



*Delegates to a national convention of elected rural and urban local governments after the formation of ALGI*

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## Where democracy is no more anathema

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The global expansion of democracy continues apace. The unprecedented democratic expansion and consolidation of democracy across continents in the past decade or so is indeed gratifying even though roots of many nascent democracies are still shallow. The Arab world may appear to buck this global trend, but even here the change is taking place. The democratic Arab world by Western or Indian standards may be long in coming, but the democratic opening has already been made. The drums of change are beating. While Western Arabs may be chafing under non-democratic governments, Gulf Arabs are witnessing new found freedoms. Bahrain, Qatar and Oman have taken significant steps to open up their political systems and held relatively free elections at the local self-government levels.

The Middle East's Mediterranean capitals—Cairo, Beirut and Tunis—traditionally sparked what little progressive political thinking occurred in the Arab world. The Gulf Kingdoms, by contrast, were dismissed as politically crude: tribal, conservative, lacking basic civic freedoms. This has changed totally today. Qatar is holding the third municipal elections in April. Bahrain held these elections last November. It installed in 2002 a bicameral parliament in which lawmaking power is shared by an elected assembly and an appointed consultative council. Majlis Al-Shura, consultative council, in Oman is now an elected body. With the voting rights given to women, Oman is moving towards democratization. For over four decades, Kuwait has been holding regular elections, both municipal and parliamentary.

Last December, the UAE held its first ever elections to elect an advisory council. Saudi Arabia too held the first ever nationwide municipal elections in February 2005. Billboards were put up asking citizens to vote. Even though these elections were flawed, the compulsions to hold elections in the region of electoral draught clearly suggest the advance. Though Saudi authorities did

not allow women to vote in the municipal elections, women were allowed to contest elections to the board of the powerful Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The senior Saudi government officials have indicated that women may vote in the 2009 municipal elections.

More and more Arab States are moving towards greater democratic political systems. At the municipal levels, this process is definitely getting consolidated. Call it controlled democratization or tactical democratization, the process is very much on. For a region where the power structure has traditionally remained centred around what has been labelled *dimuqratiya-al-khubz* (democracy of the bread), the ongoing change is a qualitative advance. Several factors weigh in for change. Demography, technology and the information revolution have set off a revolution of rising expectations. A realisation is gradually dawning that the oil boom can no longer support the population explosion. The Gulf monarchies need to mobilise women to be more active in the economy to support the labour market.

Radical Islam is drawing the disenfranchised youths which can be curbed only by opening up the polity. In view of the bold steps taken by Qatar, Bahrain and Oman, Gulf Arabs are feeling hopeful about democratic change. They hope to get rid of a uniquely discredited style of 'democracy' and to move towards participatory democracy.

The Gulf region is also moving closer to establishing a union of Gulf municipal councils. It will be a useful instrument to share best practices in the field of municipal governance. It will also go a long way in unifying governance systems in cities across the region.

Democratic governance at the local level is finding feet in certain countries of the Arab world. The steps taken by the Arab States may be wobbly but nevertheless welcome. What is encouraging is the fact that the whole floor of public debate is gradually shifting to questions of when and how than why of democratic opening.

## What's New

### India-Pakistan JWG on Local Governance

At a time when India and Pakistan are engaged in a war of peace initiatives and are deliberating on complex issues like joint management and self-governance, an issue that has not received the attention is the setting up of a Joint Working Group (JWG) to promote interaction between members and officials of local bodies of both countries. The JWG will be headed by Panchayati Raj Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar from the Indian side and Chairman of National Reconstruction Bureau (NRD) Daniyal Aziz from Pakistan.

An agreement to this effect was signed by Meenakshi Datta Ghosh, Secretary of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Secretary of NRD Humayun Ishaque Chauhan. The signing ceremony

was attended among others by India's Deputy High Commissioner T.C.A. Raghavan and Director General, South Asia, in Pakistan Foreign Office Jalil Abbas Gilani.

Meenakshi Datta Ghosh said that the JWG would finalise a schedule of meetings of the Joint Forum on Local Governance and ensure 'full and free' dialogue between relevant stake holders and constituencies. Officials of the two governments are calling the JWG "tentative baby steps" towards exploring the potential of cooperation among local bodies. However, it has the potential to take Indo-Pak engagement several leaps forward in a whole new set of democratic stakeholders into the peace process.

### Twinning Agreement between Dubai Municipality and Busan Corporation

The Dubai Municipality and the Busan City Corporation of South Korean have signed a twinning agreement that will pave the way for expanding bilateral relations between the two cities in the areas of trade, economy, future technologies, tourism, ports and culture.

Hussain Nasser Lootah, Acting Director General of Dubai Municipality and Hur Namsik, Mayor of Busan, signed the protocol following talks between local government officials from cities, last November.

Lootah described the agreement as a "significant step" in enhancing the existing cooperation between the two cities, which have many things in common. "Busan is a port city and has a large economic free zone and Dubai is also known for its free ports and many a free economic zones. A twinning agreement like this will help boost

exchange of expertise and sharing of best practices", said Lootah.

He noted that the municipality had been dealing with Korean firms in implementing civic projects for a long time. Busan Mayor Hur Nam-Sik said the city hosts the largest of the port of South Korea and Dubai's DP World is currently involved in a major multi-million dollar project to develop a second port in the city which is expected to be operational by 2011.

The twinning agreement provides for exchange of expertise between Dubai and Busan in fields like economy, trade, technology, environment, public health, culture, legislation, administrative systems, youth and sports. It also suggests exchange of visits by delegations from both cities and participation in scientific conferences and meetings that are organized by the two cities.

### Commonwealth Local Government Conference in New Zealand

New Zealand is holding the fourth Commonwealth Local Government Conference from 26-29 March 2007 at the Aotea centre in Auckland, New Zealand. The main theme of the conference is "Delivering Development through Local Leadership"

Prime Minister of New Zealand Ms. Helen Clark will open the Commonwealth Local Government Conference at a special opening ceremony on 26 March 2007.

### Britain Issues White Paper on Local Governance

The UK government issued a white paper on local government in October 2006 which outlines its proposals for enhanced local leadership, decentralization to communities and more accountable local services. The reforms are seen as one of the final acts of the Tony Blair administration before its scheduled departure later this year.

