

## A few days in Islamic Republic of Iran

By Shaukat Ali Jawaid

I had a rare chance to spend a week in Islamic Republic of Iran in November 2006 which was my second visit to this Muslim country. Iran Air operates one weekly flight Tehran-Karachi-Tehran on Wednesday. Thursday and Friday are official holidays in Iran, hence when I landed at Tehran Airport on November 1<sup>st</sup>, I had to plan what am I going to do the next two days before I could start my professional work of visiting various medical universities, medical and dental schools to meet their faculty members. My friend Dr. M.B.Rokni from Tehran University who has been extremely kind and hospitable to me having made all my appointments in medical institutions, received me at the Airport and drove me to the hotel and we decided to talk later about the programme for Thursday and agreed about the Friday schedule to some extent.

At about 8.00 PM the same day I rang up another friend a brilliant young research scientist Dr. Syed Hosein Mosavi Jazayeri whom I had known through e mails and asked him if we can meet. He was delighted and straight away offered to come to my hotel. He came along with his father a retired banker and we had some preliminary discussions. He asked me about Thursday's programme and

I said it was all open. He offered to come and join me to take me on a tour of Tehran city which I gladly accepted. The only condition he mentioned was that I should be ready to leave by 6.00 AM early in the morning because due to some traffic rules, it is not possible for him to drive in this area after that time. Dr. Jazayeri was in the hotel lobby exactly at 5.45 early in the morning. He had brought breakfast with him and we left the hotel at 6.00 AM. Our first destination was the lush green Jamshedia Stone Park with lot of natural beauty, trees, mountains, water falls and jogging tracks. Thursday being a Holiday there was a crowd of young men and women in the park. A little rain at night had given a bath to the trees and fresh cool breeze had made it all worth enjoying every moment.

We first decided to have breakfast and then went for a walk around various areas in the park. Then he took me to a nearby museum which has a rare collection of classic paintings of one of the most famous Iranian artist Ustad Mohammad Farshian. It was a fascinating experience to spend about two hours here looking at some of Farshian's masterpieces. His name is included in Who's Who in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and he has had 83 group and fifty four one man exhibitions. He has received world wide acclaim for his outstanding artistic accomplishments. His paintings were exhibited in many countries including Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi in Pakistan. He has won many awards. Many Kings, Queens, Princes, politicians and Museums including Lahore Museum in Pakistan have his paintings.

A careful look at his fifty two paintings in this museum revealed the real depth and intelligence of Farshian. Each and every painting has a message beautifully conveyed.

These paintings which had its meanings written underneath in English depicted beautiful Dawn, innocent, paradise, Abraham Ismail's sacrifice, hope, fragrance of affection, atre mohabbat, shameful, besieged, Hafez's poetry, Hazrat Younus, trapping of fate and protection, smiling even with sorrows, human beings are good by nature, broken heart and helplessness, hunt, Imam Raza the saviour of the deer, meditation, fighting the devil inside, fifth day of creation or birds, fish, brutalized by power, salvation, in search of knowledge and his own portrait. This Sadabad Cultural and Historic Complex houses many other museums apart from Farshian museum. These include Water museum, Behzad museum, Miremad writing museum, Green museum palace, research anthropology museum, military museum, national museum, art museum and Ahmad Shahi Palace which all have rich history. One can spend the whole day here if time permits.

Then we went to the shrine of Imamzadeh Ali Akbar. Inside the shrine there are too many graves of young boys and educated qualified professionals belonging to different fields who I was told all died defending their country during the eight year Iran-Iraq War. Men and women visit this place regularly to pray for the departed loved ones. Dr. Jazayeri then took me on a driving tour of North Tehran which houses most of the VVIPs, politicians, people from the ruling class and the ambassadors of various countries. The whole area is on mountains and it offers a beautiful view of the downtown city. Even looking at the downtown Tehran from the top of Jamshedia Stone Park gives a beautiful look of Tehran which I was told is fully covered with snow in winter. In the afternoon Dr. Jazayeri took me to

his house for lunch which again provided me an opportunity to meet his elderly father who himself could not speak in English. However, through interpretation by Dr. Jazayeri, I was able to know something about the Iranian Society. He then dropped me at the hotel after a fruitful day. In the evening I decided to discover Tehran walking in the nearby areas of the Hotel which is located just adjacent to the Tehran University. An adjacent park is a busy public place in the evening. I also walked to the Inqilab Square to have a glimpse of the city life.

