

Pakistan Army's one-day spending of Rs. 1.35 billion is equivalent to Pakistan's one-year Education budget

ISLAMABAD: **Pakistan spends Rs1.35 billion per day over the three armed forces just under the head of salaries and operating expenses only**, Rs8.60 million daily on the president and prime minister, Rs7.8 million per day on the Senate and National Assembly but a paltry amount of three lakh rupees per day to take care of human rights, show the budget documents.

It further discloses that the Army's one-day spending is equivalent to the running year's total allocation for education ministry, and the air-force's per day expenditures far exceed what was allocated to the health ministry for running the financial year ending this month.

In the new financial year, as many as Rs495.215 billion has been allocated for the armed services only and the amount to be spent on the purchase and maintenance of military hardware is apart from this. Going by the above cited figure means that Rs1.35 billion is spent on the three armed services each day.

A further break-up indicates that Rs640.37 million will be utilized by the Army per day; a sum equivalent to the running year's budgetary allocation for the ministry of education. Although the ministry has been devolved now with no new allocation made under its head, last year's budget for the ministry was Rs640 million which means Rs1.7 million a day. The allocated amount for the entire year for the education ministry last year, Rs640 million, is spent in a day by the Army for meeting its salaries and operating expenses only.

Likewise, the health ministry's running year's budget was less than the one-day spending of the air force. The ministry that has also been devolved now got budgetary allocation of Rs269 million for 2010-2011 whereas the air force's per day spending is Rs290.86 million. Pakistan Navy's spending per day is Rs141.80 million.

How much is spent on the ISI, the premier intelligence agency, is anybody's guess as the budgetary allocation for the agency is not included in the amount specified for the armed forces.

The PML-N had demanded a debate on the defence budget and the allocations for

the intelligence agencies, but the point has neither been taken seriously by the government nor pressed further by the major opposition party.

In addition to the massive defence spending, the expenditures of the prime minister and president also raise many eyebrows. The prime minister of Pakistan, for example, spends an amount of Rs4.3 million per day on foreign tours and the president around one million of rupees.

According to the budgetary allocation, the daily expenses of the Prime Minister Secretariat are Rs1.5 million in addition to Rs4.3 million each day that goes towards spending on the PM and his delegations' foreign tours.

Likewise, the presidency's budgetary allocation shows that a sum of Rs931,506.85 will be spent per day on his foreign tour and Rs1.322 million on the presidential secretariat. An accumulated amount of the president and PM's expense is Rs8.60 million per day. Next comes the Senate and National Assembly Secretariat which constitute a total amount of Rs7.8 million per day. Going by that figure it shows that tax-payers would be spending five million rupees on the National Assembly Secretariat each day and Rs2.8 millions per day over Senate.

This massive spending is in contrast with the plight of human rights in Pakistan and the government's non-serious attitude towards it. The next financial year's budget indicates that a meagre sum of Rs110 million has been allocated which means three lakh rupees per day. Again, this amount has been allocated for employees' related expenses as otherwise the ministry of human rights has no presence on the ground.

This is in contrast with the plight of human rights in a country like ours where even journalists are killed like dogs and cats.

An official of the ministry said they don't have sufficient budget to create awareness, and conduct fact-finding missions. Most of the paperwork is done through media reports as neither the ministry has transport nor enough staff members to verify facts about human rights abuses taking places.