The document contains certain concrete proposals to minimize the authority of central government bureaucracy and to remove the inspection burden, offering instead a flexible performance framework and reserve powers to intervene only in the worst cases of local incompetence. The core component of the paper is the plans to devolve more power to

neighbourhoods, besides some of the technocratic measures involving Local Strategic Partnerships and Multi-Area Agreements.

Local councils will now have to decide whether or not to have a directly elected mayor, which they can proceed to without a referendum, or instead elect the council leader for a fixed four-year term rather than annually.

The local leader would also be vested with all executive authority within the council, which they could then delegate to cabinet members. This arrangement would make English councils operate along the same lines as those in many other European countries, where the mayor is appointed by the council for the duration of its term of office.

### One Stop Shop Centre

To improve the administrative capabilities and to create a congenial atmosphere for the citizens, the Al-Bireh Municipality, Palestine in cooperation with GTZ has opened one Stop Shop Centre, which is considered a new experience in administrative development of municipalities. According to Waleed Hamad, Mayor of Al-Bireh, the new centre will provide better services to the citizens equally, and improve administrative procedures in the municipality. The centre will receive all the applications and petitions of the

people related to their day-to-day issues, their comments, and direct them to the required service. The new endeavour will allow the municipalities to do their administrative tasks completely.

The centre will also accept receipts and payments from citizens and also meet the citizens to solve their problems. The GTZ, German based development organization, is also assisting other Palestinian Municipalities like Ramallah, Betunia and Salfit to start similar centres to strengthen the activities of local bodies.

### Fighting Discrimination in Latin American Cities

The Coalition of Latin American and Caribbean Cities against Racism, founded by UNESCO, has undertaken a special action plan aimed at tackling 10 types of abuses based on xenophobia, race, gender, health and disability. Governors, mayors and senior municipal officials from 40 cities have signed the action plan. These leaders have taken upon themselves the responsibility to ensure

the anti-discrimination drive achieves its objectives.

The mayors and city officials will coordinate their move with NGOs, education centres, civil associations, unions and other institutions and organizations before formally launching their initiatives. The Coalition of Cities against Racism was set up in 2004 as part of a worldwide strategy to fight discrimination.

**Local Government Reforms in Japan**

Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has announced that the mayors and elected local government office bearers who have completed three terms or more will not be allowed to contest in a bid to strengthen the ranks of elected officials and guard against corruption. In recent months few provincial governors and local officials resigned due to financial irregularities.

Elections for mayors and local assemblies will take place in April 2007. These elections as well as three imminent gubernatorial elections in Miyazaki, Yamanashi and are perceived important marker for the critical upper house elections in the Japanese parliament this summer. It will be Shinzo Abe's first electoral test since becoming Prime Minister last September.

**Local Government an Important Pillar in Australian Federalism**

The Australian Senate and House of Representatives have passed the local government motion recognizing the role of local government in Australian federalism. The motion acknowledges local government's importance in providing service and responds to the needs of local communities. The resolution also acknowledges the importance of consulting and cooperating with local government and signifies the importance of all spheres of government working together to address the challenges faced by local communities.

The Minister for Local Government, Jim Lloyd presented a framed copy of the resolution on the recognition of local government to Prime Minister John Howard at Parliament House. It brought the states to the table to end cost shifting - which impacted on local government by around \$500m to \$1 billion a year - with the historic signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement.

The resolution says that the House/Senate:

1. Recognizes that local government is part of the governance of Australia, serving communities through locally elected councils
2. Values the rich diversity of councils around Australia, reflecting the varied communities they serve.
3. Acknowledges the role of local government in governance, advocacy, the provision of infrastructure, service delivery, planning, community development and regulation.
4. Acknowledges the importance of cooperating with and consulting with local government on the priorities of their local communities.
5. Acknowledges the significant Australian Government funding that is provided to local government to spend on locally determined priorities, such as roads and other local government services.
6. Commends local government elected officials who give their time to serve their communities.

**Nyaya Panchayat Bill/Nari Adalat in India**

The Indian Local Government Ministry is planning to propose Nyaya Panchayat Bill, a less expensive; self financed local justice system to speed up the litigations and problems of rural people. A similar kind of justice system called Nari Adalats (women Courts) is already functioning in the villages of Vadodara, in the state of Gujarat since, to resolve the cases related to women and domestic issues. The women meet every Thursday at the local Panchayat premises of Padra taluka

Panchayat of Vadodara seeking intervention for family violence and domestic disputes. Similarly, other villages in Vadodara like Dadhoi, Pavi Jetpur also have full-fledged women courts and the jury members, usually social activist takes a nominal amount 200 to 500 rupees from the clients as fees. The success of Nari adalats would have probably prompted the Panchayat Raj Ministry (Ministry of Local Governance) to evolve a parallel concept in the country.

# The Practitioner's Page

## Professionalisation is the Key



*Thomas Mkaza has worked in a number of different positions including as a teacher, township manager, CEO of Mangaung and several other local municipalities and one of the founders of the Institute for Local Government Management of South Africa as well as its first President. He talks to Dumisani Nyalunga of Democracy Development Programme (DDP) Durban.*

### *What are the critical issues facing the local government system in South Africa today?*

There are several issues that hamper the smooth functioning of the local government system in South Africa. The fixed term employment contracts for senior managers within municipalities affect continuity of officials. This results in patronage. Thanks to the Executive Mayor system, roles get blurred between political/legislative and the executive/managerial/operational. The executive powers allocated to Executive Mayors are often abused and deliberately misinterpreted to further other aims than what they are intended for.

Conflicting legislations also create confusion in their implementation. The Municipal Finance Management Act prohibits Councillors and officials from engaging in business with the municipality where they work or any municipality in the country. The Municipal Systems Act, on the other hand, only requires the person concerned to declare their pecuniary interest when the matter is dealt with.

Allocation of functions to municipalities is also problematic as some of these are too costly and municipalities can't afford them. These are sometimes called unfunded mandates. The demarcation of municipalities has created institutions that are "still born" as they still do not have the capacity to fulfill their legislative and constitutional mandates.

Party representation in local government has also created an unintended problem - those elected under this system are accountable to their political parties first and to the electorate later.

