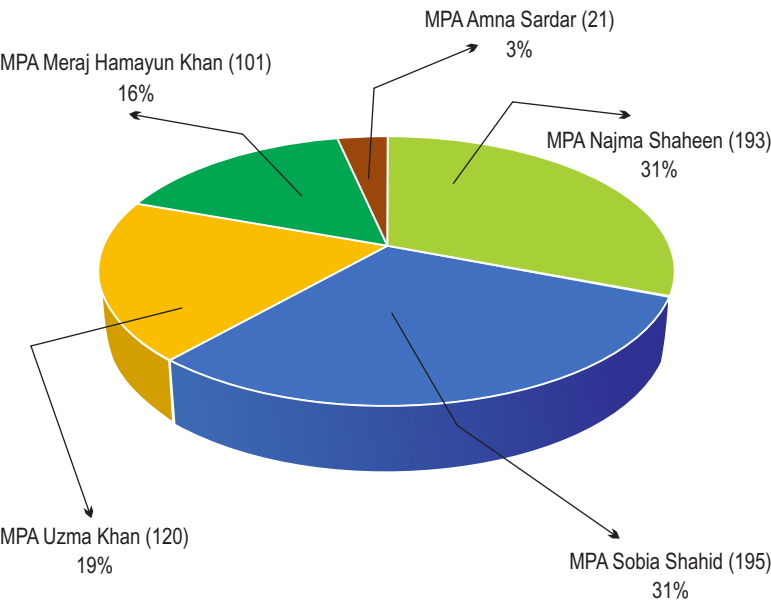
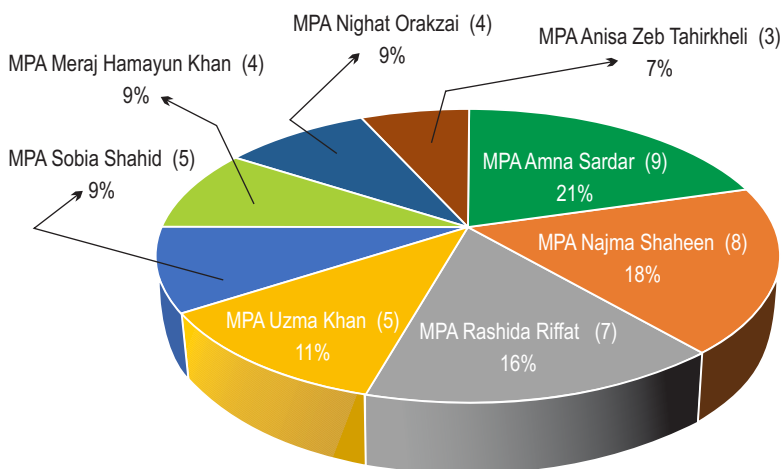


Table 1.8

Call Attention Notices	Numbers
MPA Amna Sardar	9
MPA Najma Shaheen	8
MPA Rashida Riffat	7
MPA Uzma Khan	5
MPA Sobia Shahid	4
MPA Meraj Hamayun Khan	4
MPA Nighat Orakzai	4
MPA Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli	3

Chart Call Attention Notices



The Government initiated several noteworthy bills which directly affected women, among them the following are noteworthy.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Deserving Widows and Special Person's Welfare Foundation Act 2014:—this law introduced an institutional mechanism for the welfare of women.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Regulation of Lady Health Workers Program and Employees (Regularization and Standardization) Act 2014—this law provides for the adoption of the National Program for Family Planning and Healthcare as Provincial Lady Health Workers Program and Regularization of Lady Health Workers appointed between 2012–14.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Protection of Breast Feeding and Child Nutrition Act 2015—it provides for the promotion of breast feeding to infants and the regulation of sale and advertisements of products used as a substitute for mother's milk.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Maternity Benefits (Amendment) Act 2015—prohibits employers from asking women employees to do any laborious task during specific periods before and after giving birth.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women Bill 2016—provides for the establishment of the KP Commission on the Status of Women which shall work for the protection and empowerment of women.

Several resolutions were passed which condemned violence against women and recommended the establishment of a Women Development Department and the formation of a

Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) in the House. Resolutions were also passed which requested that the Federal Government take steps for the extrication of Dr. Afia Siddiqui who has been in US government custody since 2008 on allegation of involvement in terrorism, and the employment of women staff at the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) Lakki Marwat Office. The House also condemned the practice of denying women their right to vote and urged the Government to enact legislation to encourage the participation of women in the political process.

4.4 Agenda Not Completed

There were several bills submitted to the Assembly Secretariat that never found their way to the agenda. Most of these were drafted by members of the opposition and/or the Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC). They included bills on critical issues such as human trafficking, the reclaiming of public space for women, the protection of home-based workers, and the protection of animals. A big disappointment was the failure to bring our Domestic Violence Bill to the agenda. During the first year of our tenure, when four of us were also members of the Provincial Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), a carefully drafted bill was prepared and shared with a focal person from Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI), MPA Mufti Janan. This Party was brought on board because they had rejected the first draft presented by the previous Government, declaring that it contained matter which went against the teaching of Islam. Their input prior to submission was to ensure they would have no objections to any of the sections of our bill when it came to the Assembly. After thorough discussion, checking and rechecking, the bill was sent to the Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Department KP, which forwarded it to the Law Department. Unfortunately the Law Department sent it to the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), a Constitutional Advisory body created for ensuring that legislation is in conformity with

Islamic injunctions. The CII rejected the bill on the grounds that it violated some religious and cultural principles. It was a period of great tension for both the Caucus and the Women Commission as we went from pillar to post trying to learn exactly what had offended the CII. What we learnt was that, as luck would have it, tensions were running high in Islamabad due to the unanimous passage of a similar bill, but with tougher decisions, in the Punjab Assembly. The CII had publicly taken a stand against the Punjab Act. The KP bill, though much less extreme, had no chance of acceptance under these circumstances. When the disappointment of the rejection had faded, work on a second draft was started. MPA Rashida Riffat of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) took responsibility for this, as the Commission had completed its tenure of three years and a new one could not be formed until the Government had drafted and approved a new bill to make it more autonomous as per our demands.

It took us a few months to complete the process and prepare the new bill on domestic violence. In the meantime the new Women Commission had also been notified and, to our surprise, and without taking the Caucus into confidence, they began working on another draft. The most detrimental element to the whole concept of women's empowerment is the appointment on key position of those who have neither the knowledge nor the interest in the subject. Unfortunately our second draft became a bone of contention among the different stakeholders and could not find its way to the assembly agenda.

The reason why progress could not be made on some critical aspects was the general apathy of the members from the treasury benches. After the initial jubilation, enthusiasm and determination of the members of the new Assembly to accomplish worthwhile tasks things started slowing down. By the second year apathy had set in and punctuality was compromised, attendance was scanty and the speeches tended to be lackluster monotonous outpourings. They were

painful to the ears, especially when they were sprung upon us without previous warning. Usually they were made by those senior and experienced members who did not bring business such as questions, resolutions, adjournment motions etc., but were experienced in hijacking the proceedings. There was a noticeable decline in the interest of the other members who were relatively new, especially those on the treasury benches. Soon complaints from the opposition began to arise and, by the fourth year, the complaints had become uproars and walkouts, which also fell on deaf ears. All questions were left to either the law minister or the minister for Public Health & Engineering Department (PHED), who were fairly regular in attendance—although, for the first time in the history of the province, the Government had appointed a big number of parliamentary secretaries whose main job, they were told, was to fill in for ministers absent from assembly sessions. This was something new and contrary to the generally understood role of parliamentary secretaries as assistants to the ministers for the efficient management of the departments. A substantial number of these parliamentary secretaries were women who, even if they wanted to help, were discouraged from trying to understand their own role or the function of their departments. This was unfortunate because a great opportunity to train new entrants into the parliamentary system was wasted as the parliamentary secretaries were just left to enjoy the privileges of their position and leave all aspects of management and decision-making to the ministers and the bureaucracy.

As the interest of the ministers and their parliamentary secretaries waned, the department heads, secretaries, special secretaries, additional secretaries and the whole line of officers who reported to them began to skip sittings. Every day another member would express frustration with the department's apathy and negligence, forcing the Speaker to pass rulings, to no avail. Conditions deteriorated to such an extent that even questions

were returned without replies. Quorum was often pointed and the sitting was adjourned after a few minutes. Punctuality was a major issue and no sitting ever commenced at the fixed time of 3 pm. Sometimes the wait went on for hours. This apathy and this regard for time coupled with lack of discipline negatively affected the overall performance and achievement of the assembly.

On the occasions that MPA Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli of Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) was in the Chair the whole colour and tempo of the proceedings changed, and the sittings were enjoyable and enlightening. Being intelligent and a qualified advocate, she went by the book, not ignoring any rule. MPA Anisa Zeb was also at the forefront of the struggle to initiate a capacity development programme for all members. Together with the British Council she linked the KP Assembly with the Parliament of the United Kingdom, offering each of us an opportunity to visit and learn from their system. The Speaker, Mr. Asad Qaiser, gave his full backing to this programme and included it in the KP budget. He had a difficult time convincing his chief, Mr. Imran Khan, about the benefits of the training but he did not waver in his resolve to carry out the programme. However, as with all government institutions, this valuable project became controversial and caused a great deal of anguish because of a lack of transparency in the selection process especially among administrative and management employees. There were claims that a few were favoured while others who had never stepped out of the province and had received no training were ignored. Further details of the foreign parliamentary programme are given in a later section of this book.

