

# QUETTA VOICE

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Tuesday 10  
May ,2022

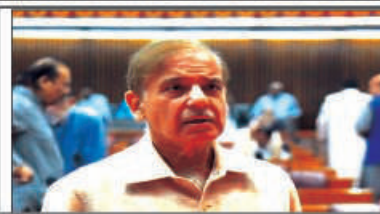
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## Shaukat Tarin questions PML-N govt about predicted Rs6.8tr fiscal deficit



## Friendship with China a key component of Pakistan's foreign policy: PM

### PM Shehbaz assails Imran in NA speech, says 'poison' against institutions must be clamped down

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday criticised PTI Chairman Imran Khan for his comments regarding state institutions and said that action should be taken on them within the ambit of the law and the Constitution.

He made the comments during today's National Assembly session where lawmakers unanimously passed a resolution condemning the campaign against state institutions. According to Radio Pakistan, the resolution was moved by Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi.

Imran, while addressing a public gathering in Abbottabad on Sunday, had narrated the stories of Mir Jafar and Mir Sadiq. The former prime minister had said Siraj Daula was a governor of the Mughal emperor whose commander-in-chief, Mir Jafar, joined hands with the English to topple the government.

He had said that his government was removed from power through "the Mir Jafars and Mir Sadiqs of today". PM Shehbaz had criticised

the comments yesterday and vowed to take action.

Following on those comments in today's session, the prime minister said Imran's comments were "very dangerous and terrifying". He said Imran had "directly" likened Pakistan's institutions to Mir Jafar and Mir Sadiq.

"The poison he spewed about the institution yesterday is a conspiracy against it and Pakistan. If this is not stopped through the law and the Constitution then God forbid this country will become a hideous reflection of Syria and Libya where cities present scenes of graveyards today." The prime minister claimed that Imran was the "blue-eyed" of the institution and "was fed milk like a child". "Without fear I want to say that in 75 years, this institution has never supported any government or prime minister like it did Imran Khan." It was his misfortune that despite that he learned nothing, did nothing and did not serve the nation. There is no example found of this kind of support and nor will it be found again," Shehbaz said,

adding that if even 20 per cent to 30pc of that support was provided to the PPP or PML-N governments then "we would have had this country [taken] off as a plane flies."

The prime minister reiterated that if Imran's comments were not clamped down on then "nothing would be left" and there would be a crisis in the country.

He lambasted the PTI chairman for taking the country in a direction where democracy could be eliminated.

PM Shehbaz also criticised the PTI government on economic fronts such as arranging oil and gas supplies, maintaining power plants, managing the fiscal deficit and taking loans. He said it had "mortgaged future generations" with the number of loans it had taken.

The prime minister also rubbished Imran's claims about the Cablegate affair and said Pakistan's then-ambassador to the US had himself admitted that threatening language was used in the letter but "where was this element of conspiracy conjured from?" Web Deskss



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs PML-N Palimentary party meeting.

### President Alvi 'strongly rejects' PM's advice to remove Punjab governor



President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday rejected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's advice to remove Punjab Governor Omar Sarfraz Cheema from his office.

"The president further highlighted that he was committed to stand by the provisions of the Constitution of Pakistan in these difficult times and strongly rejected the advice of the prime minister to remove the Punjab

governor," said the press release from the President's Secretariat.

In the first summary PM Shehbaz sent to the president on April 17, he had recommended the name of PPP's Makhdoom Ahmad Mahmood as the Punjab governor. However, when President Alvi returned that summary after holding it for 15 days without a decision, the premier endorsed the advice on Saturday asking for Cheema's removal, and appointment of a PML-N loyalist from Bahawalpur, Balighur Rehman.

Alvi conveyed to the prime minister that the governor could not be removed without his approval and would continue to "hold office during the pleasure of the president" in accordance with clause 3 of Article 101 of the Constitution.

"He wrote that the incumbent governor cannot be removed as there was neither any allegation of misconduct nor conviction by any court of law or of any act committed by him contrary to the Constitution of Pakistan," said the press release.

President Alvi highlighted the governor's constitutional role and said he had sent a report on proceedings regarding the chief minister's election in the Punjab Assembly that had raised questions regarding the validity of Usman Buzdar's resignation as the provincial chief and the shifting of MPA loyalties. "The president emphasised that it was essential that the incumbent governor should continue to stay to encourage and promote a healthy and clean democratic system where members are not coerced or bought to bring about an illegitimate change and Article 63A of the Constitution specifically discouraged such activities," the press release added. Web Desk

### Candidates lists for LBs elections on May 29th issued in Balochistan: ECP

Dawood Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued lists of candidates contesting the local bodies' elections in Balochistan. The local bodies' elections would be held as per the schedule on May 29th, the ECP said in a statement issued to the press on Monday.



Lists of candidates have been displayed in all concerned returning officers' offices across the province. Except for Quetta and Lasbella, LBs elections are scheduled to be held on May 29th in Balochistan.

Candidates can withdraw from the election today (Monday). Final lists of the candidates would be displayed at RO offices tomorrow and election symbols would be allotted to them.