### *What are the key challenges faced by municipalities in South Africa?*

Lack of service delivery, appropriate planning and skills is a key challenge. In certain instances resources are available but due to lack of appropriate planning these funds are not spent. Affordability of services is another challenge. Communities demand high level of services but they cannot afford these on the basis of cost recovery. Funding of "Free Basic Services" is problematic if not subsidized, services given to communities such as water are initially paid for by the municipality and if it does not recover these funds from somewhere, it then runs into problems.

The demarcation process has created municipalities that are not financially viable and have no prospects of ever becoming viable. The rural-urban dichotomy is indeed a huge challenge to municipalities in terms of managing these diversities. High level of apathy within communities on issues of governance after elections need to be addressed.

### *How to improve the functioning of the local government institutions?*

It is very important to develop a sustainable succession plan. Retention of human capital and development of succeeding layers of cadres for leadership and managerial positions is critical. Training and development

service providers such as tertiary institutions should develop programmes which are aimed at addressing the issue while municipalities should develop their own succession plan. Professionalisation of local government management and minimization of political interference in outright management issues and curbing political influence on policy matters are equally imperative.

### *What accounts for rampant corruption at the local government level?*

I hold a different view. Corruption is not necessarily rampant as it is perceived. There are two things at play here, namely, the increase in reporting of these matters in relation to the secretive state machinery of the Apartheid era. Secondly, legislation governing institutions such as municipalities is becoming more stringent and frequent audits and requisite reporting flush out corrupt and fraudulent activities.

However, in cases where it happens, it is the result of a ban on councilors and officials engaging in business transactions with the municipalities throughout the country. This has forced them to go underground and craft various ways and means to conceal their involvement. Political patronage has led to collusion between politicians and officials.

### *What is the best way to install good governance at the local government level?*

The appointment of persons into positions without the necessary skills and competencies has led to patronage and allegiance to the "masters". Nepotism in all its forms must be avoided. Strict adherence to transparent policies, systems and procedures in selection and appointment of personnel will go a long way in ensuring good governance. Politicians in municipalities must be trained in governance and constantly monitored to contain deviation. Provincial and National governments must monitor municipalities in a developmental and remedial manner. ■

## Needed a Fair Deal for the Indigenous People



Alberto Coles

*The name may not ring a bell in the Anglophone world, perhaps not even in Latin America, dominated for centuries by people of mixed race. But what Alberto Coles, an indigenous Mayor of Guaranda Canton, has succeeded in*

*doing, other mayors dare not tread that path for fear of antagonizing the voters. People's participation in the decision-making has created a sense of partnership among the indigenous people. When he assumed office in 2002, roughly 90 per cent of the municipal budget was earmarked for people living in urban sectors and only 10 per cent went to the village people. Today the villagers and the indigenous people receive nearly 50 per cent of the budgetary allocation.* Alberto Coles, Mayor of Guaranda Canton, Ecuador, talks to Angel Medina of the Fundacion Q'ellkaj on his novel experiences:

*What are the challenges that you have faced in bringing about change in the predominantly Western model of governance to accommodate indigenous practices and aspirations?*

We have demonstrated to the people of mixed race that we, the indigenous people, have the political capability and that we have created political space through our struggles and movements. We deserve an honourable place in the system and our customs, practices and values must be respected. I was a councillor before I was elected Mayor of Guaranda Canton. Today I can afford the luxury of addressing the solemn session in our own language. This clearly shows that we are politically competent to govern not only at the local level but also at regional, provincial and national levels.

*How do you achieve consensus in the municipal council?*

It has indeed been difficult to motivate the people living in the urban sector. Fortunately, we count on a myriad of indigenous organizations and the indigenous people who are favourably disposed towards our policies and programmes. We believe in ruling in partnership with the people and planning the ways to govern. We take all decisions in full consultation with the 85,000 people of Guaranda. I give full credit to the people for all the change we proclaim today.

*What strategies do you follow to mobilise people's support on the vital question of governance?*

I first mobilise the active community organisations in support of my decisions. They, in turn, put pressure on the community and educate the people about the policies and programmes. What I do is to invite the council members to jointly visit the villages, community people, parish church and localities where development work is to be initiated. We organise meetings in these localities where the people take decisions and chalk out plans for development. Right there the elected council members commit themselves before the people how they are going to implement a certain plan or what they are going to do to solve a given problem.

This way, the villagers don't have to visit the town council or wait outside the assembly to know what is being discussed or deliberated upon. They don't need to attend the meeting only to have lunch or to visit the mayor's office only to shout slogans. What we have tried to show is that the work should be transparent and the policy decisions must ensure equity, fair justice and accountability. One needs to work not merely for the salaries and perks. The spirit of service to the community is equally important. The indigenous people have suffered long on account of hunger, deprivation and isolation. Their leaders must establish an empathy with people on the margins. ■

## THE PRACTITIONER'S PAGE

## ■ The Big Story ■

### Women Make Better Leaders

Women's empowerment is the buzzword of the global political discourse today. In the hurly-burly world of politics, women are making their presence felt, climbing the ladder to power. Countries that have taken steps to empower women have moved forward in advancing development agenda and promoting good governance. Rwanda and South Africa have dramatically transformed polity and governance by way of quota. Quotas for women at the local government level in India and Pakistan have worked wonders at a short span of time. Now a report by the United Nations Children's Fund has revealed that around the world, greater participation of women in local politics has led to what it calls "a more equitable distribution of community resources with direct benefits for women and children, particularly girls."

Even though the UNICEF report, which is based on the Poverty Action Lab of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is more India-specific, it has lessons for the entire world, particularly the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. As the report says, the most comprehensive findings on the impact of women in local government come from developing countries, particularly India which reserves not less than 33 per cent seats for women in all leadership positions in panchayats (village councils). Today, some of the Indian states elect far more than the mandatory one-third women to the village councils. For instance, Maharashtra in western India and Karnataka

in south India have 43.7% and 43% women respectively in the village councils. The State of Bihar in eastern India has reserved 50% of these seats for women. It is thus clear that women are getting elected from general seats by defeating men.

What is the impact on governance? Taking the example of Bengal the UNICEF report states that gender quotas have worked to the advantage of local communities. "Investment in drinking water facilities was double in panchayats headed by women compared to those without quotas". Similarly, roads were almost twice as likely to be in good conditions, said the report quoting from the results of the MIT study.