As mentioned earlier there was a set time for questions from the members but unfortunately, even in this vital area of the proceedings justice could not be done. The one-hour question period was usually spent in arguments and counter-arguments

over four or five questions. This aspect of the proceeding was very peculiar. It was obvious that the speaker was always in a hurry to move on.

This also happened when resolutions, bills or amendments were being tabled. The Speaker stated the mandatory sentence and then immediately allowed the member to present his/her business, upon which a war of words commenced between the treasury benches and the opposition, the former trying to justify its position while the latter attempted to submit the issue to the relevant standing committee. The gaps in our education programme are clearly visible in the selection of subjects and quality of debate which are not at all commensurate with the rank and status of legislators. Not only does our education system fail to equip students with simple literacy and cognitive skills, it also blocks coherent, creative thinking and fails to stimulate the imagination of the students. The result is mediocrity in all spheres of life which, for a politician whose words and actions influence the destiny of the nation, is of deep concern and totally unacceptable. To improve the quality of decision-making the military Government of General (retd) Pervez Musharraf passed an ordinance which made it mandatory for members of parliament to have a graduate degree. The civil government repealed the ordinance as soon as it came into power, on the grounds that it violated the right of a largely illiterate and semi-literate population.

All four provincial assemblies displayed a disappointing disregard for the timely election of standing committees. Sindh Assembly performed better than its counterparts in legislative activity, but witnessed the greatest delay in the formation of standing committees: there was no standing committee in Sindh Assembly for 10 out of the total 12 months of the first parliamentary year. The process of formation of committees was also delayed in the Punjab and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assemblies by seven months, while the Balochistan Assembly

formed its standing committees after a delay of eight months. Significantly, even after a delay of eight months, the Baluchistan Assembly only formed the Finance Committee and the House and Library Committee, which are not related to any ministry and do not have an impact on oversight performed by the legislature. Not only did the Balochistan Assembly fail to form the all-important Public Accounts Committee in the first parliamentary year of the current House, but also, the entire five-year term of the previous Balochistan Assembly elapsed without the formation of any standing committees. (*PILDAT Report 2014*)

Interestingly, according to a public opinion poll conducted by the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development (PILDAT) on the quality of democracy in Pakistan, the highest Net Performance Rating (NPR) given to any provincial assembly for its legislative performance was for the Balochistan Assembly at +22%, followed by the Punjab Assembly at +5%. The Sindh Assembly, which passed the highest number of bills for the first parliamentary year, scored the lowest NPR of all the provincial legislatures at -19%, followed by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly at -9%. This lack of correlation between the public perception and the legislative activity of the assemblies suggests that the citizens are either not well-acquainted with the legislative activity of their provincial assembly or that they are not satisfied with the issues being addressed by legislation.

According to the second PILDAT public opinion poll the citizens of Balochistan and Punjab were largely satisfied by the oversight carried out by their provincial assemblies, as both received a positive NPR for this parameter (Balochistan +23%, Punjab +2%). Both Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assemblies, however, scored a negative NPR on the oversight with Sindh at -40% (understandably due to the 10-month delay in the formation of committees) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at -48%.

It is also important to note that none of the provincial assemblies adopted any major reforms to improve the performance of the standing committees. Hence, except for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly (under rule 152 (2) of its Rules of Procedure), the standing committees of the provincial assemblies did not have suo moto powers to take cognizance of any matter related to their area of work. Furthermore, during the first parliamentary year in all the provincial assemblies, important legislation was generally not referred to the relevant standing committee, leading to a lack of consensus amongst the parliamentary parties and hasty deliberations often resulting in opposition walkouts.

Public opinion surveys during 2013 showed that the majority of Pakistanis felt that the four most critical issues the country was facing were energy, inflation, unemployment and terrorism. An analysis of the assemblies' output for the first parliamentary year reveals that the provincial legislatures failed not only to contribute constructively to policies addressing these issues, but in some cases did not debate these issues even once, reflecting a failure on the part of legislators to effectively represent those who elected them.

The British Parliament has a strong Committee system with ample backing of the Government, which encourages significant public involvement in the Parliament's activities. After observing the Committee System of Scottish Parliament, the honorable MPAs of KP Assembly were of the view that in order to strengthen the Committee system in KP Assembly, the proceedings of a committee should be made online and embedded in the e-governance system which is already functioning in KP Assembly. Doing so will make the proceedings of a committee readily available and there will be no chance of missing or losing a question/query raised by an honourable MPA. The Public will also be able to gauge the performance and focus of respective committees of the Assembly.

Although in most of the cases, Standing Committees in KP Assembly were better equipped, they have limited or no support of an in House Research cell. The committees in KP Assembly are handling three types of business,

- a. business referred by the House,
- b. suo motto issues taken up, and
- c. any matter related to the department subject to the discretion of the Honourable Speaker.

The Assembly intends to enhance committee authority to empower them by new rules and appropriate research support base.

Department Day: In Scottish Parliament there is a specific day for the business of each department. On that day the business related to that concerned department is discussed. This makes it easy for the departments to present their work as they are aware of their turn. Additionally, this eases the burden on the departments, who don't have to ensure their presence at every session. Steps will be taken to introduce Department day in the KP Assembly.

4.5 The Library

The KP Assembly prides itself on its library, which contains publications that form a part of the Assembly's own history. There are rare books as well as Hansards (transcripts of members speeches) from the very inception of the Assembly. It is the only library in Pakistan with library management software, KOHA, used for catalogue and classification of documents. The library is an almost independent unit located on the first floor with a grade 19 senior officer in charge as director, managing a



team of support staff and research officers. The supervision of the library is assigned to the deputy speaker. The library's purpose is to assist legislators with their legislative business. Research conducted by the library and the books and records of speeches are all needed for reference and in drafting bills and resolutions and quoting during speeches. For the first time a section containing literature on gender empowerment was created with support from Women Parliamentary Caucus. It was hoped that publications of UN agencies and international organizations will come to the library on a regular basis. During my first visit I learnt that only a few of us legislators had visited the library, the majority were unaware of its existence. Though this was not very welcome news, what was equally disappointing was that the staff on duty lacked the interest and motivation to enrich the library and their own experience.

During my five years stay not one research paper was published by the library. The Director seemed to resent my innocuous questions about books purchased and research undergoing, and was especially angry when I questioned and reported over expenditure on a few books, the purchase of which could not be justified.

4.6 The Media in the Assembly

The media plays a significant role in every development story nowadays. In fact it is the reporters and the journalists who create the stories for online and print media. Until the introduction of social media, the traditional media, the 'fourth estate', enjoyed a monopoly over the news and were often held responsible for the rise and fall of governments or nations. Social media broke into their monopoly as it empowered individuals and private groups to circulate their news fresh and unedited.

In the Assembly a special gallery is reserved for print and electronic media representatives and during the session the front entrance is full of cameras and vehicles from leading television channels. Although the national and regional representatives are all present, the actual detailed coverage is done by the province-based channels and newspapers. Unfortunately Khyber Pakhtunkhwa does not have a strong media network so the provincial news does not get its fair share of national coverage. The KP Government needs to look into this and think of ways to strengthen the media and build its image at the national and international level.

Members of the media are generally friendly but always on the lookout for evidence of the fallibility of the Government or Assembly. Like our other institutions it will take a few years before our media develops and matures into a vibrant and credible institution which focuses on issues and functions and which monitors the day-to-day performance of public and private institutions.

They expect legislators to be up to date on current situations and to have formed an opinion about them, which is unfair. Every person has his / her interests in certain subjects to which they give more time. People in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have still to

develop a culture of specialization which requires a great deal of research, reading and analysis. Only then can one be considered an expert on the subject, at which point one would be able to comment on the core points of developments in that field, their impact and their future. Politicians here, I have found, are reluctant to read and expand their knowledge. They still believe that the written word cannot bring them more votes, so why waste time on it. Here in the Assembly the media will stop you suddenly in the corridors or at the entrance or exit to ask your opinion about a developing story. One is completely unprepared and would not like to comment because the full understanding and the impact has not yet set in. Secondly, a MPA is a representative of her constituency as well as her party so he/she must make sure that his/her statement does not go against the party or the aspirations of her people. For this she needs time to think deeply and come up with an intelligent and balanced comment.

4.7 Security and Vulnerability

Very early on we had to bear the brunt of the terrorist activity that was tearing our province into shreds. Law Minister Mr. Israr Khan Gandapore, our well-informed, hard-working, handsome and courteous colleague from Dera Ismail Khan, was gunned down in his hujra while exchanging Eid greetings with family members and guests in 2014. It became obvious that we were a soft and precious target for suicide bombers who were being deployed in alarming numbers. Mr. Imran Khan from Mardan and Mr. Farid Khan from Hangu were other casualties of the war on terror. Another dear member to leave us was the minority member from district Buner, Sardar Soran Singh, who was shot and killed near his home in 2016. The young colleague from Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), Mr. Akbar Hayat, affable and ever-smiling, quite suddenly and mysteriously died at night just a few days after contesting elections for the deputy speaker vacant seat.

The years 2013-15 will always be remembered with fear and horror. Terrorism was at its height. Suicide bombings were a daily occurrence. No one and no place was safe as no one had any idea of the next target of the terrorists. The fear was intense and emotionally devastating due to disjointed news reports from the Government and exaggerated accounts circulated on social media. In the beginning the attacks had been targeted at law enforcement agencies but with the passage of time soft targets including mosques, churches, schools and shopping centres became more vulnerable to attack. This was the period that sectarian violence also intensified, with the resultant massacres from both sects of Islam, Sunni and Shi'a.