On Friday Dr. Rokni took me to the famous late Shah's Palace which is worth seeing. Sabeh Qaranih Palace nearby was ordered to be built by Naseeruddin Shah in 1267. Later rulers made some changes and Malka Farah Deba in particular ordered some changes as regards its interior decoration. All windows and doors of the palace are beautifully decorated with coloured glass. We moved to various parts of the palace. The negotiations room where the late Shah Reza Shah used to have negotiations with the world leaders has acoustic facilities so that nobody outside could hear the discussions. There is an Ambassador's waiting room which is decorated with pictures of all the world leaders including many US Presidents, Chinese president Mao and late Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who once waited here to call on the Late Shah of Iran. There is a resting place for Shah in the middle of the drawing room which has most beautiful decorations. Drawing room has very expensive and beautiful chandeliers all around and a water fountain in the centre of the drawing room adds to its beauty. A tea room and a bar are located on one side of the drawing room.

Ahmad Shahi pavilion in the adjacent area in this compound has water falls, very old trees, flowing water, beautiful paintings and a room of King Raza Shah's son. Niavaran Palace is spread over nine thousand square meter area and consists of two and a half story building. Its construction started in 1958. It was built by an Iranian designer and it was completed in 1967. In 1968 it was for the first time used for hosting a reception for visiting foreign guests and later was used as residence of M. Raza Shah Pahlavi. Ground floor has a great hall including dining room, guest room, waiting room, lateral halls and blue hall. Half floor of the building was used for office. Malka Fareh Deba also had a small room with secretary's office. Third floor housed Pahlavi resting place, his children and their retainer room. All these palaces are decorated with precious paintings, carpets and gifts received from different countries.

The private library is spread over 770 sq. meters. It was built in 1976 and has two floors, one underground floor. It has a rich collection of twenty three thousand books both in English and Persian. Ahmad Shah Mansion is spread over eight hundred Sq. meters. It has decorative items made of silver, ivory wood, bronze, six rooms and two corridors. After Islamic revolution, these palaces were renovated and opened to public. While I was visiting this palace, I was reminded of the fact that such rulers every where are not fully aware of the feelings of their people or they do not want to know. There was a time when late Shah of Iran was the Police man of United States in this part of the world and when the time came, even his patrons the Americans could not save him and he had to flee the country. Our rulers who bought Surrey Palace and

built Palaces in Raiwind too could not live in these palaces and have been forced by circumstances to live in exile. It offers many lessons to those who are keen to learn. Iran had just one King but in today's Pakistan, we see many Kings and they should worry about their future if and when the people decide to stand up saying enough is enough.

Iran's greatest strength and the reason for immense nationalist spirit among its population is that it is on democratic path. Even during the eight years long Iran-Iraq War, the country held elections to elect a democratic government. The war itself has created lot of social problems. Millions of young boys sacrificed their lives defending their homeland with the result that now the number of young girls far outnumber the boys. There is a trend towards independent life among the youth, the joint family system having disappeared to a great extent. Young men have to wait to get married until they finish their education, find a suitable job and can afford to live independent comfortable life.