The election schedule for Quetta and Lasbella would be announced later, the ECP concluded.

### PM Shehbaz imposes ban on export of sugar to stabilize prices

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif on Monday imposed a ban on the export of sugar and has also ordered strict action against those involved in smuggling sugar out of the country.

According to details, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif said that it is our duty to fulfil the nation's needs first and also do that by keeping the prices of sugar stable.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif further ordered that the concerned departments should take strict actions against the hoarders, illegal profiteers, and those involved in making artificial scarcity to rise prices of commodities. INP

### 220 kv transmission line blown up in Naseerabad district

Aziz Marri

Miscreants have blown up a 220 kv transmission line through an improvised explosive device in Balochistan's Naseerabad district on Monday. Police sources said miscre-



ants had planted an IED near the 220 KV transmission line in the Notal area of Naseerabad. The blast damaged the line. Police reached the spot as an investigation into the incident went underway. The technical team of WAPDA was also dispatched to make sure timely repair of the line. Miscreants in the past have repeatedly targeted power lines and gas supply lines.

### Coronavirus on back foot again with no casualty across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The Covid-19 pandemic seems to be on the back foot on Monday as there were only 64 cases reported with no casualty during last 24 hours.

According to the statistics released by the National Health Institute, the total number of positive cases remained 64. As many as 13,190 tests were conducted during the last 24 hours. INP

### BNP worker killed in Quetta, protesters block Sariab Road

Staff Reporter

A worker of the Balochistan National Party (Mengal) was killed in Quetta's Sariab Road area on Monday. Spokesman Balochistan Police in a statement shared with media said unknown accused opened fire and killed a motorcyclist in the city's Sariab Road area.

The victim was identified as the brother of the central leader of BNP Mengal Musa Baloch. Soon after the incident, angry protesters blocked main Sariab Road and demanded the arrest of the accused involved in the incident.

Inspector-General of Police Balochistan, Mohsin Hassan Butt took notice of the incident and directed the police to arrest the culprits behind the attack. He assured the protesters that the attackers would be brought to book soon.

BNP workers block Sariab Road

The dead body of the BNP worker has shifted to civil hospital Quetta. A large number of BNP workers also reached the hospital after the incident. "We demand an immediate arrest of the culprits", Malik Naseer Shahwani, the parliamentary leader of the party in the Balochistan Assembly said. Mr. Shahwani, Akhtar Hussain Langove and Ahmed Nawaz Baloch, the members of the provincial assembly also joined the protesters.

They ended the blockade of the road after successful negotiations with the administration. "We want the arrest of killers, otherwise, we will resume our protest", Mr. Shahwani asked the administration.

MQM Balochistan condemns the attack

Chief of Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan Balochistan, Malik Imran Kakar has strongly condemned the killing of the BNP workers. He expressed grief and sorrow over the incident and demanded of the provincial government to arrest the culprit involved in the killing of the worker.



### Shaukat Tarin questions PML-N govt about predicted Rs6.8tr fiscal deficit

ISLAMABAD: Former finance minister Shaukat Tarin has questioned the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) government for predicting an unusual fiscal deficit of Rs6.8 trillion despite it was standing at Rs4.6 trillion during Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) tenure.

Shaukat Tarin, while talking to a private TV news channel, expressed surprise over the prediction of Rs6.8 trillion deficit by the PML-N government. He said that the PTI government left the fiscal deficit at Rs4.6 trillion but the present government is predicting something unusual.

Tarin said that the fiscal deficit would be standing at Rs6.5 trillion if the PTI remained in power. "We were taking steps for reducing the fiscal deficit. My question is about the additional deficit of Rs2.2 trillion. What are the reasons behind the increasing fiscal deficit?"

"The price of onion was Rs32 per kilogram and tomato was Rs45 per kilogram. The prices of petrol and edible oil doubled last year. The prices of commodities should have been reduced. The reduction in commodity prices will decrease the fiscal deficit."

The former finance minister said that he was not expecting the economic landmine's statement from Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. "Such statements come after playing with the national economy like political affairs," criticised Tarin.

He advised the present finance minister Miftah Ismail to focus on the statistical realities instead of launching harsh criticism. He offered the PML-N government to consult him if they wanted to remove "landmines" for strengthening the national economy. INP

### Bilawal emphasises need to ensure food security, enhance energy production

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari Monday urged the Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative (GDI) to address the challenges faced by the developing world.

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Bilawal attended a high-level meeting of the Group of Friends of the GDI, where he emphasised the need to address challenges in order to support emergency actions to increase cooperation in public health and vaccine equity, ensure food security, enhance energy production, promote global green economy, stimulate trade and industrialisation, and eliminate the digital divide.

In his video address, the foreign minister appreciated China's initiative to launch GDI and termed it a useful platform to accelerate and coordinate efforts for implementing the globally agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"Recalling the multiple crises posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and geopolitical developments, with disproportionate and devastating impacts on the Global South, the foreign minister expressed deep concern over the reversal of progress in the implementation of SDGs," the statement read.

Bilawal, noting that multiple crises have enlarged the gap in financing for development, called upon the international community to mobilise adequate resources for SDGs and fulfil the commitment of providing at least \$100 billion annually in climate finance.

He reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to further strengthen its All-Weather



Strategic Cooperative Partnership with China, including through the rapid implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

"Pakistan will continue its efforts to enhance cooperation with China through CPEC, to advance its national implementation of SDGs, in addition to participating actively in the work of the GDI Group of Friends to promote the common aspiration of a peaceful, prosperous and shared future for all mankind," the Foreign Office said.

Meanwhile, President Xi Jinping of China put forward the Global Development Initiative during his address to the 76th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2021.

In January 2022, China launched a Group of Friends of GDI in New York — which was joined by Pakistan and more than 50 other countries — as informal cooperation and coordination mechanism for strengthening policy dialogue, sharing best practices, and promoting practical cooperation on realising the SDGs to advance the objectives of GDI.

## QUETTA VOICE

Editor Asim Khan

### Water shortage in Balochistan

The scarcity of water poses a serious threat to human life in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan. Environmentalists and experts on the water issues have warned of an alarming situation with regard to water scarcity in Quetta in near future.

The water level continues to drop with every passing day in Quetta, and most parts of Balochistan. This has sent alarm bells among the indigenous people living for centuries in towns and villages. Environmentalists warn that the shortage of water is likely to force citizens of the provincial capital to migrate.

The Water and Sanitation Authority (WASA) has failed to provide drinking water to citizens of the city. Most of the WASA-run tube wells are either not functional or provide water to officials and influentials.

People pumping water from more than 1,000 deep underground. Gone are the days, when people were pumping water through tube wells 500 feet deep from underground. Currently, it is more than 1,000 feet deep.

Private tankers are meeting the demand of more than 70 percent population of the city. Tankers owners are minting money from the people right under the nose of WASA and district administration. Per tanker is available at Rs. 2,000 to 3,000. No mechanism to check the quality of water. More importantly, none checks the quality of water. Nobody knows whether the water is contaminated or clean for drinking. Since it is a matter of human health and life, therefore, the provincial government should evolve a mechanism to check the quality of water. Set aside, the increasing rates of water tankers association. Depleting water table in Quetta, Pishin, Killa Abdullah, Kalat, Mastung, Noshki and Chaghi have forced the growers to cut their green trees. This has made a large number of people jobless as most of the people in Balochistan are financially dependent on agriculture and livestock.

Construction of delay and check dams imperative. As suggested and advised by the environmentalists, the provincial and federal governments must construct delay and check dams on a war-footing basis to maintain the depleting water table. Supreme Court has already directed the government to ensure the completion of more than 100 dams within the next three years to overcome the water crisis in Balochistan.

## Radical isolation

By John Feffer

A recent military parade in Pyongyang showcased the country's intercontinental ballistic missile. Kim Jong Un used the opportunity of the spectacle to promise that he would push the country's nuclear program forward at maximum speed. To top it off, North Korea has been improving its tactical nuclear weapons, which means that it may soon be able to threaten South Korea with a nuclear strike as well.

North Korea's nuclear program has been the perennial threat that concerns South Korea, East Asia, and the United States. Some pundits are even suggesting that the nature of this threat has recently changed - that North Korea is no longer just interested in possessing nuclear weapons in order to deter attacks by other countries. Instead, as Washington Post columnist Josh Rogin argues, North Korea is now seriously considering using nuclear weapons for offensive purposes as part of an effort to take over the Korean peninsula. This seems far-fetched. Pyongyang has difficulty even maintaining control of its own territory. Having seen Russia's embarrassing failure to take over Ukraine, a considerably weaker country, the North Korean government can't seriously believe that it could invade and control South Korea, a considerably stronger country.

True, Russia's nuclear weapons have made the United States and Nato reluctant to confront Russian forces directly in Ukraine, but they haven't provided the Kremlin with any practical advantage over Ukraine on the battlefield. Given the size of North Korea's nuclear arsenal and US security guarantees to South Korea, Pyongyang wouldn't be able to use nuclear blackmail to aid in some hare-brained effort to seize the entire peninsula. After all, Pyongyang knows that any use of nuclear weapons, be they against its southern neighbor or the United States, will result in massive retaliation. The North Korean leadership would be committing suicide if it launched an ICBM or tactical nuke.

No, in fact, nuclear weapons are not the biggest threat that North Korea poses to the world. North Korea's greatest liability is something that it currently views as an asset: its radical isolation.

To protect itself against Covid-19, North Korea has closed its borders. During the pandemic, it even shut down trade with its principal economic partner, China, only resuming trade in January. Virtually all diplomatic staff have left the country, and so have humanitarian aid workers.

Fine, you might say, isolation befits North Korea. It doesn't produce anything that the world particularly wants, unlike Russia and its oil, gas, and military exports. If it doesn't want to play with others, it should be left undisturbed in its own sandbox. But such isolation is actually dangerous - and not just for North Korea. As part of its radical isolationism, North Korea has refused any Covid vaccines. It has so far turned down offers of three million doses of Sinovac and two million of the AstraZeneca-Oxford University vaccine.