We suffered terrible losses during our tenure, but the most heart-rending period was the end of 2016. A bloody 16 December left the whole country in gloom and despondency. The brutal murder of some 140 students, faculty and security personnel is a shock which, I pray, no one will ever have to experience again. For two days and nights Peshawaris were all out on the streets running between the school, the hospitals and the homes of the victims, bringing coffins and weeping for the loss of those innocent angels.

This horrific tragedy disturbed the lives of everyone in the country, especially ours in Peshawar, where we live in very close contact with each other and inter-marriages have made us into one large connected family. The shock could never be forgotten. The parents of the martyred children demanded action, as did the entire population of the country. The Government was galvanized into action, and the first decision it took was to lift the moratorium on the death sentence. The Parliament and the provincial assemblies reverberated with demands from the opposition that the Government step down. In response, the Government presented a National Action Plan (NAP) of 18 measures to be implemented in the fight against terrorism.

4.8 Dharna (دھرنا) 2014

Soon after the announcement of the election result by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), PTI Chairman, Mr. Imran Khan, had raised allegations of vote rigging in the Punjab where Pakistan Muslim League (N) had won by a thumping majority. Mr. Khan had expected to form government in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which would also have given him majority in the Centre. Losing Punjab was a big disappointment for him. He demanded recounting in at least four constituencies of Punjab where he was sure of bogus votes being polled. Punjab is the most densely populated province of the country due to its fertile flat land and the presence of the major rivers of the country. Therefore it has a large vote bank and more electoral constituencies than the combined total of the three other provinces, so any party getting a majority there becomes the winning party at the federal level too. Mr. Khan's demand for recounting was met with a cold shoulder from Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), a federally managed office which was accountable to and working on instructions from the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) Government. After a wait of a little over one year Khan decided to go out on the streets and, amassing his workers, he started a long march from Lahore to Islamabad in 2014, stating that his 14-months wait for justice through legal means had not produced results. He named this the Azadi March as it was started on August 14, the Independence Day of Pakistan. He was joined by workers of another political party, Pakistn Awami Tehreek (PAT), headed by Dr. Tahir ul Qadri. This party was demanding justice for the murder of their workers at Model Town, Lahore, allegedly by the previous PML(N) Government. The March culminated in a sit-in popularly known as Dharna at D-Chowk, Islamabad. Other demands were added which included judicial inquiries into electoral fraud, the reformation of the electoral process and election commission and the resignation of Prime Minister, Mr. Nawaz Sharif and his brother, Mr. Shahbaz Sharif who was Chief Minister of Punjab. The sit - in ended suddenly and without any result on 16 December, 2014, the day of the horrific Army Public School (APS) massacre.

The Dharna drama, though it took place in Punjab and the capital Islamabad, had serious implications in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where the Government belonged to PTI and all its key members had not only to ensure their own regular presence at the march but also to bring in large number of supporters to sustain the protest over the four months. The tension in the province and the Assembly was palpable as there was no certainty about the future of the Government. In fact, on the call of the party chief for resignation, PTI parliamentary members were divided and, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, only the efforts and political wisdom of the Chief Minister, Mr. Pervez Khattak, prevented the dissolution of the Assembly and the Government. However, assembly business suffered a great deal and very little legislation was carried out in those months.

4.9 The Assembly and Gender

The life of a woman in a patriarchal society controlled by haughty and insensitive feudals is difficult, to put it mildly. Insecure even in her own home, she is never encouraged to believe in herself and her importance and that she should try to keep herself healthy and happy. Her world is a heavily burdened existence of multiple responsibilities to a variety of people who must not be antagonized and annoyed. If she does so inadvertently she must face severe punishment. Reprieve and forgiveness for a woman are unthinkable unless she grovels at the feet of those she is accused of irritating. It is so hard to understand the hypocrisy and double standards of KP culture and the wide divide between the living standards of men and women. The best section, the front of the house, is reserved for men and their guests. This portion is wide, clean and furnished according to the resources of the family. The rear section of the house, used by the women and children, is small and dingy with a bare minimum of comforts. They wash and dress, cook and procreate and raise the children in the same limited space. Going out is a luxury for which they generally have to beg and

find a hundred justifications. Entry into this quarter is also forbidden without the permission of the male head. With this heavily controlled environment and lack of financial independence a woman withers away, becoming old at a young age. However, when it comes to a political career and nominations for the women's reserved seats, husbands and fathers are quick to offer their wives, daughters, sisters and aunts; it becomes a mark of prestige and status to have a female family member as parliamentarian. Many of these women have never faced or talked to men outside their families, and several are illiterate or semi-literate. They find assembly business taxing and uninteresting—to expect them to contribute to a debate on the budget, the Annual Development Programme, law and order, or issues of marginalized groups is like asking for the moon. Among the 22 female members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly during my tenure I would say only some 15% understood their role and responsibilities, 20% depended completely on their spouses/fathers, who provided them with a list of questions to ask, and the rest just ensured that their seats were occupied during the sessions.

The Assembly is in a way miniature Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as it reflects the culture that prevails in the province, a culture which believes that 'women should neither be seen nor heard'. It is a culture based on the strict code of Pakhtunwali, which emphasizes the honour and protection of family and clan. Women, who are seen as physically, mentally and emotionally vulnerable, need to be kept under strict control for fear that they might breach family honour. At the same time, they have to be protected from the evils believed to be lurking all around in society. The political leadership, having been raised in the same strict code of Pakhtunwali, finds it difficult to change the patriarchal thinking and introduce a system based on equality and justice. The women, on the other hand, being illiterate or semi-literate, do not grasp the universal issues of dependency and independency, domination and suppression, freedom and fidelity, so they live largely unaware of how their development and thinking are inhibited.

That the Assembly is a man's world is also reflected in the gender division of employees. Among the over 500 employees there are only two females, a blatant violation of the 5% quota reserved for women. None of the 22 women lawmakers has been directly elected to the assembly. Only one out of the 14 (7%) ministers was a woman; seven out of 18 (39%) parliamentary secretaries and four of 38 (11%) committee chairpersons were women.

The constitution mandates the state to ensure the full participation of women in all spheres of national life. There have been reserved seats for women (17%) in the legislatures under the Constitution, but there is no bar on them contesting elections on general seats. Each woman lawmaker represents 596,652 women in the Assembly. On the other hand, each male lawmaker represents 130,064 men.

One can also judge the importance given to women by the facilities available to them at the Assembly. There is only one room for the 22 women members, with two small adjoining toilets. There are no waiting rooms anywhere for visiting females, who are forced to share the facility provided to members, resulting in a breach of the members' privacy. Such is the status of women that according to the Assembly Hall seating arrangement they are always assigned the back benches.

The Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) women formed a very strong group, numbering eleven, in contrast with other parties with three or fewer female members. Moreover, all but two of the PTI women members had been made parliamentary secretaries, raising their status to just below that of a minister. They could have made a strong case for the empowerment of women. However, an opportunity to make a worthwhile contribution to the system was squandered.

The two most senior members in terms of professional experience were MPA Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli from my party, the Qaumi Watan Party, and MPA Nighat Orakzai of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). MPA Anisa Zeb is a Pakistani politician in the truest sense, affable and warm and quick to make commitments. She has reaped rich benefits from her party and her close proximity to the party founder and chairman, Mr. Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao, and his son, provincial chairman Mr. Sikander Hayat Khan Sherpao, whom she has served loyally and dutifully ever since she joined politics in her college days. MPA Anisa Zeb is a mesmerizing speaker and the party depends heavily on her power to rouse large crowds. She is the party's central Secretary-General and was made a provincial minister when Qaumi Watan Party rejoined the Government in 2016. Previously she enjoyed prestigious positions as federal state minister and senator and, as she proudly pointed out, she had the honour to attend all international events in one capacity or another, showing how much Mr. Sherpao trusted and depended on her. As minister, she gave Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the first Mineral Sector Governance Act in 2016.

MPA Nighat Orakzai, on the other hand, is a fiery, vociferous legislator who performs theatrics for the benefit of the media. She speaks more often on 'points of order' which means requesting to be given time to speak on some urgent issue and, I must say, she did bring some serious issues for debate. She arouses fear because of her forceful manner and inappropriate language. She stayed clear of the women chamber and the Caucus saying openly that she was far above the level of the women members.

An important but shocking thing to learn was that no matter how much we applaud our advancement, we women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remain subservient to men throughout life. The charade to appear courageous and contented has played

successfully throughout out lives. There may be an occasional weak moment when others get a glimpse of the injured soul within, but usually the belief is that all is joy, success and one long celebration. At the end of the day one wonders whether it is good to be a strong woman since people have the misplaced belief that nothing can go wrong with you that even physical illness will never touch you. Numerous expectations are piled upon your shoulders and if you even protest slightly you are regarded as selfish, greedy, self-centered and non-cooperative. A female parliamentarian may succeed in earning respect in the workplace, but at home she is expected to shed her whole outlook and demeanor and shrink in stature and pay lip service to her husband. With the passage of time, if her importance grows in society, his insecurity deepens and the relationship becomes marred by taunts and jibes.