### Jahan-Nama Museum

The Jahan-Nama Museum is a summer resort in Northern Tehran. Its largest building the Sahebqaraniyeh Palace was erected under Nasser-ed-Din Shah. Its Western Wing was later dedicated to a collection of works of art, both Iranian and foreign, presented to or acquired by the court. This gallery was named Jahan Nama after the large mirror-work-adorned reception hall of this palace. After the Islamic revolution during which the royal palaces of Niavaran and Sad'abad became public property and were converted into palace-museums, this gallery was inaugurated as the

Jahan-Name Museum in 1998. Currently restoration of the buildings, the replacement of its electrical system, the design and installation of an optic fiber lighting system, the creation of new showcases, the restoration of interior areas and the installation of a modern air conditioning system which began in 2005 is underway. Jahan-Nama Museum invites the art lovers on a dreamlike tour of its alcoves, during which the visitors admire the magnificent works of art created over a period of more than a thousand years.

During the next four days I had chance to visit many healthcare professionals, visiting medical universities and having fruitful discussions with many research scientists and faculty members. I was immensely impressed with the way government of Iran in general and university authorities in particular give importance to medical research with the result that Iranian research scientists are making impressive contributions to world medical literature. Islamic Republic of Iran has forty four medical universities and medical faculties. The government spends between 5.2-7.2% of its GDP on health as per information collected from different sources and the share of research in IRI GDP will reach 2% by the end of 4<sup>th</sup> Development Plan. Research scientists are offered incentives to publish their research work. I also had a chance meeting with a few pathologists from Tabriz who were staying in the same hotel and had come to Tehran to attend the international pathology conference. Talking to them revealed that people had very high expectations from the government but they pointed out that one has to be realistic. There has been tremendous development in the health sector, science and industry and we are

hopeful for a good sustained growth. People living in the periphery do face some health and education problems. However, decentralization of administration has been helpful in many respects.

A visit to school of allied health sciences affiliated with Iran university of medical sciences revealed that it has over fifteen hundred students. Many of the faculty members at the university I was told have been trained in Europe and America and possess Ph.D qualifications. During the discussion some of them expressed concern regarding publication charges of manuscripts accepted by Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences and some were of the view that the journals should pay the reviewers. They were informed of the financial problems that all the biomedical journals published from this region face in view of no financial support either from the government or the Pharma industry. Hence the biomedical journals have to generate their own resources to survive and it was not an easy task. Before visiting the Pasteur Institute of Iran, I also managed to have a brief meeting with Dr. Mohsen Abolhassani a distinguished research scientist who is also Editor of Iranian Biomedical Journal. This meeting proved to be quite informative. I also had fruitful discussions with the faculty members of the Institute of Allied Health Sciences at Tehran University of Medical Sciences.

Iran has a very popular democratically elected President Mahmud Ahmadinejad who has shown great courage. It won't be an exaggeration to say that after Mahatar Muhammad of Malaysia, Ahmadinejad the Iranian President is the second Muslim ruler who has successfully confronted the arrogant American leadership. Every Iranian is imbued

with nationalist spirit and despite petty differences among them; they stand like a solid rock against their enemy. Iranian is brave, courageous and self respecting Nation who knows how to defend their country against all sorts of aggressions. They are the only Muslim country who takes pride of having humiliated the US politicians for a long time after they occupied the American Embassy in Tehran soon after the Islamic revolution. This is a humiliation which the Americans will perhaps never forget. Some Iranians feel that former President Khatemi was a more liberal and better administrator who enjoyed lot of respect for his moderate policies. Situation is much different these days as compared to the early years of Islamic revolution. However, even now no female can go out without Hijab. However some people feel that it should be optional and not mandatory. Otherwise the women enjoy all the freedom and they are contributing a great deal working in almost every field having earned lot of respect. Roshan Khiali has no place in the Islamic Society. However, some people do complain that the gap between the rich and the poor like almost all the Muslim countries is widening which is something which the government must address seriously. The biggest Friday prayers in Tehran are held at the Tehran University which had played a pivotal role in the Islamic revolution. Ever since Islamic Revolution, the successive governments gave too much importance to Persian language and ignored English to some extent. It had some adverse impact. Now if you do not know Persian, it is difficult to go for shopping or move in a Taxi as most of the people do not understand English language. Even I met a Dean of the medical school and a Dean of Dental School both of whom

could not speak English and I had to talk to them through interpreter. Iran has too many medical journals which are published only in Persian language with the result that most of this research work goes un-noticed by the West and other countries. Every boy and girl after eighteen years has to do a two years compulsory national service. In case they are in between their studies, they can opt for this service after having completed their graduation studies but there is no escape.