Women village council members also pay more attention to health care. A survey covering 100 villages in Rajasthan collected information on the immunisation record of every child between the age of one and five living in a village reserved for a woman village council head. The impact of women leaders on school attendance is even more significant. The UNICEF report further says that "The study showed the presence of a woman head reduces the gender gap in school attendance by 13% points."

The UNICEF report is in line with the findings of a Gallup poll in Latin America in 2000 which found that 62 % of people believed women would do better than men in fighting poverty, 72 % favoured women for improving education and 52% thought women would make better diplomats.

Women's participation in politics has increased greatly across the world in the past few decades. Even some Arab countries, which bear the world's lowest percentages of female representation, have achieved impressive numerical leaps. As per the Arab Human Development Report 2005, women's representation in Iraqi parliament has reached 25% after the 2005 elections. Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan have also made remarkable advances. Today, 11.5% of legislators in Tunisia are women. From 0.66% of deputies in 1993, the percentage of women legislators in Morocco increased to 11% in 2003. In Jordan, women's representation climbed from 2.5% in 1995 to 5.5% in 2003. In the December 2004 elections for local councils under the Palestinian Authority, women gained 17% of total seats.

The UNIFEM Report titled *Progress of Arab Women 2004* makes an interesting observation: "Women are not active in politics because politics is not a safe and secure domain for them to participate in." As a survey conducted in Bahrain on the eve of the 2002 municipal elections said, 60% of women were opposed to the participation of women in elections. They were not convinced of the ability of women to run for public office. That explains why no woman was elected to the municipal elections held recently in Bahrain despite the voting rights. Several Arab countries are therefore considering quota for women. None would have imagined that in the Afghan Parliament, among the 249 elected members,

one would have 68 women members, including the likes of Shukriya who was whipped in public by the Taliban! The Afghan constitution provides for 25% quota for women.

Africa has done better in terms of women's empowerment. In Rwanda, 48.8% of parliamentarians are women. In South Africa, the first democratic elections resulted in an astounding jump in female representation, up to 27% compared to 2.7% in the apartheid era. Botswana and Tanzania are close to achieving 30% female representation in their legislative bodies.

Quotas are a legitimate means to securing gender balance in a great many countries.

Quotas have been relatively more successful in countries with PR system.

In Latin America, for example, quota provisions are formulated on a gender-neutral basis. In many countries the law provides

for a maximum of 60% or a minimum of 40% representation of either sex. This type of formulation is important in overcoming resistance to quotas on the grounds that they are discriminatory and consequently unconstitutional.

That quotas help women's empowerment is no more disputable. The UNICEF report does assert that quotas have proved to be an effective method of empowerment. As many as 50 countries world over have quotas for women in their legislative bodies. Of the 20 countries with the largest number of women in parliament, 17 are using quota in some form or the other.

—By Ash Narain Roy

## THE BIG STORY

# Global News

## Northern Germany to Abolish Directly Elected Mayors

The recent proposals of the regional government of northern Germany seeking to abolish directly elected mayors have received sharp criticism from across the political parties. The government committee of Schleswig-Holstein has recommended that local democracy would be better served if mayors of the state's two largest cities were elected by council members rather than

elected directly. However, Angelica Volquartz, Mayor of Kiel, has said that the move is detrimental to the local governments and a direct attack on the democratic process. The government officials pointed out that the low turnout in local government elections may have prompted the retrograde move. The final decision is yet to be taken.

## Indian Panchayat Model on Export

Success in the field of decentralized governance, particularly empowering village local self-governments, has prompted India to market this model abroad. Sri Lanka is studying the Indian local government experience to take lessons from it and evolve its own model of maximum devolution, said Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa in Dehra Dun while inaugurating the first Asian Mayors' conference last November. Recently Sri Lanka sent a high-level delegation to India to learn about the Indian Panchayat system. Afghanistan is currently preparing a blueprint for empowering the local government institutions. Afghanistan Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development Mohammad Haneef Atmar recently told an interactive meeting at Delhi's Institute of Social Sciences that his country was keen to replicate the Indian local government system

India has now prepared a plan to market its

best practices in the field of local government to countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and South Africa. A 10-member team led by Meenakshi Datta Ghosh, Secretary of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, has visited South Africa to share the Indian experience of local government. The visit followed repeated requests by the South African government how citizen service delivery can be fine-tuned through local governance. The team included senior government officials and experts on decentralisation.

India is equally interested to learn from experiences of other countries and link up with a common global platform for dealing with local self-government. Norwegian local government minister was in Delhi to share her country's best practices. The World Bank has also shown interest in the Indian local government institutions.

## Tales of Corruption in Spanish Local Government

Eugenio Hidalgo, Mayor of Andratx, the Balearic island of Majorca, has been accused of serious corruption including financial irregularities, bribery, illegal association and offences against the Spanish Treasury. The director of urban development of the Balearic autonomous government, Jaime Massot and the public works supervisor Jaime Gibert are caught up in the allegations. All three are members of the centre-right People's Party (PP). The Spanish Local governments have been under scrutiny when the high level corruption in Marbella, Ciempozuelos and Telde local bodies were made public.

Meanwhile in Telde, one of the councillors who has been accused of alleged payment of illegal commission said in a newspaper interview that some of the money was diverted to the treasury of People's Party. Also implicated in the allegations are the materials and labour for the building of a new party headquarters in exchange of receiving preferential treatment with obtaining municipal building permits. However, the chairman of the People's Party, Jose Manuel Soria, lodged a lawsuit to prove the allegations in court.

### **Department of Municipalities in UAE and Injazat Data Systems (UAE) Sign Outsourcing Contract**

The Department of Municipalities, UAE has signed a 10 year contract with Injazat Data Systems (the region's leading Information Technology Outsourcing (ITO) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) company), under which Injazat will provide IT managed services and assume full responsibility for the Municipality's IT services and operations.

Juan Salem Al Daheri, Chairman of Abu Dhabi Department of Municipalities and Agriculture at Abu Dhabi Municipality signed the contract on 1 November 2006.

Under the terms of the contract, Injazat will provide fully integrated IT services to the Department of Municipalities and Agriculture, including infrastructure management, application management, project management and delivery,

extensive network support throughout Abu Dhabi, in addition to developing and supporting Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solutions.