In a state of mixed feelings and utter confusion, a woman entering an awe-inspiring, formidable looking place called the Assembly where men rub shoulders with other men and the existence of women is not acknowledged, she quickly disappears into the least intimidating corner, the room allocated for the 22 women legislators, the ladies responsible for their security and the female visitors, professional women from civil society organizations and other groups. The room is furnished, but not for the purposes of advancing professionalism and intellectual discussion—it is more of a lounge for relaxation after strenuous mental or physical exercise. Refreshments are consumed within minutes of the break from assembly proceedings. Discussion centres on home, family life, children, latest trends in fashion outlets and food. Very few are seen working on issues identified by their constituents. The financial benefit of assembly membership is also of great importance, but one cannot gauge whether the pressure is from home or the member's own struggle for economic empowerment and financial autonomy.

In addition to senior legislators like MPA Anisa Zeb and MPA Nighat Orakzai there were some other strong women who not only actively participated in debate but were responsible for the contribution to assembly business mentioned in the FAFEN report. Among these were MPA Uzma Khan and MPA Najma Shaheen from JUI, MPA Amna Sardar and MPA Sobia Shahid from PML (N), MPA Fouzia Bibi, MPA Dina Naz and MPA Zareen Zia from PTI and MPA Rashida Riffat of JI. They were keen to contribute both in the Assembly and their own districts. MPA Uzma Khan was particularly admirable as she patiently and cheerfully balanced the considerable demands of home life with her responsibilities as a member and as Secretary of the Women Parliamentary Caucus. This was her second tenure so she had an edge over us, but she was generous in sharing her learning with all of us. She is mild-tempered and humble, which endears her to all. MPA Fouzia Bibi from Chitral, another soft-spoken and gentle person, was extremely helpful in the Caucus as a tireless Vice-Chairperson. Her constituents hold her in high regard as she has been able to bring many projects and jobs to her district and her people. MPA Amna Sardar is sharp and shrewd. She knows how to advance her agenda and our five-year tenure was full of examples of her contribution to legislative business and her constituency. MPA Sobia Shahid, her colleague in PML (N), is very close to the party leadership. She is confident and can mix easily with all groups, but did not seem very keen on taking an issue to its logical end. MPA Dina Naz and MPA Zareen Zia, both from PTI and the southern districts, are intelligent and quick to understand political developments. They showed their interest in assembly proceedings and played an active role in the politics of their districts. MPA Najma Shaheen of JUI, always extremely polite, very frequently brought in very relevant business but she also honestly, and with a smile, admitted that her husband was behind all this work. MPA Rashida Riffat of Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), learned in Islam, motherly and helpful, quietly worked on several bills and will be remembered for her Prevention of Ostentation in Marriages Bill 2017.

My Own Role as Legislator

Assembly business is intense and very demanding, as is pursuing a political career in general. Only a person with steely nerves can survive the pull and the push associated with it. Very early on, when I had rejoined politics after a gap of 12 years from the time of breaking off from PTI over differences arising due to principles and values, a family friend from Swat told me I would not be able to give time to my existing responsibilities at the provincial level due to the workload at the constituency. I was skeptical because I believed in my time management skills and thought I would be able to manage the load at both levels. I was wrong. One has to pick and define one's objectives very clearly in order to achieve even minimal targets annually. In my case, soon I found myself completely entrenched in activities at the provincial and national levels. Days seemed to have shortened while work had enlarged to a gargantuan size, unmanageable, uncontrollable. My past history of intellectual pursuits and engagements pushed back the urge to be with the simple village folk and get really involved in their lives and their difficulties. To be a real leader who combines ambition and creativity with compassion and humanism one must lead a balanced life, dividing one's time equally between the affluent and the underprivileged. When family responsibilities are added to the already overstretched schedule then existence itself becomes a burden.

I tried my best to create a balance in my multiple tasks. The first three years I succeeded, but in the years 2016 to mid-2018 I was in a spin, trying to manage and strengthen the Women Parliamentary Caucus, pursue my own cases in the Assembly Secretariat, organise workers and voters in my constituency and also pay a little attention to family and household. Apart from my struggle for the Caucus, my other noteworthy successful campaign was for the rights of the 862 employees of the Higher Education, Archives and Libraries Department.

These young men and women had been employed by the department in 2014 against a specially created cadre of teaching assistants. The cadre was not a scheduled one so the department refused to absorb them or give an extension to them after 2015. Starting with a resolution, which I took to the Standing Committee, I fought on for two years and finally secured approval for the Bill.

To provide for the regularization of the services of teaching assistance as lecturers in Government Colleges by Higher Education, Archives and Library Department, in the province of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 2016.

My record of resolutions, questions and call attention notices, verifiable from the assembly website, is also quite up to the mark. Most of these were regarding social issues, especially pertaining to education, child protection and women empowerment. One sample is reproduced below. It had taken me two months to verify information before drafting the resolution and two years to table it in the assembly. Members of the Representative committee formed by the Primary School Teachers (PSTs) and I had to work closely together during this time to keep the issue alive and to enlist the support of other members to ensure unanimity in the passage.

Resolution No. 710 Adopted by the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

I am directed to say that the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in its sitting held on 06-10-2015 has unanimously passed the following Joint Resolution No. 710 moved by Ms. Meraj Hamayun Khan, Member Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Primary Level is the most important level in the education process as it lays down the foundation on which the later tiers

work and builds a system that contributes to the healthy, physical, moral, emotional and social character of the individuals. Everywhere in the world special care is taken in the hiring of teachers who are held in great esteem by the parents who work closely with them as well as the community around them. Contrary to this primary school teachers in our country do not enjoy the respect and recognition that is due to them. Not only this, they are also subjected to bias and discrimination in incentives and benefits which are far less than other categories of teaching staff. This has created a lot of frustration among the Primary School Teachers (PSTs), especially the senior ones and those who are highly qualified with MA, M.Sc and M.Ed degrees, which are adversely affecting their performance.

This August house demands that the Provincial Government should adopt immediate measures to enhance the status of PSTs by giving them their due rights, scales and incentives as well as direct the media to positively and regularly project the importance of PSTs in the whole education system. Some decisions requiring immediate implementation are:-

1.	Pay scales according to qualification i.e. scale 15 for under graduates, scale 16 for Graduates and 17 for Masters.
2.	Trainers for Primary Teachers should be selected from among PSTs.
3.	PSTs should be given a share in appointment of Subject Teachers (SS). 4. Merit should be introduced at the District and Tehsil Level.

4.10 The Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC)

Very early on I introduced the idea of creating a Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) in the same model as the one set up in the National Assembly during the tenure of the Pakistan

People's Party (PPP) from 2008-13. The objective was to add value and weight to the membership of the women legislators who were facing taunts and jibes from their male colleagues reminding them that they had not contested elections and should just be content with their presence in the Assembly. The members supported my nomination of MPAA Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli as Chairperson, in light of her extensive experience. However, as the months passed we realized that her experience did not extend to an understanding of issues related to women's empowerment, gender equity and equality, and though she did succeed in carving out a small office in a corner of the veranda, there was little or no progress in strengthening our legislative role or increasing our visibility. Soon restlessness set in as demands for meetings increased. Luckily for us, Ms. Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli was given the portfolio of two departments as minister when Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) rejoined the Government. This gave us an excuse to conduct elections for the six-member executive committee as prescribed. The JI MPA, Rashida Riffat, offered to be the Election Commissioner and nomination papers were filed by interested members. By the end of the day all positions except that of Information Secretary were unanimously filled; MPA Zareen Zia of PTI secured this post in another round of voting.



There was a sudden surge of activity as soon as the oath-taking and inauguration of the premises took place. There was no looking back. From the creation of a gender literature corner in the assembly library to the inclusion of the Caucus on the main menu of the assembly website, the WPC went from strength to strength, catching the attention of people and organizations around the province and even the country. Soon there was a queue of interested organizations who wanted to meet the Chairperson and work with the Caucus. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) took on the task of furnishing the office, a small space created in a corner of the veranda, and with great excitement and enthusiasm the inauguration was held. It was a moment of great pride for us.

Creating a united forum for ourselves was necessary to face the dominance of the male members, whose arrogance is multiplied many times over due to their election success. They are completely insensitive to the feelings of their female colleagues and taunt them unashamedly, sarcastically pointing to their status on reserved seats. Slowly but surely we found our bearings and when representatives from different organizations approached us and expressed their interest in building partnerships with the Caucus, our weakened self-esteem got a boost and we started showing our strength during assembly sessions. In the two years under my chairship the Caucus earned a reputation for being the most active parliamentary bloc of its kind in the country. Our activities varied from research to awareness raising, from gender analysis of bills to gender audits of departments, from coordination and networking with local organizations to sharing experiences with ministers and secretaries of other provinces and representatives of international organizations. The FAFEN Report 2017 on the performance of the KP Assembly had this to say:

Women lawmakers had a higher attendance rate in the assembly sessions than male lawmakers. According to the

official attendance record, women lawmakers attended 167 of 219 (76 per cent) sittings on an average while men attended 133 (64 per cent) sessions. Most of the women lawmakers had more than 70 per cent attendance during the period under review. Female lawmakers contributed more than one-fifth of the assembly's agenda over the past 44 months. They submitted 693 (20 per cent) questions, eight adjournment motions (16 per cent), 47 call-attention notices (17 per cent), demonstrating their interest in the assembly's core functions, including the executive's oversight.

They also represented public issues through resolutions. Women legislators sponsored 46 per cent of resolutions brought before the house. They also contributed to the legislation, sponsoring six out of 17 private members' bills.

Published in The Express Tribune, 10 March 2017

The Assembly also responded to some of the women's issues by enacting relevant legislations or recommending suggestions to the Government via resolutions. Among the achievements of women lawmakers were the regularisation of the Lady Health Workers programme, alongside the enactment of a law to protect the rights of working women. The Assembly also established an institutional mechanism providing for women's welfare in general and widowed women in particular.