Most of the TV channels are in Persian and even English programmes are shown with their Persian translation. It is not easy to have free access to the Cable TV networks. Soccer is a very popular game in Iran. When the British came to explore oil they also brought with them this soccer game. Iranians are crazy about soccer. In those days, there was a match between two soccer teams Istiqlal and another one which was watched by millions of fans inside the stadium and on TV. Some people do feel that they need more freedom but strict government control is also a blessing to a great extent as one does not see the Bars, Night Clubs and all such entertainment which the West is so keen to export to Iran as well because it serves their purpose. People of Iran and its Government headed by President Ahmadinejad have remained steadfast despite threats from United States so far. There are reports that after having occupied Iraq with world's largest oil reserves, having tamed other Arab Kingdoms and Sheikhdoms most of which are ruled by American puppets, the Americans wish to attack Iran to destroy its nuclear facilities. They cannot think to live in a world where after Pakistan; another Muslim country becomes a nuclear power. And

imagine all this noise being made by a superpower which has itself committed the crime of using atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki the Japanese cities. No other country has ever used atomic bombs so far. Even then they are not ashamed of following these double standards. They keep their eyes closed when it comes to the nuclear facilities and capabilities of Israel. During my visit I had an impression that Iran has made tremendous progress in this field and they have already achieved something of which they are proud of.

I had a chance to read Tehran Times, Iran's leading international English daily newspaper of November 8<sup>th</sup> 2006. It had front-paged three stories about former Iraqi President Saddam Hussain. A two column headline on front page said "Saddam calls for reconciliation" and the other again on front page headlined "The lynching of Saddam Hussain". It quoted Saddam Hussein's lawyer Khalil al-Dulaimi saying that "Saddam knows that his death sentence has been issued from Washington". This story further read that "it will take only ten to twenty days for an appeal to be considered by a panel of nine judges and then the death sentence must be carried out within thirty days. But Saddam still wins the paper wrote as in the eyes of Sunni Arabs in Iraq and many elsewhere, he dies as a martyr to the cause of Arab nationalism. His sons are dead, his country is in ruins and he will die at the end of a rope- but he defied the West and he kept his dignity, so he dies a hero." It further adds that "In any properly constituted international court, he would have been found guilty of the same charges he faced in Iraq. But in an international court there would have been due process of law, and the Iraqi Government

could not have replaced judges who wanted to respect the rights of the defendants and the defense lawyers would not have been murdered and as a result the trial would have had some credibility. The trial in Iraq did not. An independent tribunal would have the right to see documents and hear testimony that would reveal the extent of US complicity in Saddam's crimes in the earlier phase of his career when the Reagon administration was supporting Iraq in the 1980-88 war against Iran. Hence the Kangaroo Court in Baghdad and all the grotesqueries that ensued. The first judge resigned, five weeks later his successor judge was removed and again another judge appointed to run the court was removed for being too sympathetic to Saddam. His lawyers died like flies. The first to go was Saadoun Janabi who was murdered, the second Adel al-Zubidi was shot shortly afterwards whereupon another fled the country. Chief defense lawyer Khamis al-Obaidi was abducted and his body was found with both arms broken with eight bullet wounds dumped in Sadar city. Then his defense lawyers resigned. When Saddam went on hunger strike, he was force-fed by tubes pushed up his nostrils. The story ended with a concluding paragraph that Saddam did not get a fair trial although that too would have found him guilty. He is victim of a state sponsored lynching and so for many people, he will die a Martyr." That is exactly what has happened. Publication of such reports also show that press does enjoy freedom to a great extent if not absolutely free.