The country's population of 25 million unvaccinated people offers COVID an extraordinary opportunity not only to spread but also to mutate. A powerful new variant would not stay within the borders of North Korea. Even those who have little empathy for the plight of North Koreans have to understand that a new Covid variant could potentially kill hundreds of thousands if not millions of people all over the world.

Providing North Korea with tens of millions of doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines - the more effective drugs that the North Korean government reportedly prefers - would neutralize the country's inadvertent biological weapon.

But North Korea's isolation is dangerous for other reasons. Economic isolation has pushed Pyongyang to pursue black market strategies to make money in global markets. It has been involved in the production of narcotics, particularly crystal meth. It has long been rumored to have produced counterfeit \$100 bills. And it has unleashed its world-class hackers to extort money through various cyber-blackmail schemes and cryptocurrency manipulations.

The cultural isolation of the population has made it easier for the government to maintain its control over society. True, North Koreans manage to get some information from the outside, including South Korean TV dramas. But isolation increases the atomization of the population, making it all the more difficult to develop a civil society apart from the government sphere.

And the geopolitical isolation of the country - North Korea doesn't belong to any regional organizations and, aside from the United Nations, few international organizations - makes it difficult to embed the country into the system of global laws and norms. The North Korean government is certainly ambivalent about its isolation. On the one hand, Pyongyang doesn't want to expose itself to what it considers to be various political and economic viruses - democracy, an unregulated free market - circulating in the outside world. On the other hand, the North Korean leadership recognizes that it cannot achieve its goal of a "strong and prosperous nation" behind high, impenetrable walls. It has, for instance, consistently relied on China to sustain its economy. But the North Korean leadership views its current dependency on Chinese trade to be unacceptable, both because of the perceived inferior quality of Chinese goods and because of the risk of China using its advantage to put pressure on Pyongyang.

Protocol I of the Geneva Convention prohibits the deliberate or indiscriminate attack on civilians or civilian objects. Of course, these are precisely the objects of nuclear weapons regardless of the ICJ's parsing. Threatening nuclear weapons attacks would not top the list of Russian war crimes in Ukraine. But threatening to ignite a nuclear war must be acknowledged as a war crime; the inhumanity of a nuclear war is incalculable, and threatening it should be indicted in the court of international morality.

The ICJ does not define the use of nuclear weapons though. Every opening of the United Nations General Assembly since 1975 votes to eliminate nuclear weapons. The General Assembly has initiated international nuclear weapons treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty 1968 and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons 2017. The majority of countries in the world are members of nuclear free zone treaties, NFZT. The international community is increasingly impatient with the progress of nuclear disarmament as agreed in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, 1968. The nuclear armed nations can destroy the world many times over, but are increasingly held to a higher moral and human standard by the international community.

However much the United States abhors the nuclear threats from Russia's disastrous invasion of Ukraine is also an international crime.

Threats to use nuclear weapons are as old as nuclear weapons. Threats to use nuclear weapons may even be their main function. Increasingly bellicose statements by Putin and Russian State media during Russia's hot war in Ukraine are unprecedented, and must be taken seriously. "All the world should be prepared for the possibility that Vladimir Putin could use nuclear weapons on Ukraine", said Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

On Sunday, Putin's Kremlin TV mouthpiece Dmitry Kiselyov called for Russia to obliterate England with its new SARMAT missile, and drown Ireland in a 1600-foot radioactive tidal wave created by its new Poseidon torpedo. There appears no preparation in Russia for such a barbaric attack, nor any heightened alert levels from US or Nato counterforces. But such desperate threats to use weapons of mass destruction are concerning, obscene... And illegal. Under an advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice in 1996, threatening a nuclear attack beyond the standard of war for self-defense is illegal. The ICJ stated that while nuclear weapons were not technically illegal, their use must adhere to the war doctrine of "necessity and self-defense."

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## A change for the worse

By Hussain H Zaidi

Prior to the exit of Imran Khan, in 1989 a no-trust motion was voted upon against the then prime minister Benazir Bhutto. The contrasting manners in which the ruling party of the day reacted to the no-trust motion on each occasion is a grim pointer to the direction in which our politics has moved since 1989 - by all accounts, a turn for the worse.

In a parliamentary democracy, the executive is the creation of parliament. Being the chief executive, the prime minister must enjoy the confidence of the majority of the popularly-elected legislature - in our case the National Assembly. That is the reason one of the first agenda items after the election of the presiding officers in a newly elected parliament is to ascertain who enjoys the confidence of the majority of the members.

In some countries, as in India, the prime minister is appointed by the president. After his/her appointment, the prime minister is bound to seek a vote of confidence from the popular chamber within the stipulated period. In case he fails to do so, he has to call it quits. In India, in 1996, Atal Bihari Vajpayee stepped down as premier only a fortnight after being sworn in having failed to win the vote of confidence from the Lok Sabha.

Taking due cognizance of this fundamental convention of parliamentary

form of government, Article 91 (3) of the constitution of Pakistan states: "After the election of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, the National Assembly shall, to the exclusion of any other business, proceed to elect without debate one of its Muslim members to be the Prime Minister." Clause (4) of the same article adds: "The Prime Minister shall be elected by the votes of the majority of the total membership of the National Assembly."