Assembly Reports had the following to say about the Caucus.

Dynamic Women Parliamentary Caucus: The KP Assembly has lately setup a vibrant and responsive all party Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC), which is not only voluntarily taking up challenges of women on the floor of the House but it will go a long way in increasing women participation and effective contribution in day to day business of the House. The WPC can certainly play effective role in providing women

sensitization on all matters to the people in general and matters of human rights in particular. Being a front line province against violent terrorism, women have been often most ignored facet of the society during conflict. The WPC has been a great addition where women MPs are self-sufficient in having a platform to jointly utilize the parliamentary tools available to initiate business of the house to advocate, persuade and influence challenges to women in the society and vulnerable groups like people with disability, transgender community and old citizens.

*Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
Members Capacity Building Programme 2016-17:
Reference Assessment / Appraisal Report, 15 May 2018*

There were many success stories but also much frustration. It was obvious that the women members themselves were not sure of their powers or convinced that there was discrimination against women. Many times they forcefully argued that women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa lead a very comfortable life and that women should be subservient to the male members of their family. They also refused to accept that the Caucus was a purely voluntary process responding to a desperate need. It is a major challenge to cure them of this dependency syndrome and to make them understand the broad issues of controlled and strengthening, freedom and subjugation participation and submission.

Despite the challenging circumstances and lack of resources, through sheer hard work and dedication we were able to hold public consultations on two important bills, the Local Government Act 2014 and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013. Several consultations were also arranged with public and private sector representatives prior to the drafting of important bills like the Domestic Violence Bill 2017, the Protection of Home Based Workers Bill 2017, the

Prevention of Human Trafficking Bill 2017, and Prohibition of Ostentation in Marriage Ceremonies Act 2017.

Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) also took the lead in introducing research into its work. Two important initiatives demonstrated this commitment. The first was a Gender Audit of three departments which employed a large number of women compared to others (with the exception of the Health and Education Departments): the Social Welfare and Women Development Department, the Home Department, and the Agriculture Department. The audit report was shared with relevant departments and NGOs working in these sectors. The findings showed that there is no gender policy in any department and no special allocation for women-specific projects in their Annual Development Programme (ADP). The departments also failed to employ women at the senior, decision-making level.

The second initiative was the profiling of two districts for comparison and study to understand the measures needed for improving gender status. The two districts were Abbottabad, a reasonably developed district in the north, and Tank in the south, considered under-developed and conservative. The study did not show much difference in policies and management but the officials of Abbottabad, surprisingly, were less cooperative in sharing information.

The Caucus was acutely aware of the fact that all the districts of the province were not represented in the Assembly because women had not contested on the general seats and political parties and 22 reserved seats did not match the 26 administrative districts. So it was difficult to access them for information and to help women find solutions to their problems. In order to fill this serious gap the Caucus decided to create a facility within the Assembly so women in remote areas could reach the female members of the Assembly to discuss their

issues. The aim was to link legislators with all the women of the province. A hotline named Zama Awaz (My Voice) was set up for this purpose, receiving praise from many development professionals. The whole mechanism comprised a telephone hotline in the WPC office (the Speaker and the Secretary refused to give space to the hotline team), a team of one lawyer and two telephone operators, and a referral network of all departments and private sector organizations in the field of women's empowerment. Unfortunately, the Speaker failed to recognize the value of this service to women and refused to give his support for the future sustainability of the hotline. It is unfortunate that the facility had to be closed down just as it was gathering momentum. During the nine months of its operation a total of 277 calls were received on issues as wide-ranging as violence at home, refusal to extend financial help, inheritance, and problems in getting identity cards.

A memorable event organised by the WPC in 2017 was the 13th Inter-Provincial Ministerial Group Meeting. This important coordination meeting had not been held for three years because

of a lack of funds. The Secretariat of the group is based at the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), which is also mandated to hold these meetings annually. It was upon their request that for the first time the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly's Women Parliamentary Caucus took responsibility for bringing all important stakeholders to Peshawar for two days' deliberation on the status of women in the country. Participants included Ministers for Women Empowerment, Chairpersons of the Women Parliamentary Caucuses, Chairpersons of National and Provincial Commissions for Women, Secretaries of Departments dealing with women issues, representatives from civil society organizations, academia and the media. The benefit of the exercise was the exchange of ideas and comparisons of the pace of development in the different

regions. For representatives of regions such as Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) it was especially enriching and a great learning experience.

The celebration of International Women's Day 2018 was another big success story. With a lot of hard work, multiple meetings and coordination among different people and organizations a very interesting plan was devised. Though this day had been observed once before, that was a low-key event organized by an NGO. This time we transformed it into a high profile three-day exercise for raising awareness among different groups. The first get-together was a seminar on the theme of the year, 'Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50–50 by 2030', followed by dinner in the Assembly which was attended by members and management staff.

The second historical event in the series of three for International Women's Day was arranged with support from the Chief Minister's Secretariat. On this occasion, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Gender Policy complete with implementation strategy and five-year work plan was launched. The event was chaired by the Chief Minister himself and the audience included



senior ministers and development professionals from civil society. It was hoped that this high-profile launch of an important document would sensitize and motivate the province's high command and civil administration to work seriously on removing hurdles and creating a conducive environment for gender equity and equality.

The third event was an exhibition planned for the public so the venue selected was the artisan's village in the old city of Peshawar. Stalls and banners were put up and home-based women workers were invited and encouraged to display their products. This was a day-long celebration attended by excited men, women and children.

From the point of view of women and their political development the creation of the Women Parliamentary Caucus, the first of its kind, was the most commendable achievement of the KP Assembly of 2013–18. It provided a united platform, a training ground, psychosocial support and a safe area to take refuge from the physical and emotional stress so common in the lives of women. I can overlook all the other weaknesses in the Assembly of that tenure and thank the Speaker for giving the freedom to members to form the Caucus and work on its agenda of strengthening women legislators. Other partners without whom the Caucus might not have had so much success were UNDP, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), UN Women, Pak Women, Democracy Reporting International (DRI), the British Council (BC), the US Consulate, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Peace Education and Development Foundation, (PEAD). They provided financial and technical support for infrastructure, capacity development of members, printing and publications of reports and newsletters, and the development of strong networks with other stakeholders. Organizations themselves are nothing without the people who staff them. So it was with Mr. Bilal Khattak, Syed Wajid, Mr. Ahmed Ali Khattak, Mr. Khalfan, Ms. Azra Gul, Ms. Shagufta, Mr. Shehryar and Mr. Mudassar Hafeez whose input was very valuable.

It would be grossly unfair if I did not mention those who contributed to creating a very lively and conducive environment within the Caucus. There were two full-time assistants, Mr. Imran Khan and Mr. Muhammad Ashfaq, who dealt with all the routine happenings and kept us informed about developments in the various assembly departments. They handled protocol and were responsible for all administrative arrangements for meetings, conferences, networking and visits. Since they are regular employees of the Assembly I made a special effort to train them for the sustainability and future role of the Caucus Secretariat. Besides these two amiable staff members provided by the Assembly, the Caucus also created four project-linked posts which further strengthened our performance. These posts included a full-time gender coordinator whose job it was to develop concept papers for implementing ideas proposed by members during the executive committee and general body meetings. Ms. Kalsoom Usman proved to be a very valuable asset during the one year that she served in the Caucus. She had good knowledge and communication skills to document ideas and assist in their implementation. Despite her great personal responsibilities, she handled her workload in the Secretariat pleasantly and efficiently.

The three members who were specially hired for Zama Awaz included, as previously mentioned, Advocate Ms. Shandana Naeem, a soft-spoken lady who left her home town, Swabi, and took up residence in Peshawar so as to be regular in attendance. Her colleagues, Ms. Farkhanda Seema and Mr. Mehran Akbar, handled the phone calls and noted the complaints which were then shared with the relevant department or agency for solution. Other members of the assembly management team with whom we interacted on a daily basis and developed fond ties of friendship were Mr. Shakir, the Assistant in charge of the women's chamber, and Mr. Yaqub, Mr. Mehmood Riaz and Mr. Aurangzeb, all working in the Assembly Hall.

Parliamentarians and legislators face a great deal of pressure due to the balancing of work in the Assembly and the constituencies, but more stressful are the moral dilemmas that one faces from time to time when there is a clash of beliefs and interests between the party's decisions on an issue and one's own thinking on how it should be handled. I happened to face many situations like this. Being independent by nature and having worked for decades independently in the social sector, but also having learnt that discipline and obedience to your elders, your organization and your party are the hallmarks of a strong moral character, it was extremely difficult at times to reconcile with party decisions on issues debated. There were several occasions when matters related to education were debated but someone from the opposition who was angry due to differences with the Government at the constituency level would call for a boycott of the proceedings and, reluctantly, I had to join. As Chairperson of the Women Parliamentary Caucus I was under special radar when the treasury and opposition clashed on a certain bill or resolution. The worst case was the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women Act 2016, for which I proposed and had to defend many amendments for giving full autonomy to the Commission. In this case I was standing in one-to-one opposition to my party chief, Mr. Sikander Hayat Khan Sherpao, who was the Minister for Social Welfare and Women Development Department.