By walking gracefully to the Gallows, President Saddam Hussain defied George Bush and his arrogance. He refused to bow with the result that most people in the Muslim

world have forgotten his crimes against humanity and he has become a Hero and a Martyr. Even after his lynching so mercilessly the Americans have not succeeded in controlling Iraq. Hence even in his Death, Saddam Hussain wins something which the Americans find difficult to digest and accept. Later reports say that the judge who sentenced Saddam Hussain to death is now secretly living in Britain and has also applied for permanent residence visa as he cannot risk going back to Iraq where he knows his fate.

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**Recognition of Medical & Dental Colleges**  
**Supreme Court Judgment in PM&DC  
case and its after effects**

Shaukat Ali Jawaid

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan in its landmark judgment announced on December 15<sup>th</sup> 2006 has clearly defined the functioning and responsibilities of Pakistan Medical and Dental Council. The members of the Bench included Honorable Justice Mian Shakirullah Jan, Mr. Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jillani, Mr. Justice Nasir-ul-Mulk and Mr. Justice Syed Jamshed Ali. The judgment was written by Mr. Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jillani.

The important issues which the members of the Bench considered included:

1. What is the nature and import of concept of recognition of a medical qualification as contemplated in Section 11 of the Pakistan Medical & Dental Council Ordinance 1962?
2. What is the nature of consultation with the Council by the Federal Government which the law requires the latter to have before passing an order under various provision of the Ordinance?
3. Whether every chartered University having a medical faculty is entitled to representation in the Pakistan

Medical and Dental Council in terms of Section 3 of the Ordinance?

4. Whether the teaching staff of each medical and dental institution in Pakistan is entitled to representation in accord with Section 3(f) of the Ordinance?
5. Whether the PM&DC is empowered to ask for information make queries, issue directions and take other steps prescribed in law to carry out the purposes of the Ordinance.

The main objective of the PM&DC Ordinance the Judgment states is reflected in its preamble and it was "to consolidate the data relating to the registration of medical practitioners and dentists and reconstituted (Medical and Dental Council) in Pakistan in order to establish a uniform minimum standard of basic and higher qualification in medicine and dentistry". It also pointed out that the election of members to which reference has been made in Section 3 (b) and (f) are to be conducted by the Council in such a manner as in may think fit (Section 4). A careful study of various provision of the Ordinance show that its objectives were as follows:

1. Maintenance of uniform standard of Medical and Dental education (at the graduate and postgraduate level).
2. Recommendations for recognition/de-recognition of medical qualifications registration of doctors with recognized medical qualifications within the country or outside the country.
3. Registration of doctors possessing recognized medical qualification from within the country or from foreign countries.
4. Making arrangements with foreign countries for according reciprocal recognition to the medical qualifications.

Recognition accorded to a medical qualification in terms of Section 11 of necessity would entail the recognition of the institution which is imparting training and granting a medical qualification. This is so because to assess whether the medical qualification being granted by an institutions is in accord with the standard set by the Council and to ensure "uniform standard of basic and higher qualification in medicine and dentistry". The Council has prescribed the courses of study, watches the teaching standards and has been empowered to inspect, issue directions, monitor the working of the medical and dental institutions or university which trains for " grant medical or both trains and grants a medical qualification, additional qualification registerable medical license or diploma or any degree, diploma and license in dentistry. The law does not contemplate any distinction between a medical institution and a chartered university granting a medical degree. "So far as the power to grant a Degree in some medical qualification is concerned, no university in Pakistan can issue a Degree in a medical qualification mentioned in the First Schedule to Ordinance XXXII of 1962 unless the said qualification has been accorded prior recognition in terms of section 11 (1)2 of the said Ordinance. As regards nature of consultation the judgment says that "the rationale appears to be that the expert opinion of the apex body of the Medical and Dental Professions should be solicited before according recognition to a medical qualification. The consultation is not a consultation of senior with the junior in administrative hierarchy nor it is a consultation with a consultant of choice rather it is consultation with a statutory body mandated under the law to carry out prescribed functions to achieve