Logically, if the National Assembly by a majority can elect a member as prime minister, it can also vote them out. Hence, Article 95 of the constitution stipulates that if a motion of no-confidence is passed by a majority of the total membership of the National Assembly, the prime minister shall cease to hold office. Thus the popularly elected assembly's power to vote out the prime minister is an essential, non-negotiable feature of parliamentary democracy.

Coming back to Pakistan, in a power struggle, prime ministers have generally been whumped by powerful presidents. However, prior to April 10, 2022 no prime minister had ever been voted out on the floor of the house. The only prime minister who had come close to being voted out was Benazir Bhutto.

The election of the charismatic Benazir Bhutto in 1988 marked the eclipse of a long,

dark era of despotism, against which she had spearheaded a popular movement. Though it had emerged as the single largest party in the national elections, her party, the PPP, fell short of a clear majority and could form the government only with the help of smaller/regional parties and independents, and having reached a power-sharing deal with the then president and other powerful stakeholders. However, all along the weak coalition hung by a thread.

Things came to a head in 1989 when the opposition tabled a non-confidence motion against Benazir Bhutto. In view of the thin majority of the ruling coalition in the National Assembly, the outcome of the motion was anybody's guess. That said, Benazir Bhutto dealt with the opposition's move with all grace and dignity befitting a democratically elected leader. At no point did she term the motion an international conspiracy, although being a leader of international stature, she could have contrived a conspiracy theory without much ado. Her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, it may be mentioned, is widely believed to have been a victim of such a conspiracy.

Nor did she, or any other leader from her party, use abusive language against her opponents, much less accuse them of being morally bankrupt or traitors. She did strongly criticize the

opposition for what she called their undemocratic tactics and allegedly trying to purchase loyalties of her parliamentarians. In return, she took the flak for having allegedly resorted to similar tactics. At that time, the constitution didn't embody provisions against floor-crossing by the legislators and so they were absolutely free to move from one party to another.

It is widely believed that the strings of the opposition, which was led by the then Punjab chief minister and future prime minister Nawaz Sharif, were pulled by the then president Ghulam Ishaq Khan (GIK). But Benazir Bhutto didn't point an accusing finger at state institutions. Nor did she threaten the members of her party who were suspected of defecting, or their families, of dire consequences. To top it all, despite being a hugely popular leader, she didn't seek to defeat the no-confidence motion through a show of strength on the streets. Being a leader who was well-steeped in democratic conventions, she knew well that, far from being an aberration, a non-trust motion was an integral part of the parliamentary form of government.

Equally graceful was the role of the then speaker of the National Assembly, Malik Meraj Khalid, who had already won accolades for conducting the business of the house in a completely impartial way, as he was supposed to do as per the spirit of his high office. At no point during the whole episode did he demonstrate that he was taking sides. Instead, he went by the book and allowed the no-trust motion to take its logical course. The highest court of the land didn't have to intervene to ensure that the motion was put to vote.

The no-trust motion was defeated by only 12 votes and Prime Minister Bhutto survived. But the cards had already been stacked against her. In a few months, she was sacked by president GIK by invoking the now-defunct Article 58 (2-b) of the constitution. In a game of fluctuating fortunes, three years later she was back in the saddle having sunk her differences with the same GIK. Politicians can always have more than one bite on the cherry; so political battles may not be taken as a matter of life and death.

The logical question which the events preceding the exit of Imran Khan has given rise to is this: why has politics become such a squalid affair in Pakistan? Certainly, the advent of the 24/7 TV channels and the presence of a ubiquitous social media provide sufficient ammunition to politicians and their supporters to heap slur on their opponents to their heart's content. But the media, mainstream or social, isn't the prime culprit.

transion. While the Ghani government will prove to be a hurdle, it can still be given a safe and honourable exit under conditions that could be guaranteed by the "Quartet". More troublesome would be the spoiler's role by India which views its strategic interests against Pakistan and China being better served by continuing warfare in Afghanistan. But the Indians or the Americans will not deploy their forces in Afghanistan to protect Ghani, having learnt the lessons of history. Consequently, the Kabul government cannot survive for long and would be eventually forced to find a political solution. Pakistan's support for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process is laudable. But given the high stakes involved and the obvious Indian interference in Afghanistan, there is need for a proactive Pakistan policy in collaboration with China, Russia and Iran to protect shared national interests. Such a collective approach needs to be based on the ground realities, in particular that the Taliban must play a key role in a future Afghan government.