4.11 Travel to Other Parliaments, Lessons Learned & Recommendations

As mentioned several times before one positive initiative of the Speaker of our Assembly was a capacity development programme for all members. The programme included training on assembly rules and procedures, the budget, legislative business and other such relevant subjects, and exposure visits to other provincial assemblies. Several organizations assisted

the Assembly in implementing this programme. Under an agreement with the British Council a very comprehensive schedule of visits to the British Parliament was also implemented, giving every member an opportunity to visit the UK and observe and learn about their parliamentary history and current practices.

I was also lucky to have the opportunity to travel to Sri Lanka in 2015 to showcase the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act 2013. The Sri Lankan Parliament was preparing to table its own bill and wanted to study similar legislation, selecting our act because it was considered the third best in the world. Besides a meeting and discussion on our Right to Information Act, it was a chance for me to interact with professionals from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and to visit the Sri Lankan Parliament and learn about their parliamentary system. I was impressed by the environment, protocol and discipline within the parliament premises and the courtesy extended to me.

The UK Visit

The programme included exposure visits to legislatures in London, Scotland and on the Isle of Man. All expenses were to be borne by the Assembly. At first there was an uproar against the proposal but the Speaker was adamant and in the end got his way. We learned a lot from these valuable visits as we could see for ourselves the practical working of a real democracy.

The Women Parliamentary Caucus delegation from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly visited London, UK, from September, 2016, and we had the opportunity to visit Westminster to discuss strengthening the role of women legislators. The delegation included 11 women MPAs. We explored the role and responsibility of parliamentarians and, more specifically, the role of women parliamentarians in promoting gender equality. The topics covered during the extensive sessions included the role of MPs, the impact of devolution, the Women and Equalities



Select Committee, equality legislation, and the promotion of gender equality in parliaments and political parties. We also spent a day shadowing UK MPs in their local constituencies (Ealing Central & Acton, and Lewisham and Deptford) to observe the role of parliamentarians in public outreach and representation. The programme was nicely rounded up with a visit to the Secretariat of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), London, to meet senior officials and learn about their latest strategic initiatives and plans. CPA was founded in 1911 to link up its members in a network which works to support good governance, democracy and human rights. The head of Commonwealth Queen Elizabeth II is the Patron while the Vice Patron is elected on rotation basis from among the members.

It was a well-planned visit packed with a number of activities which were all very informative and interesting. The availability of a large number of resource employees proved the excellent networking of the British Council with key partners. Sessions were interactive, with active participation by all members of the delegation. The presence of British Council and KP Assembly officials was an added bonus in the overall facilitation process.

While the benefits of the tour were manifold, the main outcome was the strengthening of the relationship between the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and the UK Parliament. It also helped contribute to the existing work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and Women's Parliamentary Caucuses in Pakistan, while identifying future issues for discussion. It may be my ignorance but I was sad to discover that a rich resource like CPA was not actively linked to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly.

The preparation for the tour was in itself a huge learning exercise. The selection of the group (11 Women MPAs and an Assembly Officer), filling in application forms for the UK visa, the submission of passports and the excitement of traveling were all memorable moments. The eagerness with which the group participated in the whole tour right from the start was amazing. Even after 16 hours of travel, every member was ready on time for the first appointment of the day, a visit to Barking and Daghenam Borough at 9 am.

We worked hard and tried to understand what we saw and heard. Each evening we summarized our experiences and prepared for the next day. The result was that we were termed the best delegation that Westminster had ever received, a moment of great pride for us. Unfortunately the Speaker never referred to this great honour that we brought to the KP Assembly, nor did he ever read the recommendations that we presented to him upon our return.

Our Recommendations Included:

- The resignation of the Speaker from his political party after election to the position of the Speaker to ensure that he is unbiased in his judgment and rulings.
- The empowering of Standing Committees and to bring in equality of gender, minority and disabled persons by increasing their number in each committee and electing them as Chair to 30% of the committees.

- The reduction of the vote of the Chair of the Standing Committee to one instead of two.
- The Chair of the Standing Committee should take suo moto notice on critical issues.
- The development of a video on KP Assembly and history of KP for the education of the general public and students in particular. Educational institutions should be encouraged to send their students to the Assembly in order to understand the role of the Assembly and its impact on their lives.
- Question hour is a very important segment of the Assembly proceedings. It should be handled efficiently so that maximum number of questions brought by the members are answered satisfactorily. Unnecessary debate should be avoided during this hour.
- The practice of appointing shadow ministers from the opposition should be introduced in the Assembly. This will enhance the accountability of the Minister in charge and ensure good governance within the Line Departments.
- Each MPA should be facilitated by the creation of a reasonable budget to help them in better management of their work in the Assembly as well as the constituency.
- Assembly doors should be closed after the time fixed for entry has passed. In Westminster, London, the doors were closed eight minutes after the start of the ringing of the bell.
- The history of the Assembly should be preserved e.g. the Jirga hall should remain as it is.
- Use of stationery should be curtailed.

- There should be a separate room for the media where cameras are fixed for them to follow the proceedings.
- The seating arrangement should not be made on the basis of gender as is currently the case, with men occupying the front seats and women the back rows. Seating should be such that women are not always given the back rows.
- A special area should be designated where constituency workers can come and meet their MPAs instead of allowing them to enter all areas as is the current practice.
- There should be a message board for messages for MPAs.
- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly should pass a unanimous resolution demanding that Parliament should bind the political parties to give 10% tickets for general elections to women.
- A day and time should be fixed for the Chief Minister to attend one sitting during a Session. The Leader of the Opposition should begin the question hour by asking a predetermined number of questions to be answered in detail by the Chief Minister.
- There should be a well-functioning reception area with young officials receiving and sharing information and arranging meetings of visitors. Currently people enter and walk around looking for the office/ official/member to have a meeting with.

Recommendations addressed to the British Council, the partner organization, in the capacity development programme:

- This exposure visit for the members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly should be institutionalised and linked with other Commonwealth Parliaments.

- In addition to the MOU with the Steering Committee of the Capacity Building Programme, the British Council should initiate a separate programme for the strengthening of the Women Parliamentary Caucus. The programme could include the development of documentaries on women parliamentarians worldwide, printing newsletters, arranging discussion groups and organizing visits within the country as well as to parliaments of other commonwealth countries.

The Caucus Secretariat should:

- Ensure the active participation of women in assembly proceedings.
- Assist members in drafting legal documents and understanding assembly business and procedures.
- Strive to establish strong links with civil society organizations working for gender equality.
- Make sincere efforts to reach out to male members and encourage them to become members of the Caucus.
- Raise awareness about the importance of women in the Assembly and try to change people's negative views about women in politics.
- Conduct research on crucial issues and submit reports to Government demanding a quick response.
- Try to earn the goodwill of the Chief Minister and the Speaker.

What Political Parties can do:

- Ensure gender equality in their manifestos.
- Encourage women by giving them tickets and supporting them to contest elections on general seats.

- Strengthen women wings and build the capacity of prospective women MPAs through a well-planned and efficiently implemented capacity development programme.
- In case of the demise of a member, his wife, daughter or sister should be given that seat.
- Support women and men from under-privileged backgrounds and people with disabilities.
- Appoint women to key decision-making posts.

The Swiss Tour

Due to our successful management and handling of the Caucus, the Head of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Dr. Stefanie Burre, proposed to organize a tour of the Swiss Parliament for a selected number of Caucus members, to which the Swiss Embassy readily agreed. Where there are people with different views and loyalties there will always be jealousies and conflict. Never was it more obvious than when we announced the plan for this exposure visit to the Swiss Parliament on the invitation of SDC. The actual invitation had been graciously given to me as Chairperson but I had pleaded for it to be extended to the whole executive committee (seven members), the patron in chief, and one support staff, a delegation of nine. As soon as the programme was finalized we announced it in the group created especially for sharing and updating information. The reaction to our announcement was scathing to say the least. A flood of accusations and angry outbursts seemed to have been released. It was most hurtful, especially when the poisonous volleys were thrown by those who had never taken interest or contributed in any way to further the cause of women or the Caucus. The most shocking part was the assault on us through the media, which relished the discord and, as is their practice, exaggerated it several times. There



were threats of no-confidence and using all tactics to stop the tour. Everywhere I went I had to give an account of what was happening. Those opposed went to the extreme limit of writing to the Ambassador of Switzerland and the Speaker of the Provincial Assembly. Nevertheless, the trip went ahead, for which we will always be very grateful to Dr. Stephanie Burri, Head of SDC, the Embassy of Switzerland in Pakistan, and the Swiss Government. The trouble they took in making the arrangements perfect and giving minute attention to protocol and our comfort was most commendable.

The whirlwind, action-packed tour of ten days provided not only an opportunity for new learning about Swiss life, history and its parliamentary system but it also helped to introduce Pakistan and its systems in Switzerland. The two countries have some similarities. Both enjoy strategic positions with powerful countries on their borders, but Pakistan is fortunate to have access to the Arabian Sea, while Switzerland is landlocked. Both countries are proud of their majestic mountains and serene lakes. However, there is a marked difference in climate, and Switzerland has limited natural resources compared with Pakistan's rich mineral deposits. Both countries have a rich

diversity of language, ethnicity and religion. However, while Switzerland is peaceful and neutral in its approach to foreign powers and issues at home, Pakistan is facing a grim law and order and security situation due to multiple factors and developments in the region. It is of great interest to us to learn how Switzerland manages to isolate and immunise itself from disturbances in its surroundings. Compared to Switzerland, Pakistan's political history is very new and it is still struggling to strengthen its weak institutions and political and parliamentary systems. Switzerland, on the other hand, has a long history of direct democracy starting at the grassroots and systems based on an egalitarian ideology which it continues to strengthen through candid discussions and referenda: the result is what we saw and experienced during our ten-day tour.