certain objectives. Hence consultation has to be purposeful and meaningful. If the federal government chooses to disagree or bypass the advice rendered, it has to give reasons in writing. The reasons should reflect an objective understanding of the issues." As regards representation of the universities in the Council, "only those universities would qualify for representation in the Council whose degree falls within the ambit of Section 11. If the universities are established and they start imparting training or granting degrees of a medical qualification independently of the regulatory mechanism of Pakistan Medical and Dental Council, then each university would run its own courses, and there would be no institution of medical experts at national level to ensure uniform quality education. As such universities established by law in Pakistan having medical faculties and medical institutions would require prior recognition of their respective medical qualifications for getting representation in the Council. The need for regulatory mechanism in the realm of general education and in the domain of professional courses has never been greater. Higher Education Commission has taken many regulatory steps to ensure qualitative improvement in higher education and PM&DC has taken certain steps to pursue the objective of a uniform standard of medical and dental education in the country. All the stakeholders should strengthen these and similar institutions in the country because it is only through these institutions that we can achieve the goals set out in their Charter." The judgment further highlights the point that "A society in transition witnesses two parallel strains i.e. a process of institutional erosion and attempt by the reformers/idealists to build the institutions. Efforts should be to strengthen the latter. Because institu-

tions play a vital role in civilizing people and in their onward march towards socio-economic and political progress. In the comity of Nations, the credibility and progress of a country is measured by the strength of its institutions. A Nation which fails to respect the institutions falls in grace, decays, and splits and is condemned in history.”

The operative part of the judgment in brief says:

1. No medical institution or university can train or grant a medical or dental qualification or train and grant both unless the said qualification degree or diploma has been accorded recognition in terms of Section 11 of the PM&DC Ordinance 1962.
2. The Federal Government has to have a meaningful and purposive “consultation” with PM&DC.
3. Every university established by law in Pakistan having a medical or dental faculty or both and every medical and dental institution performing a similar function have a right of representation in terms of Section 3(1) (b) and (f) of the Ordinance, provided the medical qualification, diploma has been accorded recognition under Section 11 of the Ordinance.
4. There is no concept of provisional recognition of a medical qualification issued by a medical institution. Since many institutions have been granted provisional recognition by the PM&DC and several students admitted in those institutions are at various stages of their professional courses, we are not inclined to direct immediate closure of these institutions.
5. The case of these provisionally recognized institutions should be taken up by the Council in six months time

after the announcement of this judgment so that they can make up the deficiencies. The Council should then submit its report having examined and carrying out inspection, to the Federal Government by August 14, 2007.

6. Medical institutions who do not qualify for recognition by this date shall not be allowed to function thereafter.
7. Students in those institutions who are not recognized shall be accommodated by government in various medical institutions of their respective province of residence. This is being done because PM&DC as well as Government of Pakistan are partly responsible when they granted provisional recognition and secondly the Secretary of PM&DC undertakes that the council with the assistance of Federal Government shall ensure that these students are accommodated in medical and dental institutions of their respective provinces.
8. The Council shall ensure that all necessary steps are taken for the composition of the Council and conduct its elections within six weeks of announcement of this judgment.
9. The FHM and Govt. of Pakistan is directed to ensure that a mandate of the PM&DC is given effect to in letter and spirit and any violation of these laws are met with penal consequences as envisaged under the law.

The honorable members of the Supreme Court who heard and decided this important case deserve to be complimented for their detailed judgment which for the first time has cleared many points and clearly laid down the functions and responsibilities of the Council, government of Pakistan through Federal Health Ministry, Medical ,dental institutions as well as the Universities. How-

ever, the problem that we are facing in the field of medical education at present is not going to resolve because it is the functioning of the PM&DC which is itself responsible for the present state of affairs to a great extent. For example the council keeps its eyes closed as regards deficiencies in public sector medical and dental institutions but becomes more active when it deals with the institutions in private sector.