## Nuclear threats

By Mark Mubich

Threats to use nuclear weapons are as old as nuclear weapons. Threats to use nuclear weapons may even be their main function. Increasingly bellicose statements by Putin and Russian State media during Russia's hot war in Ukraine are unprecedented, and must be taken seriously. "All the world should be prepared for the possibility that Vladimir Putin could use nuclear weapons on Ukraine", said Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

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Threats to use nuclear weapons are as old as nuclear weapons. Threats to use nuclear weapons may even be their main function. Increasingly bellicose statements by Putin and Russian State media during Russia's hot war in Ukraine are unprecedented, and must be taken seriously. "All the world should be prepared for the possibility that Vladimir Putin could use nuclear weapons on Ukraine", said Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

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## The gathering storm

Zamir Akram

War clouds have once again gathered over Afghanistan. Even as American's longest war in its history has ended, the Afghan people are unlikely to enjoy the dividends of peace. In fact, a renewed civil war has already started between the Taliban and the Afghan government. The impact of such a conflict will not remain confined to Afghanistan but will engulf the entire region.

The Taliban have already made extensive territorial gains. They claim to now control 85 per cent of Afghanistan, especially the rural areas and the crucial highways, thereby encircling the major cities with fighting currently raging for the control of Herat, Kandahar and Lashkar Gah. The Taliban are also trying to rebrand themselves, projecting a more tolerant and responsible image in order to increase their domestic and international acceptability.

Rejecting Taliban claims, the Afghan government has asserted that its forces are regrouping to halt the Taliban advance and will retake lost territory. The government has also enlisted local Tajik, Hazara

and Uzbek militia to boost the capabilities of its troops while relying heavily on military support by Washington and New Delhi. In these circumstances, a protracted civil war is now the most likely outcome.

Prime Minister Imran Khan is correct in stating that the Americans made a mess in Afghanistan. Now they are leaving a mess behind. Instead of ensuring a peaceful transition, the Biden administration has rushed for the exits, a b a n d o n i n g Afghanistan to its fate. American "over the horizon" military operations in support of the Ghani government, such as recent air strikes against the Taliban, have encouraged Kabul to reject any compromise solution. The recent meetings in New Delhi between US Secretary of State Blinken and the Indian leadership indicate that India will also militarily assist the Afghan government. The Indian objective was clearly spelt out recently by former Indian Foreign Secretary Sham Seran that an Afghan civil war would be preferable to a Taliban government.

A more sinister aspect of such Indo-US cooperation, underscored by the meeting between Secretary Blinken and Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, is that Indian and Afghan intelligence agencies would feel encouraged to intensify support for terrorist groups like the TTP and Baloch separatists against Pakistan. The Chechens, Uzbeks, Uighurs of the ETIM and ISIS will also gain greater freedom of action to increasingly target China, Russia and Iran.

In these circumstances, Afghanistan will not only face further devastation but will also be denied the benefits of its potential role as a hub for regional connectivity. Projects like TAPI and CASA-1000 will remain unimplemented. China's extension of its BRI into Afghanistan as well as its investments in the country would have to be put on hold. For Pakistan, the costs would be even higher - continued instability and security threats on its western and eastern borders, influx of Afghan refugees, and denial of access to the region. Since Afghan instability will have regional implications, the geopolitical interests of

Pakistan, China, Russia and Iran converge on the need for a peaceful transition in Afghanistan and avoidance of a renewed civil war. As such, all four countries have individually and collectively reached out to the Afghan parties. The Taliban have, in their engagement with these countries, stressed their willingness to accept a political solution, sought international recognition and promised to ensure that the Afghan territory is not used against any other country. In a significant development, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told the visiting Taliban leader, Mullah Bradar that the "Taliban... is a pivotal military and political force in the country and will play an important role in the process of peace, re-conciliation and reconstruction there."

Similar endorsement for the Taliban has also been expressed by the Russians and Iranians. Efforts by this "Quartet", therefore, hold the most promising option to secure peace in Afghanistan. Intensified collective initiatives by them can still prevent a full scale civil war and lead to a peaceful

transition. While the Ghani government will prove to be a hurdle, it can still be given a safe and honourable exit under conditions that could be guaranteed by the "Quartet". More troublesome would be the spoiler's role by India which views its strategic interests against Pakistan and China being better served by continuing warfare in Afghanistan. But the Indians or the Americans will not deploy their forces in Afghanistan to protect Ghani, having learnt the lessons of history. Consequently, the Kabul government cannot survive for long and would be eventually forced to find a political solution. Pakistan's support for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process is laudable. But given the high stakes involved and the obvious Indian interference in Afghanistan, there is need for a proactive Pakistan policy in collaboration with China, Russia and Iran to protect shared national interests. Such a collective approach needs to be based on the ground realities, in particular that the Taliban must play a key role in a future Afghan government.

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## Misogyny in politics

By Naurah Khurshid

The recent act of verbal abuse directed by Pakistanis at Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mariyam Aurangzeb, while she was in one of Islam's holiest sites, is yet another reminder of the rampant misogyny that plagues Pakistani politics.

As if that was not horrific enough, some ex-ministers belonging to the PTI posted the video of the incident from their Twitter accounts, endorsing these actions. This is not the first time, nor will it be the last, that misogyny against Pakistan's women politicians is tolerated and endorsed. Pakistan's political history is rife with women political leaders' character assassination at the hands of their male colleagues.