Commenting on the contract, Al Daheri said, it is important that we support and accelerate the development and unprecedented economic growth taking place in Abu Dhabi, by providing prompt and efficient services. Giving Injazat Data Systems the responsibility of managing our IT services and operations will "enable us to benefit from innovative solutions and leverage the considerable expertise of the company's pool of professionals. This in turn will help us provide speedy and improved government services to the public and further reinforce Abu Dhabi's development and progress".

### **Las Vegas to Throw Homeless from City Parks**

Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman has taken a hard line against the city's 15,000 homeless people. Recently the city administration enacted a number of by-laws, making it a criminal offence to provide the homeless and street sleepers with food and banning them from parks. The mayor believes the action is necessary to rejuvenate the area north of the famous Las Vegas Strip. But the crackdown came as big setback to the homeless and the poor.

One man told local journalists that Mayor Goodman saw every homeless person as a public

enemy." He wants this city to be lily white for the tourists". In July, Las Vegas made it illegal to feed the poor in parks, a reaction to some charity workers' practice of bringing spaghetti vegetable soup, sandwiches and water to homeless people in a Las Vegas park.

The American Civil Liberties Union has challenged the ordinance and a federal judge has ruled it unconstitutional. However, the mayor remains unwavering and is bent on vacating the parks.

### **USAID Assistance to Honduras Local Government**

The Government of Honduras and USAID have agreed to launch a joint programme-Support Democratic Local Government and Decentralisation, to strengthen the receptiveness, efficiency, transparency and accountability of governance in Honduras. The USAID and other partners will help Honduras in the decentralisation process, and increase the capacity of local government to meet citizen's needs.

To advance the management capacity of local governments, USAID will provide specialized

technical support and training for a select number of municipalities, and basic training to a number of small municipalities in the areas of financial administration, tax collection and service delivery. Assistance will also be given to local bodies in the interim period of elections, including assistance to foster citizens in the management of public funds and to deal with country's Supreme Audit Institution(SAI) to audit municipal government and international donor programmes.

### Mass Wedding in Dubai Municipality

The Dubai Municipality organized a mass wedding on 13 November 2006 at its Staff Club in Garwood to encourage the youths to reduce extravagance and overspending for wedding. A total of 61 couples tied the knot under the group-wedding programme, organized with the aim of lessening the wedding expenses. Out of 61 couples 22 were the employees of Dubai Municipality. During the first group wedding ceremony of Municipality employees in 2002, there were only 12 couples.

The Municipality has taken this initiative in line with the instructions of the Father of the Nation Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan who supported

cost cutting on wedding ceremonies and exhorted the people to avoid lavishness in wedding parties.

Hur Nam-Sik, Mayor of the south Korean City of Busan, who signed a twinning agreement with Dubai Municipality, was the guest of honour at the ceremony and Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Makhtom, UAE Minister of Finance and Industry and Chairman of the Dubai Municipality also attended the reception.

The entire expenditure for the reception, which also featured folk performances by troupes, fireworks, traditional wedding opera and folk arts show, was borne by the municipality.

### World Bank Officials Visit Nablus Municipality

David Craig, the newly appointed country director of the World Bank in Palestine, visited Nablus Municipality of Palestine accompanied by Steven Karam, World Bank's Economic Expert of Urban Development for the Middle East and North Africa. The World Bank delegation met the Mayor of Nablus Adly Yaish and was briefed on the hard situation and the financial crisis in Nablus Municipality due to the prolonged instability in the region. David Craig expressed the willingness of World Bank to assist

the ongoing projects of Nablus Municipal Council within the framework of Emergency Municipal Services Rehabilitation Project. The World Bank also agreed to fund new infrastructural projects particularly in the area of water and wastewater and social services aiming to create more jobs and to revitalize the civic facility of the Nablus Municipality. Technical assistance and consultancy services to improve the management and financial system of the municipality have also been extended.

### Drug Mafia Infiltrating Mexico's City Governments

In recent years Mexico has seen a 'Colombianisation' of its polity in many parts of the country. City governments have become victims of the mafiosi's design. In November last year the mayor of Huimanguillo in the State of Tabasco became a victim of the drug mafia. According to the office of the Attorney General of Mexico, Huimanguillo mayor Walter Herrera had been investigated by the Assistant Attorney General's Office of Specialized Investigation in Organised Crime as he had allegedly protected his ex-director of public security Anicasio Perez Malpica, who had been

apprehended in connection with the murder of six people involved in drug trafficking.

The possibility of police officers and some city officials being involved in drug trafficking in Mexico is real. According to the Office of the Attorney General of Mexico, in Tabasco alone, at least nine of the State's 17 municipalities are infiltrated by the criminal organisations involved in drug trafficking. As per the new plan, all future police chiefs would be vetted by the Office of the Attorney General of Mexico so as to help mayors to rid municipal police forces of criminal elements.



# Election News

## High-level Rigging in Belarus

The Belarus local government elections held on 14 January 2007 were marred by high incidents of rigging and electoral malpractices. President Alexander Lukashenka's supporters and friends managed to win majority of seats in an undemocratic manner. As reports suggest, only 300 opposition members took part in the election and about 100 others withdrew before voting, fearing widespread ballot rigging. The opposition leader Alexander

Milinkevich condemned the undemocratic approach of the government. The government agencies did not allow the opposition candidates or their representatives in local election commission's office during the counting of votes. Ironically, the Central Election Commission claimed that the voting turnout was above 79 percent and nearly 22,640 representatives got elected to 1581 local bodies in a free and fair manner. The European Union expressed its strong disapproval.

## Gains for Ruling Coalition in Cyprus

Cyprus held municipal elections on 17 December 2006. The ruling tripartite coalition of AKEL, DIKO, and EDEK captured majority of the councils by winning 18 of 33 municipalities. Interestingly, mayors of six municipalities—Morphou, Kythrea, Lysi, Lefkoniko, Karavas and Kato Polmeidia—were elected

unopposed and fourteen out of thirty three Mayors have been elected for the first time. The participation of women in the municipal elections have only marginally improved. Out of 414 municipal councilors, only 84 women municipal councilors have been elected. The performance of the opposition DISY bloc was also relatively better than earlier years.

