



Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan Beginning of Rights for Balochistan

My heart bleeds
to wet the barren land of my miserable people
In the hope that one day these lands will turn
green
and there will grow red flowers
I will gather the seeds of those flowers
because these are from my blood.¹

Sayyid Zahūr Shāh Hāshimī (1938-1997)

resonated again when President Asif Ali Zardari extended a public apology in February 2008 to the people of Balochistan. The apology announced by the Co-Chairperson PPP on behalf of the whole nation to the people of Balochistan marked an important break with the past.³ In the first place, the strongly-worded resolution made no bones about conceding that "atrocities and injustices" have been committed and as such, by accepting wrong, provides some hope that a new relationship with Pakistan's largest, but most sparsely populated province can indeed be built.⁴

Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's promise turned eventually into concrete policy recommendations for the Joint Sitting of the Parliament when Senator Mian Raza Rabbani presented a set of comprehensive proposals titled 'Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan' (AHB) on November 24, 2009.

The era of this new relationship has already set in. Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani has explained at various forums why his Government has used the word 'Aghaz-e-Haqooq' for Balochistan instead of a 'package'. Historically, Balochistan was treated by non-representative forces with a 'charity' and 'relief' perspective, by doling out sporadic handouts to its people.

But the People's Government has shifted the paradigm. It has established through its policy approach as well as by its practical delivery that marginalization of provinces cannot be mitigated through ad-hoc relief packages and arbitrary charities. There has to be, first, a genuine political understanding and will to address their grievances; and second, a predictable institutional mechanism to address the vulnerabilities of marginalized provinces.

AHB is an exciting beginning to achieve the

People's Doctrine of Peace

"I have come to Balochistan with a message of peace and brotherhood," said Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto while addressing an election rally in Dera Allahyar, just seven days before her martyrdom.² During her campaign visit to Quetta in December 2007, Shaheed Mohtarma also recognized that the situation in Balochistan had deteriorated because of use of force instead of efforts to resolve the issue through dialogue, thereby forcing the youth to take up arms. She said that the PPP would give equal rights to all the provinces and exploitation would be ended to enable the people of Balochistan to move forward with honor.

These words said to the Baloch people by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto

¹Jan Muhammad Dashti, 'Patriotism: A Baloch Cultural Tradition as Depicted in Modern Balochi Poetry', users.tpg.com.au/users/goshti/Dashti.rtf.

²Dawn, December 21, 2007.

³The News International, February 26, 2008.

⁴Ibid.

desired institutional sustainability for an equitable federation -- where right is not relief, but it is enforceable. Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani said on the floor of the House, "apart from trying to resolve the backlog of the last 62 years, the Government is determined to evolve an arrangement to avoid recurrence of such problems in future."⁵

Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Reconciliation Committee: Process and Outcomes

The Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Reconciliation Committee formed by the People's Government in March 2008 met people belonging to different shades of opinion from Balochistan and also interacted with *jirgas*. The Committee formulated recommendations and presented them to the Government. The People's Government also constituted another committee to formulate recommendations for political, administrative and economic reforms.

The seven-member committee comprised Federal Ministers Makhdoom Amin Fahim, Raja Pervez Ashraf, Syed Khurshid Shah, Syed Naveed Qamar, Babar Awan, and Senators Mir Lashkari Raeesani and Mian Raza Rabbani. The Committee firmed up its recommendations with a lot of hard work and dedication. Then a National Consultative Process was initiated, which included interaction with the President, the Governor, and the Chief Minister of Balochistan. Consultations were held with the provincial cabinet and members of the provincial assembly in Quetta.

The Peoples Government also involved other national political leaders in this consultative process. Those who were consulted include Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Mian Nawaz Sharif and his companions, Sardar Mehtab Khan Abbasi, Opposition Leader Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, Raja Zafarul Haq, Ishaq Dar, Khudai Noor, Yaqub Nasir, and Mamnoon Hussain; Awami National Party (ANP) President, Asfand Yar Wali; Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam leaders, Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Maulana Sheerani; Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) leader,

Engaging the Estranged

Since coming to power in February 2008, the People's Government has offered dialogue to those Baloch leaders who elected not to take part in the polls. They don't belong to one party or a group, but many of them offer different perspectives on various provincial, regional, and national issues. A great majority of the Baloch leaders, in fact, did contest the polls and are members of provincial legislature, National Assembly and the Senate. They have been part of the dialogue process and have greatly contributed towards negotiating AHB.