My first experience witnessing such blatant misogyny was as a child growing up in Lahore in the 1900s, when Benazir Bhutto's political opponents would repeatedly attack her character, her choice of clothes from before she entered politics, and her personal life. The words used for her by large sections of the population are categorized as the worst form

of verbal abuse directed at a politician only because of her gender. Even though I could understand very little of what passed as political discussion at the time, I knew that her personal life was open to disgusting attacks by the PML political leadership and their followers only because she was a woman who had stepped into an overwhelmingly patriarchal political world. While the 90s may be one of the vilest political periods, current events indicate that nothing has changed. Clearly, political parties that enjoy massive support from the Pakistani public do not own any responsibility of bettering political discourse and condemning misogynistic and sexist comments directed at women politicians.

Most of this abuse is considered funny rather than something that needs to be apologised for. This is truly reflective of Pakistani society where casual homophobia and misogyny is not called out. We have ingrained these attitudes in ourselves so deeply that most people do not even recognise why it is offensive to call women names on the floor of the National Assembly or refer to a male politician as a woman in a public

political rally. Much like the streets and parks of Pakistan, public institutions are also no place for a woman. Entering politics as a woman in Pakistan means that her physical appearance will be discussed and mocked by her male colleagues. Her personal life and character will be freely tarnished for the entertainment of the people.

One cannot have much hope from the majority of male politicians but at least women politicians should present a united front and condemn misogyny and sexism across the board. This is something that no woman, regardless of her political affiliation, is safe from. Today it is Mariyam Aurangzeb, but it has been Shireen Mazar, Firdous Ashiq Awan, Maryam Nawaz, and countless others in the past - and there will be others in future.

When one woman faces abuse by political leaders or members of the public, others should come to her defence regardless of the political party they belong to. After all, these are the experiences that all of us Pakistani women share. We all know what it is like to be targeted because of our appearance, and to be dehumanized purely based on our gender.

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Pilot licensing exams resume in Pakistan after three years

KARACHI: The pilot licensing exams under UK CAA International have resumed in Pakistan from May 9 (today) after three years.

"In the first phase, more than 100 candidates will appear for the pilot licensing tests in Karachi. In the next phase, exams will be held in Islamabad and Lahore," he stated.

Sarwar Khan regarding fake pilot license. "The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) has entered into an agreement with the UK CAA International for pilot licensing exams," said PCAA deputy director general Nadir Shafi Dar.

Businessmen for stable exchange rate as feeble rupee keeps hitting economy

KARACHI: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has urged the government to control instability of rupee against the US dollar, as the industrial expansion and economic growth is not possible without stable local currency.

contain the current account deficit in a sustainable range of 2-3 percent of GDP in FY22. Pakistan's rupee remained on the receiving end, depreciating 0.5% against the US dollar in the inter-bank market as pressure persisted on the currency amid lack of clarity on inflows and economic support from international lenders and friendly countries.

currency which lifted the cost of imported products and created uncertainty about the exchange rate stability. The dollar was at Rs164 in October 2020 and now again hovering in the range of Rs186 in May 2022.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State Musadik Masood Malik cutting the cake along with Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan Atadjan Movlamov during the celebrations of the 30th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations of Turkmenistan and Pakistan, as Organized by Institute of peace and Diplomatic Studies at local hotel in Federal Capital.

PM's announcement to end flour price hike welcomed

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Monday welcomed the announcement of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif to increase wheat production and end its black marketing. The decision to control the price of flour should be implemented as soon as possible so that the people who are facing inflation can get some relief, it said.

country. Pakistan is facing a wheat shortfall of three million tonnes which should be imported without delay to ensure food security as wheat prices on the international market continue to rise due to low supply, high demand and the war between Russia and Ukraine.

est source of wheat is India which is constantly being ignored because of political issues. The price of flour has gone up by Rs11 per kg in Punjab while the same is happening in other parts of the country which is not acceptable, he observed.

Suzuki announces massive increase in car prices

ISLAMABAD: The Pak Suzuki Motors Company (PSMC) announced Monday a massive increase in the prices of its cars that will be effective with immediate effect. It is learnt that the raise in the car prices was announced by the PSMC following an increase in freight and input costs and depreciation of the Pakistani Rupee against the US Dollar.

ant has been increased by Rs65,000 to Rs1951,000. The price of Alto VX has been increased by Rs50,000 to Rs1475,000. The new price of Wagon R VXR has been increased to Rs2084,000. Similarly, the new prices of Wagon R VXL and Wagon R AGS are Rs2199,000 and Rs2399,000, respectively. The price of Cultus AGS has been increased Rs 100,000 to reach Rs2762,000.

respectively. The price of Swift GLX CVT has been increased by Rs129,000 to Rs3298,000. he new prices of Bolan Van and Bolan AC are now stand at Rs1328,000 and Rs1415,000, respectively. Furthermore, the price of Bolan Cargo has risen to Rs1315,000. The prices of Ravi and Ravi without Deck have increased to Rs1256,000 and Rs1181,000, respectively. The prices of Swift GL MT and Swift GL CVT have also witnessed a hike to reach Rs2774,000 and Rs2998,000, respectively. The price of Swift GLX CVT has been increased by Rs129,000 to Rs3298,000. he new prices of Bolan Van and Bolan AC are now INP.