Many private medical and dental institutions are alleged to enroll more students than permitted but when the same crime is committed by the public sector institutions, the Council decides to look the other way for reasons best known to it.. In one instance, almost a whole new class of over two hundred students was admitted extra at Liaquat Medical College some years ago but no action was taken by the Council. Not only that some members of the Council representing the CPSP just to promote their own vested interests are alleged to have been making threatening phone calls to medical institutions in public as well as private sector, black mailing these institutions and their faculty members, interfering and dictating to private sector institutions as regards faculty recruitment and selection of Principal. The mere fact that academic councils of JPMC in Karachi and Fatima Jinnah Medical College Lahore have passed resolutions against CPSP whose representative in the Council is alleged to be involved in unnecessary interference in the affairs of private medical institutions is very significant. This may also not be in the knowledge of the honourable Judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan who wrote this judgment. Had the PM&DC Executive been careful, in order to safeguard its own integrity and credibility such members should have been

thrown out of the Council but it did not. On the contrary these very members were inducted into various important committees so that they can continue their nefarious designs and promote their own vested interests. The Honorable Judges of the Supreme Court has rightly laid emphasis on strengthening the institutions like PM&DC but it is also important to see how the Council conducts its affairs through its members. If the Council for one reason or the other becomes hostage to a few members with vested interests, it does not help in strengthening it. On the contrary its image, authority will be eroded and it will lose its credibility as well.

While the role, responsibilities and functioning of the PM&DC has been clearly defined, the role of Universities which usually enjoy an autonomous status should also be discussed and debated in detail. All over the developed world universities play a major role in medical education and research. However, undue interference by certain members of the PM&DC who also happen to be affiliated with some other institutions like CPSP have seriously hampered their functioning. This needs to be rectified. Professional ethics and justice demand that such medical politicians who desire to have monopoly in the field of postgraduate medical education by creating hurdles for the universities so that they do not start MS, MD programme, should not be eligible for Council membership. It will be in the interest of the PM&DC as well because eventually it adversely affects the Council's own credibility.

There are three important aspects in medical education i.e. certification, examination and accreditation. Until and unless Registration, Examination and Accreditation are entrusted to three independent bodies to avoid

any conflict of interest, there is going to be no worthwhile improvement. Since the honorable members of the Supreme Court who heard this case and wrote the judgment, may not be fully aware of these ground realities, these aspects escaped their attention. Justice demands that while the institutions in public sector are inspected, the Inspectors should be drawn from retired Principals and retired medical and dental teachers instead of serving faculty members because one does not expect these inspectors drawn from serving faculty members to go against the interest of their own institutions. Most often they tend to be very accommodating and they protect the interests of each other's institutions.

Is it not a pity that the Council till today is not reported to have laid down the minimum requirements for a medical and dental college? Why it does not prepare a check list and it should be applicable to all institutions irrespective of the fact whether they are in private or public sector. Over six hundred posts of medical teachers are lying vacant in Punjab alone and there are many one man departments in different disciplines in some of the public sector medical colleges. If the rules and regulations of the PM&DC are implemented many of the public sector medical and dental institutions will stand de-recognized straight away. Unless it is ensured that no body is eligible to become a member of the PM&DC who represents another institution with conflict of interest, one cannot expect any improvement in the functioning of the PM&DC. The way it held its recent elections, is enough to show that medical politicians have not learnt any lesson. If the past is any guide, the medical politicians who dominate the decision

making body in the Council may come up with such stringent rules and regulations for recognition of medical and dental institutions that not many institutions in public sector would afford to fulfill. In that case it will be writing its own death warrant.

The composition of the PM&DC will remain incomplete and it will not enjoy a representative character unless and until the question of representation of the medical and dental institutions in the private sector is decided. The Honorable Judges of the Supreme Court in their judgment have rightly observed that "over the last few decades, there has been a mushroom growth of Medical and Dental institutions in the private sector; the element of commercialization has been more pronounced than commitment to academic excellence. The rapid growth of educational institutions in the private sector on the one hand reflect the extent of public need/thirst for education and on the other a deterioration or dearth of State run educational institutions. The quality of education in the private sector leaves much to be desired. Barring a few exceptions it reflects a pathetic state of affairs". So true but the question arises whether those institutions in the private sector which come in this category of "exceptions" as mentioned in the Supreme Court Judgment has been given any representation in the Council and if not why not?