Switzerland is a small country surrounded by giants like Germany and France. Pakistan's northern region on its own is bigger than Switzerland. However, its size has not interfered with the fast growth of its economy and its socio-political development. The country is governed by a system which integrates all regions, groups and beliefs. Full autonomy and equality in every sense can be seen in the Swiss political system. Small or large, every canton has the same representation and differences on issues of any genre are sorted out by referendum. The need for a referendum may be raised by any citizen through a letter addressed to the parliament or head of state. What is most astounding is the fact that Swiss women only gained the right to vote in 1971 compared to Pakistan where women have been voting since independence in 1947. Yet Switzerland is far ahead of Pakistan in creating gender equality in politics.

The tour was a tremendous success right from day one. The precision planning of the whole programme did not leave any room for failure. Every second was accounted for and care had been taken to combine political and parliamentary learning with



At the Swiss Parliament, Bern

awareness about Switzerland's history, tourism and culture. The environment in which the sessions were held as well as the travel to different meeting points was very cordial and congenial. The selection of a wide array of expert speakers and resource persons from both public and private sectors made it possible for us to learn a great deal in a very short time. Visits to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) headquarters, the Federal Parliament building, the Canton of Berne Parliament, the headquarters of Human Rights and the Inter-Parliamentary Union were particularly exciting. Highlights included an exciting chair-lift ride to Interlaken, and a peaceful boat ride on serene Geneva lake. If there was any deficiency at all it was the lack of time for buying gifts. However, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) compensated us with generous gifts of chocolate to all members of the delegation.

While the Swiss organizers took care of every detail for our learning and comfort, I discovered that a few of our delegates found it difficult to adapt to the European environment, not only

because of the language, but also the discipline and the general ethics. There are some serious gaps in understanding on the part of our political workers and leaders. A politician is a person who has to mix with diverse groups, work in multiple cultures and listen and adjust to various discussions. Within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa itself there is rich diversity of traditions and languages, which add to the beauty of the province and which must be appreciated and highlighted in different spheres. Living in restricted environments and closing one's mind to other voices dulls the mind and blocks development. It is essential for aspiring politicians, in fact all development professionals, to move out of their comfort zone and travel to learn and enrich their lives through reading, travel and engaging with people from different cultures.

Recommendations Submitted to the Speaker after the Tour:

- At the assembly/government level a fresh review of electoral reforms should be conducted to ensure transparency through active involvement of the electorate.
- The head of the government, the ministers, the speaker and deputy speaker as well as the secretaries of the parliament should all go through a process of election.
- A rotation system should be introduced to give several elected members the chance to use their expertise in driving the government machinery.
- There should be equality in regional, ethnic, gender, and religious representation in the parliament and government.
- Local-level elected members and institutions should be strengthened by increasing their administrative and financial powers.

- Consultation and collaboration at different levels are very important for strong and sustained democracy.
- The standing committees need to be strong and they should be allowed to function without interference.
- A code of conduct for MPs should be developed and incorporated into the Assembly Rules of Business.
- The capacity development programme of the Assembly should have a strong section on links between gender, finance and the social sector.
- A Standing Committee on Defence and Security should be notified with immediate effect.
- KP MPs should be included in all delegations representing the country at international forums.
- Women should be included in committees set up for security issues.
- An oversight committee should be formed in the provincial assemblies to review progress on implementation of the legislation passed by the assembly.
- Every issue should be discussed in the standing committees first. This will save time in the assembly sittings.
- In case of an emergency a special committee should be notified to discuss and prepare a report for ratification by the Assembly.
- The budget of a department should be discussed in the respective standing committee before bringing it to the Assembly session.

At the Level of Women Parliamentary Caucus / Members

- Invest in research and develop an accurate database for solid and sustainable interventions.
- Create links at provincial, national and international levels for new learning and sharing of experiences. Take interest in the delegations visiting different international forums and the reports being shared.
- Provide support to the Speaker and the Government on gender mainstreaming.
- Assist in strengthening women's groups at different levels.
- Improve consultation, cooperation and collaboration at the provincial, national and international levels.
- Strengthen members through training, especially on defence and security.
- Demand access to information—use the Right to Information Act 2013.
- Create a network of women working for gender integration in security reforms.
- Initiate dialogue on security and defence.
- Develop detailed and precise plans and strong implementation strategies for better progress.
- Point out sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians in the Assembly.
- Table legislation to curb cyber violence.

- Engage with religious and political groups to convey the importance of engaging women in development.
- Discover other countries where everything is different.
- Have a clear goal and purpose before you work for it wholeheartedly.
- Find a mentor. Sound advice and clear guidance will help in overcoming many obstacles.
- Planning and good time management will help in protecting against giving 'sacrifice' for different reasons. Start with situation analysis, facts, figures, narratives and analysis of political structure, institutions and processes. Reflect priorities, preferences, marginalization etc.
- Develop a sound understanding of parliamentary law and procedure
- Encourage members to continue their education.
- Conduct a gender audit of Assembly Rules of Business (ROBs).
- Conduct a gender audit of the Annual Budget.
- Demand the creation of a defence and security committee in the parliament.
- Demand that legislation and budget-drafting start in the standing committees.
- Demand that provincial legislators should be included in the committees formed to draft national reports for international organizations such as UNCHR and IPU.

Recommendations to Swiss Development Corporation (SDC) :

- The importance of this initiative of Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation cannot be overestimated. Pakistan is not an ordinary country. It is massive in size and population; it is also a great, novel experiment in nation building based on an idea which can be understood as a way of life above caste, creed and colour.
- Switzerland, also being an exceptional country, can lead and assist Pakistan in a mutual exploration for strengthening, supporting and collaboration in mind (ideas) and matter. Switzerland managed to keep its integrity in the European sea of discord. Similarly Pakistan, which is grappling with existential problems of how to keep its territory and ideology, needs a sound implementable strategy to overcome the challenges it faces. In this joint quest, Pakistan and SDC can develop fruitful platforms for future collaboration on human and regional development.

4.12 The Senate Elections

Pakistan has a bicameral Parliament comprising of the Senate and the National Assembly. While membership to the National Assembly, the lower house, is through direct election, senate members are elected by the members of the four provincial assemblies. The number of total seats in the Senate is 104 with 23 members from each Province, 8 members from FATA and 4 members from Federal Capital Islamabad. The senatorial tenure is six years and elections are timed in such a way that 50% are retired after three years to be replaced by newly elected members. During our tenure from 2013-18 senatorial elections were held twice, first in March, 2015 and then in 2018. Bearing in mind the Senate's status as the highest parliamentary house, the election of its members requires a

seriousness of thought and approach. Unfortunately it is the opposite in our country. Party nominations are made by either the party chairman/president or his very close allies. Members of the party in the assemblies are not taken into confidence, but simply ordered to poll their vote for the party candidate. Parties all claim to distribute tickets on the basis of merit and to the most deserving candidates using the criteria of qualifications, political knowledge and experience and loyalty to the party. However, in reality it is not so. In recent years, most unfortunately, money has played a very big role in the allocation of tickets and polling of votes. Though constitutionally it is secret balloting, members are under a great deal of pressure and, if a party candidate fails to get the expected number of votes, members face a difficult time convincing their party about their loyalty. Thus it was in the 2015 election when the Qaumi Watan Party's candidates suffered a major defeat it resulted in accusations and finger pointing as to who had 'cheated' the party.

The second senatorial election taking place in our tenure was towards the end of our term in March 2018. This election will be remembered in history for a very long time as it was purely a game played with money. Nominees were billionaires and wanted to win by hook or by crook. Cash flowed in the Assembly, the MPA hostel and anywhere else convenient to the givers and takers. The result was not unexpected and the parties were satisfied with their victories, except Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) which fell in the trap of the opposition which had spread a very effective propaganda about its members being corrupt and sellable. As a result, while other parties rejoiced over their victory, PTI reacted angrily and publicly accused 20 members, including some from other parties including me, of selling their vote. Against established and acceptable norms of leadership and management, the announcement was made in a press conference, without investigation and the sending of show cause notices to members to explain the allegations against them. Although it was explained to the public that a committee

had been formed which prepared the list, in reality no committee had been notified and the origin of the list on an unsigned and undated paper has still not been determined. When the accused protested against this unethical and unconstitutional behaviour a show cause was served to them the following day, asking them to respond within 15 days, otherwise they would be expelled from the Party. A few of us were furious as we did not belong to PTI at the time of the election, so to expect us to vote for their members was totally irrational, and it was criminal to shame us in public. That week was a nightmare as some of us sat for hours drafting a befitting reply to the show cause, while others released their steam through meetings among themselves and holding press conferences. Many believed it was a very cleverly crafted plan to eliminate serious competition from some members, but the majority agreed that what was done was in very bad taste and not expected from a party leadership which advocated justice. It showed a lack of knowledge of political maneuvering and strategizing. Even worse was the silence that greeted responses; it was obvious that they had realized their mistake and now were embarrassed to admit it. The members in the meantime had to use all their courage to go into their constituencies and meet their families, friends and well-wishers.

This was not the first time that the ruling PTI had hurled allegations against its own members, or that its members had clearly and squarely accused the Chief Minister of interference in public institutions and pocketing large sums of money as commission. Cracks in the party had appeared very early as a strong forward bloc was formed which started a vigorous campaign against the Chief Minister. After a few months the Government gave in and appointed some of them to key positions, while others were assured of compensation in some other form. However, a perceptible ill will remained, which surfaced from time to time.