## Local Elections in Slovakia

Nearly 47.65% of the electorate participated in the local elections in Slovakia on 2 December 2006 in which new mayors of towns and villages and members of local councils were elected. About four million Slovaks elected some 2,903 mayors and 21,272 city and town

councilors. The turnout was lower in towns and cities (36.76%), but was significantly higher in villages. The ruling Smer-SD party and the main opposition party SDKU-DS of former Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda expressed satisfaction over the results.

## Opposition Wins in Mauritania

The Rally of Democratic Forces (RDF) and Progressive Popular Alliance won majority of the Municipal Seats in Mauritania. In the elections held on 19 November and 3 December, 2006. The

victory of these two major alliances are seen as a political mandate against the undemocratic policies of former military ruler Maaouya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya. The voters turnout was nearly 69%.

## Victory for New Democracy

The Greek Ruling party New Democracy (ND) registered a landslide victory in the council elections held on October 15. The New Democracy won 30 of the 54 regional prefectures and the main opposition Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) managed 22 local councils, while the Left coalition and communists grabbed one each. In the city of Thessaloniki, Macedonia, Vassilis Papageorgopoulos of New Democracy got re-elected as Mayor with

a thumping majority while Andreas Fouras, supported by the main opposition Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) got elected as Mayor of Patras. According to the Central election Commissioner, more than nine million voters including nearly 9000 citizens of other EU states participated in the voting. In Athens, Nikitas, former Health Minister backed by New Democracy, retained the Mayoral position.

### Major Test for Ruling Party in Poland

The local elections in Poland were held on 12 November 2006. These elections were partly seen as the first major test for the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) since its victory in both the parliamentary and presidential elections in the autumn of 2005. The Polish parties like Law and Justice Party, Citizens Platform (PO), leftist Self-Defence, Farmer's Party, League of Polish Families participated in these elections with vigour and enthusiasm. Turnout at the polls was about 45%.

Two key metropolises Warsaw and Krakow had to go through the run-off since none of the mayors received more than 50% of the votes polled. In all of Poland's largest cities except Lodz the ruling party lost the mayoral race to either the Citizens Platform or independent candidates. According to the National Election Commission, the two leading parliamentary parties, the Citizens Platform and the Law and Justice Party took the main share of the votes around the country.

### Georgia Elections

On 5 October Georgia held local government elections to 69 municipal councils. Six political parties were in the fray. President Saakashvili's United National Movement won a landslide victory in the elections. The Akhalkalaki municipality, dominated by Armenians was the only council won by the opposition bloc. The Industry Will Save Georgia Party won majority of the seats in Akhalkalaki. The municipal elections were considered to be the first step towards

democratization. According to the Central Election Commission, the National Movement secured 77.08% of votes, the coalition of Republicans and Conservatives 8.57%, Labor Party 6.42%, Industry Will Save Georgia Party 3.79% and the Georgia's way garnered 1%. The International observers, mainly the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, were satisfied with the electoral process.

Local Government Election Calendar 2007 (select countries)		
Month	Country	Type of Election
February	Cambodia Japan (Hiroshima, Kitakyushu and Fukoka) Yemen USA (Illinois)	Municipal Elections Mayoral Elections  Municipal Elections Mayoral Elections
March	Argentina (Entre Rios) Australia (Carinthia) Germany (Schleswig-Olstein) India (New Delhi) Thailand (Samut Prakan) USA (Arizona, Oregon, Vermont, New Mexico)	Provincial Council Elections Municipal Elections Municipal Elections Municipal Elections Local and Municipal Elections Mayoral and Council Elections
April	Chad Japan Malta Qatar USA (Missouri, Las Vegas)	Local Elections 645 Mayoral and 1622 Municipal Local elections Municipal Elections Municipal and City Council Elections
May	Australia (Western Australia) Germany (Bremen) Moldova Philippines (Muslim Mindanao) Senegal Spain United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) USA (New Jersey, West Virginia, Texas)	Local Elections Local Elections Local Council Elections Local Government Elections Local Elections Municipal Elections Local Council Elections  Municipal and Local Council

### A Setback to President Ahmadinejad

The outcome of the December 15 local elections in Iran has been a setback for the firebrand President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Political forces opposed to President Ahmadinejad known in Iran as "moderate conservatives" and reformists have put up a credible performance in these elections. More than 2,33,000 candidates contested for nearly 1,13,000 council seats. The local elections were a referendum of sorts on Ahmadinejad regime. The final tally showed a major setback for President

Ahmadinejad's supporters and allies as they won only less than 20 percent of local council seats nationwide. None of the candidates belonging to President Ahmadinejad bloc won seats on the councils in the cities of Shiraz, Bandar Abbas, Sari, Zanjan, Rasht, Sanandaj and Kerman. In Tehran, candidates supporting Mohammed Bagher Qalibaf, the city's moderate-conservative mayor, won majority of the seats. Surprisingly women candidates put up a much better show compared to previous years.

### Gains for Opposition in Taiwan

The elections to Taiwan's two special municipalities Taipei and Kaohsiung were held on 9 December 2006. The opposition party of Taiwan Kuomintang (KMT) performed relatively well in the municipal elections. In Taipei Hau Lungbin of the opposition bloc Kuomintang (KMT) won the mayoral position by defeating Frank Hsieh's of the ruling Democratic Progressive party (DPP). At the same time Mr. James Soong of People First Party garnered 4.14 percent of the votes. In the Taipei City Council, the KMT emerged as the single largest party by winning 24 of 52 seats. In

Kaohsiung Chen-Chu of DPP grabbed the mayoral post by defeating her KMT candidate Huang Chun-ying by a thin margin of 1,114 votes and Chen-Chu became Taiwan's first elected female mayor of a special municipality. In Kaohsiung too, KMT emerged as the main bloc by winning 17 of 44 City Council seats including one reserved for an aboriginal councilor, DPP won 15 and PFP managed to win four. However, rigging and manipulations marred Kaohsiung municipal election and the KMT refused to accept the result.

### Municipal elections in Qatar

Election to Qatar's 29-member Central Municipal Council will be held on April 1, 2007. The announcement of municipal polls was followed by a new dispute between the elected council and the Public Works Authority (PWA) over the alleged mismanagement of several public works. The Council had accused the PWA of delays and mismanagement in the completion of one of Doha's busiest roads. According to Deputy Chairman of the outgoing Council Eisa Al Kuwari, senior officials of the PWA did not accept the CMC's role. The Council had

demanded to be informed about the road and construction projects.