Despite plurality of them being in the political process, those who sit outside are important stakeholders, and their absence from the political system, or their critique of 'Center-centered Federalism' cannot be dismissed. AHB's writers have vowed to bring them back into mainstream politics through dialogue and better understanding of each other's point of view.⁶

Dr Farooq Sattar; Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) leaders, Chaudhry Shujat Hussain and Parvaiz Elahi, Senator Wasim Sajjad, Amir Muqam and Mushahid Hussain; leader of Baloch National Party (BNP), Senator Israrullah Zehri; FATA leader, Munir Orakzai; and Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao.

Baloch leadership in the Senate was also made part of the consultative process. In the end, the Government held a joint session in Islamabad. It invited the Governor and Chief Minister of Balochistan, members of the Provincial Cabinet, senators and members of National Assembly from Balochistan, and members of the Provincial Assembly to attend the meeting.

AHB: Some Reflections

The 30-point AHB is a resolve to facilitate the return of political exiles; an immediate release of political workers; and political dialogue with major stakeholders in the province. It also proposes setting up of a fact-finding commission to investigate the circumstances that led to the death of Nawab Akbar Bugti; a judicial inquiry into the killing of three Baloch nationalist leaders; stopping the construction of cantonments in Sui and Kohlu; withdrawing the Armed Forces from these areas; limiting federal agencies' operations to terrorists; and tracing the missing citizens.

Senator Mian Raza Rabbani, who heads the committee that prepared the AHB, tabled the recommendations divided into five categories: constitutional, political, administrative, economic, and monitoring mechanism. Independent analysts observed that this marked a small but important step forward towards full integration of all Balochis into Pakistan.⁷ The AHB has addressed the lingering issue of provincial autonomy by promising to transfer the concurrent list of powers to the provinces.⁸

Major political parties, PML-N, PML-Q, PPP

and its coalition partners, MQM and ANP, have endorsed AHB.⁹

On economic matters, AHB deals with three sets of issues: job creation, royalties and share of Balochistan in the development and exploitation of existing oil and gas resources, and shared power over decision-making in



President Zardari's apology to the people of Balochistan on behalf of the whole Nation marked an important break from the past.

launching new mega developmental projects and managing the existing ones. At the outset, the Federal Government has promised to create 5,000 jobs primarily to employ educated youth of the province; more funds for poverty alleviation and rehabilitation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) of Dera Bugti with a grant of Rs.1 billion.¹⁰

People's Development Strategy

Placing the concept of public-private partnership at its center,¹¹ AHB offers 20% of right shares offered in the open market of public organizations, Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL), Oil and Gas Development Corporation Limited (OGDCL) and Sui

⁵ Pakistan Observer, December 10, 2009.

⁶ Rasool Bakhsh Raees, "The Balochistan Package: Redefining Federalism in Pakistan", Forum of Federations, www.forumfed.org/.

⁷ Adil Najam, "Full text of Balochistan 'package': is it enough?", November 24, 2009, <http://pakistaniat.com/2009/11/24/balochistan-package/>.

⁸ Rasool Bakhsh Raees, "The Balochistan Package: Redefining federalism in Pakistan", Forum of Federations, www.forumfed.org/.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

Southern. The People's Government on its part will transfer 20% of its 30% shares in Saindak Project (copper and gold) to Balochistan, and the province will have exclusive rights over the project after withdrawal of the foreign company running it.¹² The Federal Government has accepted greater share of the province in the gas development surcharge (GDS) tax that it collects, and will pay arrears from 1954 to 1991 that amount to Rs.120 billion.

Keeping in view the fiscal constraints faced by the Provincial Government of Balochistan, the People's Government extended financial assistance on different occasions and also took responsibility for paying a Rs.17.5 billion loan that Balochistan owed to the State Bank of Pakistan. Last year's Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) was increased from Rs.42 billion to Rs.50 billion.