QWP also faced embarrassment. Chairman Mr. Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao had strongly resisted joining the government. Senior members of our party were also reluctant as there were tensions between PTI and PMLN and we wanted to stay away from these tensions. However, repeated visits from the PTI committee tasked to form the coalition government finally persuaded Mr. Aftab Khan Sherpao to agree to sit on treasury benches. It was not an easy relationship as thinking and working in both parties were in contrast to each other. QWP, an offspring of the liberal Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had slowly but surely developed into a strong entity with a liberal outlook to lead the Pakhtuns out of the despair and hopelessness in which they had fallen due to the circumstances prevailing in the country. Mr. Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao, a quiet, dignified and extremely humble politician had successfully steered PPP to an enviable position by winning elections and forming PPP Government twice in the province. He carried that knowledge and experience to his new party, (QWP). He was never in a rush to take decisions. Many consultations were held before he finally agreed. PTI, on the other hand, is a strong wave of youthful dreams and energies that believes in breaking down all old systems and starting afresh. Chairman, Mr. Imran Khan, is the hero and heart throb of this young crowd and he has given them the confidence and the belief that they can move mountains and they can elevate Pakistan to a respectful position in international politics. In matter of five months PTI threw QWP out of the coalition and the government on charges of corruption. Till the very end of the tenure no proof could be provided. In fact, MPA and Minister, Mr. Bakht Baidar of QWP, had filed a defamation suit which he was made to withdraw when the party was invited a second time to the coalition. This time the marriage lasted a few months longer but the result was the same. QWP was insulted while PTI celebrated their 'self-proclaimed' justice system and zero tolerance for corruption.

Among the seven political parties in the Assembly, QWP had the most disastrous tenure, first due to the misadventure with PTI and then the rising resentment within its own ranks. Failure to get even one of its members elected to the Senate in 2015 was a shock, because other parties with half the number of members had been successful. But the party's fortunes worsened in 2017 when, one by one, members prepared to join other political parties; it was suggested that the provincial leadership was disinterested in party affairs and parliamentary proceedings and that the central command was turning a blind eye to this. By April 2018 only three of its members out of 10 remained. This must be the first time in history that a political party was routed within the Assembly after winning quite a substantial number of seats.

5

The Final Analysis

Analysis of the overall performance over five years shows that the most prominent achievements were the record number of bills, the capacity development programme of the lawmakers, the creation of the Women Parliamentary Caucus, the construction of the new block with a large parking area, the outreach activities of the members, the internship project, and the intensive exercise to amend the Assembly Rules of Business.

The internship project created an opportunity for eight fresh graduates to be attached to different departments of the assembly for learning as well as providing support to the legislators in drafting correspondence or writing minutes of the meetings. One intern was provided to the Caucus. The project was financially supported by the Subai Project and funded by the European Union (EU).

Outreach activities included members' visits to health centres, jail, women crisis centres and education institutions. This exercise needs to be institutionalized especially strengthening the links between the Assembly and academia. The visits should be in both directions as it is important to invite

students of all levels to attend sessions so they understand the working of the Assembly and the role it plays in their future and their lives.

What is regrettable is the failure to pass the large number of amendments to assembly rules of business on which we had studiously worked for four years. It would have been a big achievement if the Rules had been upgraded through these amendments. The last upgrading had been done in 1984, much before the considerable changes that have taken place in the political process of the country. The proposed amendments included critical ones for making the Assembly and the office of the Speaker accountable, for ensuring the mandatory presence of the leader of the house at least once in a session, strengthening the standing committees and laying down a procedure for the removal of an ineffective chairman of a committee.

My performance was also affected negatively by a clash between the Speaker and the Secretary. In the first year they worked well together, but by the second year the pull and push were unbearable to the Speaker and he 'plucked the feathers from the Secretary's wings'—his authority was halved, with the administrative section in its entirety given to the Special Secretary and his team. This created a big deal of bitterness and divided the management into two opposing camps.

The capacity development programme initiated by the Speaker also received a great deal of criticism due to the expenditure incurred and alleged favouritism.

Mr. Waseem Abbasi of The News International had this to report:

"ISLAMABAD: As the assemblies are nearing their five-year terms, the smaller Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Assembly has beaten the three-time bigger Punjab Assembly in terms of

spending on its members through foreign trips and salary raise, official data obtained by The News revealed.

Certified information obtained through the Right to Information Law shows that despite being a third of the size of the Punjab Assembly, the KP Assembly spent three times more on foreign visits of its members and staff as compared to legislators in the Punjab during the last five years.

The data shows that KP Assembly, which has 124 members, spent Rs53.6 million on foreign tours while the Punjab Assembly with the strength of 371 members spent only Rs16.5 million on foreign tours of its members.

The certified data shows that only eight members of the Punjab Assembly went on foreign tours during the last five years while in KP over 60 members of assembly embarked on state-funded foreign tours.

The KP Assembly Speaker, Asad Qaiser, travelled abroad 10 times, including six trips to England, and one trip each to the United States, Iran, Scotland and Africa. Qaiser spent Rs.5.5 million from the provincial budget on his trips while Information Technology Special Secretary Attaullah Khan had spent Rs.4.1 million of the public exchequer on foreign visits. In addition, Rs2.9 million was spent by the KP Assembly Special Secretary to the Speaker Syed Wiqar Shah on foreign trips.

MPAs, provincial ministers, advisers, parliamentary secretaries and even opposition members of the assembly used public money to undertake these visits. The Provincial Assembly's Special Secretary for Information Technology visited eight countries during his tenure, while the Special Secretary of the Speaker visited six countries.

The KP Assembly also passed five bills to increase the perks and privileges of its members, including the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Salaries, Allowances and Privileges Laws

(Amendment) Bill 2017, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ministers (Salaries, Allowances and Privileges) (Amendment) Bill 2017, KP Ministers Salaries Allowances and Privilege (Amendment) Bill 2014, KP Salary Allowances and Privileges Laws (Amendment) Bill 2014 and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ministers Salaries & Allowances (Amendment) Bill 2014”.

Nepotism was another significant problem, with relatives and friends being brought over from other departments and elevated to prestigious positions close to the Speaker. It was hoped that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf would implement their agenda of change and bring about systemic improvements but it remained an unfulfilled dream, leaving the staff, especially senior members, deeply hurt and frustrated.

However, on the brighter side, the data shows that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) -led KP Assembly tabled as many as 195 Bills (including 29 private member bills) during the five-year period, compared with 163 tabled by the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) -led Punjab Assembly.

Unfortunately our tenure ended on a bad note caused by the senate debacle which had further annoyed the belligerent opposition. However, the learning and experience gained during this period will remain a treasured memory in our lives. What is important now is to continue the struggle started within the Assembly. In fact, the struggle should intensify and the learning be used to sensitize workers, voters and leaders of political parties as well as those young people who are in some way connected to human resource development and political processes. There is an acute need for discussions and awareness-raising sessions for different groups. It is also important that women politicians, especially those who have served in Parliament, form networks and caucuses to give moral support to each other and learn from each others experiences. Pakistan in general and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular have

myriads of issues, among which women's empowerment is often suppressed and ignored. Bringing it into focus requires a well-coordinated and integrated programme of education, networking, and awareness-raising and community participation. Most of all it is crucial to build on the experiences of the last two tenures and strengthen political system through improved parliamentary rules and practices. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has proved time and again that they believe in democracy and a strong federation. With increased literacy and better understanding of their responsibilities legislative business and parliamentary debate will improve too.

But for now I just wonder and ask: was it only yesterday that I was a member of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, grappling with technicalities and fighting for the rights of those who had no access to the corridors of power? Was it only yesterday that I had dreamed of moving mountains to clear our way to enlightenment, emancipation and empowerment? Was it only yesterday that our political and parliamentary system appeared to me as a political device to distract the public from the grave issues of livelihood, human rights and natural disasters? I savored every moment. The experience was most certainly a memorable one.

But yesterday is no more. It has changed into today, with new challenges, new goals, new ambitions. There are new faces in the Assembly and in the Government. There are new policies and new work ethics. There are new groupings, friendships and rivalries, for the river of life does not dry up. It flows on and on forever, irrespective of who is in the Assembly and who is out. As for me, my politics shall continue as long as I breathe, for politics is a moral commitment towards welfare, justice and equity in society. Politicking for me is to use all possible and legitimate measures to win as many people as possible to this noble mission. It is a lifelong struggle for happiness, love and peace.

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Former member and Chairperson Women Parliamentary Caucus, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Ms. Meraj Hamayun Khan is an award winning development professional and committed politician with a distinguished career stretching over more than four decades. She has pioneered several noteworthy projects for child protection, women empowerment and rural agriculture through the non-profit organization, De Laas Gul Welfare Programme which she founded in 1988.

Ms. Khan is the recipient of the Izaz-e-Fazilat Presidential Award in recognition of her contributions towards female education in rural areas. She was inducted into the Caretaker Provincial Government (Nov 2007 – Mar 2008) with the important portfolio of Minister for Education. During the short term she helped restructure and improve the delivery system of the Department and its affiliated offices. She also prepared a comprehensive education plan to bring all children of the province into schools in the next four years.

Ms. Khan holds Masters degrees in English and Education and BS in Home Economics. She spends her time working in her home district, Swabi, and her adopted district, Peshawar, and the capital city, Islamabad. My Brief Political Romance is her second book. The first one, Jhanda, The Blessed Land, is a brief history of her village and family.