In March 1999, Qatar held its first municipal elections. It was part of a democratic opening unveiled by the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. Qatar is well on course to full democracy. This will be the third municipal elections in the country. During the second municipal polls, Sheikha Al-Jafeeri became the first Qatari woman to win a seat in the Council. Qatar has lowered the voting age to 18 which has considerably increased the number of voters.

### Bahrain Elections

The opposition Shiite bloc, the National Harmony Society won 20 of the 50 municipal seats in the November 25 municipal elections. The National Harmony Society, the Islamic Forum (Muslim brothers), the Islamic Authenticity Society (Fundamentalists), and the National Democratic

action Society (leftists and Arab nationalists) were the main groups that participated in the elections. In all 165 candidates were in the fray and none of the five women municipal candidates was elected. According to the election authorities voting turnout was around 61%.

## MY STORY



**Farah Deeba**

*Farah Deeba, Member, District Assembly Lahore, Pakistan has a disarmingly charming personality. Behind her infectious smile and suave demeanour lies a woman of steely resolve. Her electoral success is a measure of her fighting spirit against heavy odds. She fights for gender justice, but also for development funds. She also wants to enter the Provincial Assembly. Recipient of this year's Fatima Jinnah Gold Medal for strengthening the local government system and a shield from District Nazim for her outstanding performance as woman councillor, Farah symbolises all that is promising in the local government system in Pakistan. Farah Deeba recounts her story:*

I was born in a political family. My father was a sympathiser of Jamat-e-Islami, a fundamentalist party committed to the revival of Islam. Politics is by no means an easy vocation for women in Pakistan. Not because Pakistan is an Islamic country. In fact, Islamic society as perceived by the West doesn't exist in Pakistan. With 97 per cent Muslim population and equal rights guaranteed to minorities by the constitution, Pakistan is for all practical purposes, a secular society. The challenges that women face in Pakistan are due to our tribal and feudal social norms and taboos. The traditional religious leaders at the community level are always seen to favour the status quo. In that sense I was fortunate that my father and later my husband encouraged me to get into social activism and politics.

In my early days of marriage, I was indeed shy and unsocial. My in-laws were liberal people. My father-in-law encouraged me to become socially active and my advocate husband Liaqat Ali fully backed. I owe a great deal to my husband for my forays into politics and social activism. The

family support made me strong and gave me confidence to do things my way. I chose teaching as a profession on my own volition. In 1992, I started my own tuition centre which introduced me to a large number of people with varying backgrounds. The Sabza Zar area in Lahore where I was staying had many family disputes. Many people approached me for help and advice. I therefore started the Sabzazar Women Welfare Society (WWS) in 1997 to institutionalise my social work. The WWS became a platform for women of that area to gather together and take up social issues crying for attention.

My advice to the area people was not confined to property disputes. I helped people in finding matches for their children. It was a voluntary service to the community. Far greater challenge came my way when I had to campaign for the slaughter house to be moved to a location outside the city. I campaigned in the Press and moved a writ petition in the Lahore High Court to get the slaughter house shifted. Other larger environmental issues were also taken up.

By the time local government elections were held in 2001 under the new devolution plan of President Pervez Musharraf, I was quite known in the area due to my social activism. People approached me to contest elections. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that people dragged me into electoral politics. My maiden effort was unsuccessful. Even though I secured most votes in the area, I lost because my panel lost. Subsequently I ran for a seat in the District Assembly Lahore and won with a clear majority. I had a good campaign. I ran as independent candidate. I had no political support, no clan backing and my erstwhile panel was opposing me, but I went around the district and mobilised the people. And I was declared as Member, District Assembly. This was my second electoral success.

The quota for women in local government has been a boon for them. Gen Musharraf must be given credit for this radical transformation. Without quota it would have been next to impossible for women to come thus far. I must say here that training given to women councillors has been greatly beneficial. I personally experienced multiple difficulties when I was elected as union councillor and as Member District Assembly Lahore in 2001. Under the devolution plan we were expected to carry out major development projects but we did not know our role. Both the government and the NGOs ran out successful training programmes for the newly-elected councillors. The training empowered us.

As elected Chairperson of the Women's Councillors Network in Lahore, I led several protest rallies, staged hunger strikes, addressed press meets and

mobilised large-scale participation of women in the International Women's Day processions. I addressed many meetings on the issue of honour killing. All these activities have been a great learning experience for me. In the infamous Shazia rape case, I organised and led a protest rally in front of the Lahore Press Club which was joined by leading civil society organisations.

In 2005, I got re-elected as District Councillor. My re-election was due to my work and close contacts with my voters. The development work in my Town is there for all to see. I have always consulted my Union Council members before taking a decision. While my work has won me many friends and supporters, I have also incurred the wrath and enmity of the land grabbers and mafias. I moved a proposal for a public park which the land mafia tried to scuttle but in the end I succeeded. The development work in my Town has exceeded the mandatory allocations for development but somehow funds have come.

There are still many impediments in the way of the smooth functioning of the local government institutions in Pakistan. The successive governments did not allow the local government system to flourish because of the feudal stranglehold on the state and society. The powerful bureaucracy is another hurdle. The local government act itself contains many flaws and ambiguities which cause conflicts between the local and the provincial governments. And yet, the local government reforms introduced by the Musharraf regime have transformed governance. Women have for the first time become major stakeholders in the local government system.

## MY STORY

# NETWORKING

## Formation of Association of Local Governance of India

The elected local government representatives in India now have an association which will lobby for their rights and help them network with other groups and associations. On December 22, 2006, an Association of Local Governance of India (ALGI) was formed at a national convention of elected members of rural and urban local governments from various parts of the country. The convention was held at the Institute of Social Sciences, Delhi. ALGI will act as a forum for local government representatives and local government institutions to voice their opinions and to establish linkages and alliances to achieve their constitutional rights.

ALGI aims, among other things, to act as an advocacy and influence-wielding group promoting the interests of local government and decentralisation process in India, to network with other associations and individuals having similar concerns, to undertake action research and advocacy and to provide specialized services to its members on matters of policy and execution.

ALGI is the culmination of several years' of work to create an enabling environment in India.