In 2009, the People's Government allowed Balochistan to spend the unutilized funds amounting to Rs.21 billion, for its development projects and it also announced a special Balochistan Package to the tune of Rs.9 billion. Of these, Rs.3 billion are for Quetta Package, Rs.3 billion for budgetary support, and the remaining Rs.3 billion have been set aside for the development projects to be indicated by members of the Balochistan Assembly.

Under the Prime Minister's instructions, the Army has been withdrawn from Kohlu and Sui and replaced with Frontier Constabulary. The Prime Minister also made an announcement for abolition of seven check-posts in the province. These include: Uthal, Lehri, Dera Allahyar, Sheela Bagh, Gwal Islamzai, Sheikh Wasil, and Zero Point Coastal Highway.

Out of the 992 missing persons of Balochistan, 262 have returned to their homes. Prime Minister assured the Parliament that the remaining would soon meet their families.¹³ During the last one and a

¹²Pakistan Observer, December 10, 2009.
¹³Dawn, November 25, 2009.

AHB: Key features

- Facilitation of political exiles' return to homeland (except those involved in terrorism)
- End to construction of cantonments
- Tracing missing citizens and facilitating their immediate release
- Provincial consent in the launch of mega projects
- 10% of profits to be allocated for development of areas having natural resources
- Constitutional matters to be settled by Constitutional Reforms Committee
- Concurrent list be deleted from Fourth Schedule of Constitution
- Judicial probe into the killings of Akbar Bugti, other Baloch leaders and target killings
- Fact-finding commission to investigate circumstances that led to Akbar Bugti's killing
- Release of all political workers except those charged with heinous crimes
- Frontier Constabulary (FC) to replace Army at Sui
- Rs.120 billion gas royalty
- Political dialogue with all stakeholders
- Provincial Assembly resolutions to be implemented
- Provincial Government to amend Local Government Ordinance
- End of all military operations except actions against terrorism
- The policy of conversion of "B" areas into "A" areas to be reviewed from time to time



December 29, 2009 - Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani being received by the Balochistan Governor and Balochistan Chief Minister upon his arrival at the Gwadar airport.

- FC's law-enforcement role to be under the Chief Minister; powers conferred under the Customs Act to be withdrawn; and Coast Guard to perform its primary duty of checking arms and narcotics smuggling
- The Federal Government to immediately give 20% from its 30% shares in Saindak Project to the province, which will exclusively own it on completion and after withdrawal of the foreign company
- Judicial probe into the allotment of land at Gwadar
- Special quota in Higher Education Commission (HEC) scholarships
- 5,000 additional jobs at the earliest
- Ownership in oil and gas companies
- Rs.1 billion for Dera Bugti IDPs
- Parliament Committee on National Security to monitor package implementation
- Fishing trawlers to be restricted to 33km from the coast to help small fishermen

half year, 83 political workers were released and cases against another 89 were withdrawn.

The Prime Minister announced that every graduate from Balochistan would be provided employment opportunity. He also announced the lowering of qualification from Matric to Middle for recruitment of Baloch youth in Coast Guard to ensure availability of more employment opportunities for them. The People's Government is also taking steps for proper training of the Baloch youth, overseas employment. Ten thousand youth from Balochistan would be provided employment under the Youth Internship Program.

Thirteen small water dams would be built in the province to overcome water shortage. Six hundred scholarships for the students of Balochistan have been approved, in which 200 scholarships for the students of Balochistan have been approved, in which 200 scholarships for Masters leading to Ph.D. in English-speaking countries -- 50 scholarships per year for four years. The education division currently offers 60 scholarships in cadet colleges/public schools, 123 scholarships in polytechnic, and 15 scholarships in commerce colleges. This facility has been given under the ongoing scheme titled Provision of Quality Education Facilities to Students of Balochistan and FATA under the President's/Prime Minister's directives.

The Ministry of Education has proposed 300 additional scholarships for Balochistan-domiciled students (100 each in cadet college/public schools, polytechnic and commerce colleges). The Peoples Government has already notified a Free Economic Zone (FEZ) at Gwadar on an area of 1000 acres. The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has also approved a package of incentives for Export Processing Zone (EPZ) by enhancing its area to 46,000 acres. Five thousand skilled and unskilled workers from Balochistan are also being sent abroad.