A careful and critical analysis will reveal that the state of affairs as regards teaching and training in a large number of public sector medical and dental institutions is worse than compared to some of the medical and dental institutions in the private sector. They escape any action of de-recognition because those who are entrusted the responsibility of inspection of these institutions come from

their sister institutions in the public sector. In any case no Pakistan Medical and Dental Council can be considered complete in its composition which does not have a representation from country's first and oldest medical institution in the sub-continent i.e. King Edward Medical College now upgraded as King Edward Medical University (whatever may be the reasons) and which does not have representation from a major private medical university like Baqai Medical University. Any Council which does not have representation from both these institutions, is not worth the name and sooner one can offer Fateha for such a Council, better it will be. None of the sitting members of the PM&DC has contributed so much to the cause of medical and dental education and health services in Pakistan than Prof. F.U. Baqai and that too without any help and assistance from the Government of Pakistan. He generated funds and bought the entire land on which this sprawling university and its affiliated institutions, hospitals are located. Most of those sitting in the Council are there because of circumstances having contributed not much to the cause of medical or dental education in the country. What Prof. F.U. Baqai has done, if any foreign national could have done, the government would have showered all the benefits and privileges but Prof. Baqai's weakness is that he is a Pakistani, hence people like him and the University he established remains un-represented in the PM&DC. What a shame. It will be a pity if one was to treat institutions like Baqai Medical University with other universities, institutions in the private sector located in residential areas, housed in rented buildings in the same way. Lahore Medical and Dental College, Fatima Memorial Trust Medical and Dental College

in Lahore have their own proper Campuses. As such all such institution in the private sector who have proper campuses deserve support and encouragement by the authorities and there is no justification to deny them membership in the Council. Sindh Medical College in public sector is in shambles. It does not have any affiliated teaching and training hospital. JPMC is controlled by the Federal Government and its staff does not show much interest in teaching and training for various reasons and rightly so. The Sindh government instead of affiliating SMC with many of its own other hospitals in the city is keen to establish new medical colleges because it will bring more money.

It also looks strange that how the Secretary of PM&DC can assure and guarantee that students of those medical and dental institutions who are eventually not recognized will be absorbed in the government institutions of their respective provinces. It might open a Pandora's Box. There are medical institutions/universities in the private sector which keep commercial interests in forefront rather than academics and they certainly deserve to be closed. However, other institutions which keep on investing in further development of their institutions from the funds they generate deserve government help, assistance and patronage. After all they are supplementing government efforts in the field of medical and dental education. They deserve to be given land if not free at least on highly subsidized rate apart from exemption from duty and other taxes in purchase of equipment, instruments etc., and above all freedom from black mail by the "*Medical Mafia*" groups which are now threatening to become monsters.

Reconstitution of the PM&DC is long over due. It must have some representatives from the society running and managing Trusts and Foundations in the field of Health and Education. Keeping in view the way the recent PM&DC elections were held at Islamabad to elect the new Executive, it becomes abundantly clear that there is a need for a full time President and Vice President of the Council based at Islamabad. Medical educationists who enjoy intellectual integrity should be appointed to these coveted posts. A couple of persons for each post should be short listed after proper search by the Higher Education Commission and then there should be an open debate about their suitability or otherwise. Let them go through a proper selection through the Public Service Commission so that the PM&DC regains its lost credibility. The present Secretary is an honest and devoted individual but he alone cannot do anything because he is again dependent on Council members. Hence, unless its composition is corrected, one cannot expect any improvement in its functioning under the present circumstances.

*Tail-Piece:* According to reports once a case was being heard in the Bombay High Court and many people came into the court room. The Chief Justice ordered that close the doors as there is no place for more people. At this Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah who was pleading the case remarked "My Lord I request you to keep the doors of justice open".

*(February 15, 2007)*