In June 2003, a strategy defining workshop was organized by the Institute of Social Sciences which brought together elected members of rural and urban local governments from 16 States of India, members of the All India Mayors' Council, members of the City Managers Association, several State and regional associations, NGOs working with rural or urban local governments, along with international representatives from existing associations of local governments of Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Indonesia, Nepal, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK. The 3-day workshop discussed various aspects of forming an all India association of local governments. A committee was formed to work out the organization and structure of the association.

Subsequently, four regional conventions, covering four regions of India were organized. Besides, 11 focus workshops were organized to deliberate on the technical aspects of the local government networks in various parts of India.

## Training for Municipal Officials in South Africa

The South African Local Government association (SALGA) and the Global Community Initiatives (GCI) provided two-day training on sustainable development to municipal officials from cities and rural areas around the country on 18 October 2006. The training dealt issues like community development for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, community

development planning, asset inventory and capacity assessment, introduction to systems thinking, planning and implementation, encouraging entrepreneurs, sustainable economic development planning, leadership and facilitation skills for multi-stakeholders processes and project implementation.

## European Municipalities to fight against human trafficking

The Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CECLRA) has setup a website for the online signature of the Declaration

against trafficking. The CECLRA has urged the European Union municipalities to actively join the movement against human trafficking.

## NETWORKING

### **The South African Local Government Association (SALGA)**

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA), in partnership with the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry and Water Research Commission of South Africa, held the second annual conference of national benchmarking on 13-15 February, 2007 in East London.

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the Department of Water Affairs & Forestry, and the Water Research Commission jointly established national benchmarking programme at the

end of 2005, aimed at promoting improved performance of water services by all water services authorities in South Africa. The national benchmarking initiative undertakes annual benchmarking of key performance indicators for the provision of water services in participating municipalities. This involves site visits and quality control of information to ensure consistency and reliability. The initiative is a three-year project and is currently in its second year of existence.

### **Mayors Development Centre**

The League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) now has a brand new Mayors Development Centre. Mayor Ramon N. Guico, Jr., the founder Chairman of the Mayor's Development Centre, formally inaugurated the Centre last October. Mayor Gerardo V.

Calderon, President and CEO of MDC, handed certificates of appreciation to the development partners. It was followed by a seminar titled "Promoting Good Local Governance through Integrated Solid Waste Management.

### **Training Materials to African Local Governments**

The Bank-Netherlands's partnership program on Decentralization and Local Government Support Program for Africa and the World Bank's Africa Transport and Urban units (AFTU) in cooperation with the World Bank Institute's City Management and Urban Development Program has produced a set of training materials aimed at enhancing local governments' levels of governance

and their capacity to provide infrastructure and services in efficient, equitable and sustainable ways.

The materials are structured around six topical themes of interest tailored to African conditions and bringing best practice case studies from Africa to the fore. The materials are currently available in English and soon also will be available in French and Portuguese.

### **Symposium on Sustainable Water Supply and Sanitation**

The IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre in collaboration with UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education organised an International Symposium on Sustainable Water Supply and Sanitation: Strengthening Capacity for Local Governance on 26-28 September 2006 at Delft in Netherlands. The symposium was attended by experts, local government practitioners and

academicians from various parts of the world. The symposium ended with an appeal to strengthen the local governments in their role of governing the water and sanitation sector. The participants discussed the experience of local governments in water management and sanitation. Lack of water resources and infrastructure act as an impediment in achieving the tasks.

### **Mayors against Illegal Guns**

Nearly a hundred Mayors from North America have joined a grand coalition, Mayors' Against Illegal Guns and pledged to fight the

menace. The first Mayors' Summit on illegal guns was held in April 2006



# Miscellaneous

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- ◆ The ruling Law and Justice party of Poland has proposed to limit the power of provincial (województwo) legislatures in order to centralize power. The analysts say the decision seems to reflect the disappointing performance of the Law and Justice party in recent local elections. The core aspect of the new ruling is whether or not provincial governors (wojewoda) should have a right to vote over projects proposed by provincial legislatures, as well as how to spend EU funds. The Law and Justice party wishes the governors have veto power and is intending a bill to establish this veto.
- ◆ The British Council has agreed to provide technical assistance for the municipalities and communities in Azerbaijan. The main aim of the initiative is to support administrative reform at a local level to encourage fiscal and financial transparency. The project provides professional training to two pilot town municipalities in Lokbatan and Ali-Bayramli, administrative activities like planning, organise the budget and to enhance the leadership ability.
- ◆ The Georgia Municipal Association organized a Mayors' Day conference on 20-22 January 2007 at Atlanta.
- ◆ The Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland organized its spring seminar on 9-10 February 2007 at Bradon Hotel Tralee. The main themes of the sessions were "Local Democracy: Does it Exist in Ireland" and "Task force on Active Citizenship".
- ◆ The Association of cities of Kyrgyzstan Republic in cooperation with the public informational center of Kyrgyzstan organized two symposia titled "Informational network of local government-LOGIN" and "Using informational and innovational technologies in work of local self-government bodies" on 20 November 2006. The Mayors, local government representatives and officials of Kyrgyzstan participated in the two-day meeting.
- ◆ The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors has approved a regional and local development project to assist the government of Jordan in promoting regionally balanced local development through municipalities for a period of 17 years.
- ◆ Southern Sydney Regional Organization of Council (SSROC) has introduced a new, free service for students or ex-local government employees seeking part time or casual work in SSROC member councils. SSROC is encouraging students or ex-local government employees willing to do part-time or casual local government work within the SSROC region and are also interested in employing students in relevant disciplines keen to learn about local government.
- ◆ The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) has jointly signed a multiyear agreement on salary and wage negotiations with South African Municipal Workers Union and around 280 Municipalities. As per the agreement the minimum wages will be R/2907 from January 2007.
- ◆ The League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) in collaboration with the Mayor's Development Centre (MDC) organized an artist fair-World Art Experience on November 21 to 27, 2006, at Angono to disseminate the objectives of Eighth Millennium Development Goals.
- ◆ The Philippine Development Forum (PDF) Working Group on Decentralization and Local Government in Partnership with the Philippine-Australia Local Governance Development Program invited the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) to present the Sustainable Upland Development Model and its proposal to undertake in 2007-2010.
- ◆ In the recently concluded local government elections, Bahrain allowed GCC citizens holding real properties to participate.