

Order and the Devolution Plan without any input by the elected representatives of the people and made it constant and all

pervasive. The present transition period is eroding the credibility of the system and causing anarchic disruption of law and order. The only beneficiaries seem to be the police hierarchy and a number of district leaders.

In Sindh the rural population is politically marginalized and its voice throttled. It is an unfortunate situation that has developed here. A common Sindhi feels that the Muttahida Qaumi Movement has been invested with a crucial power role. It has been put into a role of king-maker irrespective of its relative numerical strength. The party has been given the governorship. Though the governor is a ceremonial head, in Sindh his say in the running of the provincial affairs is becoming decisive.

How the human rights in the province have become prey to political expediency can be highlighted by the following account. The MQM has declared that it is struggling against feudalism and is opposed to 'Sardars' whose word, it says, is the law in the rural areas. Recently, a couple of men of the Almani caste were held by the police and illegally detained in police lock-ups. The DPO of our district to which the men belonged informed me, on my query, that the government was doing so because of the threatened pull-out of its support by the MQM. It had declared that if the government does not punish the Sardars responsible for the predicament of Ms Shaista Almani, it would withdraw its support from the government.

Still, Governor Dr Ishratul Ibad met an Almani sardar and he, as a vendetta, named his opponents as being a threat to the lady. The victimization of the people belonging to the same tribe as the Shaista's but hailing from different districts and indubitably having nothing of the sort to do as alleged, continued to be in the lock-up.

One of the detainees was released in a raid by the court of law as it transpired that he was illegally detained. I brought the facts to the notice of the gover-

## promotions, transfers and postings of the officials.

obliges such politicians frequently by promoting and posting officials in the districts according to the choice of such politicians. This is a common occurrence in Sindh particularly in the rural areas, which is the main factor responsible for lawlessness and injustices.

In a year or so, we have witnessed new occupation of large tracts of forest department's land in kutchha areas in Naushahro Feroze district. The occupied land has turned into a sanctuary of criminals. Here and in a couple of other districts of Sukkur police region, officials from the ASIs to DPOs are the nominees of a particular group of politicians in power. The RPO seems busy in attending protocol duties because either he is unwilling to act according to his conscience or is unable to fulfil his duties. Many officials have become order-obeying robots because they do not want to lose their cushy posts.

The devolution plan instead of becoming a boon has turned out to be a bane for the districts where certain unscrupulous politicians have come to power with the help of the establishment. No action has been taken by the concerned authorities so far on any of the pleas of the victimized to redress their grievances. How the Police Order 2002 has helped strengthen the hold of the unscrupulous over the population is clear from the promotions, transfers and postings of the officials.

Recently, several promotions of the ASIs of police to the next rank, i.e., sub-inspectors, were made. At least seven of them were promptly posted as SHOs in Naushahro Feroze, which happens to be their home district also. Some of them seldom attended their duties and were often found absent from their places of posting. But, yet for the reasons other than good performance they were promoted and further rewarded by similar postings.

Such actions of the concerned officials whether on their own initiative or at the behest of the

that would assuage the angry mobs. This, perhaps, the erstwhile deputy commissioner had adequately attended to.

I would suggest that, to begin with, the government should abolish the 'Concurrent List', transfer those subjects to the provinces and announce a just and equitable financial award. The circumstances demand an urgent review of the devolution plan with a view to curtailing powers of the district nazim. Some financial powers need to be transferred from the district to the union and taluka councils. Development projects must be subjected to strict scrutiny regarding their cost, feasibility and relative priority in terms of population and must be well dispersed in the district according to the population of respective talukas/tehsils and such criteria must be well defined and adhered to by the district assembly.

A retired official of repute must head the local government commission with security of tenure. The commission should be invested with powers to inquire into complaints against misuse of authority by elected and other officials of the district. Roads, schools and health facilities must be approved after completing engineering and physical studies. The members of parliament and provincial assembly must be associated with proposing and approving of development schemes in the districts in order to promote across the board fair selection.

The public safety commissions should be made really independent and its selection procedure modified for that purpose. Police complaint authority should be made functional without further delay. Promotions of the officials, to start with, of police, health and revenue must be made through public service commission. Security of service of government officials from Grade BPS 16 to 20 should be constitutionally protected.

The present situation in the sphere of governance in the province is untenable and needs urgent remedy.

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