ISLAMABAD: Rescue Personnel are rescuing the people stuck in a building as fire engulfed a tower in blue area with short circuit, in Federal Capital.

Nation united under PTI's banner due to induction of corrupt mafia: Imran Khan

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Imran Khan has said that the removal of his party's government and induction of the corrupt status quo once again has united the nation under the banner of PTI. Addressing the PTI's parliamentary party convention on Monday, Imran Khan said that he feels as after 26 years of struggle, the nation has understood his vision.

Tuesday. The Chairman PTI said that when they took charge they had severe financial issues, with the current account deficit mounting up to \$20 billion. The PTI government stabilized the economy despite the challenge of a global pandemic. What we are doing is not politics but a jihad against the corrupt mafia, he added.

should protest in their respective areas, he added. The PTI chief said that people will come to their protest to give Pakistan a direction and not to eat "Keemy waly naan". He said that overseas Pakistani's work hard and send remittances to us while corrupt politicians steal money and send it overseas. Imran Khan added that the government's claims that such threat letters is a common occurrence, we have let other use us like tissue papers, that is why they threaten us without fearing repercussions. He said that people like the Israeli or Indian Prime Minister's and the blasphemer leader from Holland were happy at his ouster, which tells a lot about the current government. INP

First case of new Omicron variant reported in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The first case of a new sub-variant of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus has been reported in Pakistan. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), the new variant is named "Omicron sub-variant BA.2.12.1." "NIH has detected the first case of Omicron sub-variant BA.2.12.1. This new sub-variant is causing increasing number of cases in different countries," NIH tweeted. Last week, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said it was closely monitoring the BA.2.12.1 sub-variant of the Omicron variant of coronavirus. "Currently, available evidence does not suggest differences in severity or clinical manifestations," said the WHO. The WHO urged the countries to be vigilant and conduct independent and comparative analyses of the different emerging variants. According to the US health officials, the BA.2.12.1 sub-variant appears to be up to 27 percent more contagious than the previous Omicron sub-variant. It is responsible for approximately 36.5 percent new coronavirus cases in the US, according to the Centre of Disease Control. INP

21 Pakistani pilgrims stranded at Madinah airport as PIA flight leaves them behind

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan International Airline (PIA) left the passengers along with their luggage at the Madinah International Airport causing distrust among passengers. The PIA flight PK-9784 took off from Madinah airport six hours before the scheduled time of 9:30 pm. The flight left behind a complete group of Umrah pilgrims comprising 21 passengers. The pilgrims now have no confirmed ticket for the next flight and also got no money to stay in the hotel as the group comprised men, women and kids. Sources claimed that the standard passengers will be adjusted in the PIOA Sialkot flight and the remaining will be adjusted in the Lahore flight. Sources further claimed that passengers will be provided with a hotel stay. Earlier, Saudi aviation authorities sacked the Jeddah Airport CEO after a week of chaos and failing to manage the flight schedule rush on Eid and after the Holy month of Ramadan. INP



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Industries and Production Makhdon Syed Murtaza Mahmud visiting Air links facility at Quaid-e-Azam industrial estate Kot Lakhpat.

Copper value addition promises handsome revenue for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Copper plays a vital role in sustainable development. It is the second best electricity conductor after silver. Pakistan can generate a handsome revenue from its generous deposits of this metal. Assistant Director at Geological Survey of Pakistan (GSP) Yasir Shaheen shared these views during a discussion with the WealthPK. "The largest deposits of copper and gold are found in Reko Diq, Saindak, Koh-e-Suleman, Dasht-e-Kain, Banacha, Koh-i-Sultan, etc. Reko Diq is the 4th largest world-famous gold and copper deposit. It is an extended volcanic caldera," Yasir Shaheen said. "The deposits found in Chagai are of unique nature, as they are not in form of a cluster of mineral veins but solid mountainous deposits. Although the grade of copper found here is about 0.38, not too high, it is generous in quantity. Chagai is a tier one

deposit which means it consumes only 25% cost, while profitability ratio is 75%," he continued. "Total prospects of Chagai are 22 in an area of 100sq km of which only four are operational,

while 50 to 55 places are marked, which are not officially announced as deposits. It means, if from four prospects, we boost one of the largest mines, then how much economic. INP

NOTICE INVITING TENDER. The DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER KHUZDAR invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2022 based on Composite schedule rates 2018. Bid Security 5%, Tender Fee Rs. 2000/- for each work.

ML-1 to prove as a catalyst for development of Pakistan Railways

ISLAMABAD: After the refurbishment and modernization of Main Line-1 (ML-1), the Pakistan Railways (PR) will not only improve and enhance passenger traffic, but also revamp freight haulage, Syed Mir Badshah, a former senior official of Pakistan Railways, told WealthPK. ML-1 is the economic backbone of Pakistan, as it rolls through around 75 percent of the country's population and over 80 percent of industries. It is highly significant in boosting the country's growth and income and can uplift and develop the railways, he explained.

He said there were three scopes of ML-1 project: first, the track will be doubled, including underpasses and flyovers, for movement of passengers and freight; second, construction of a dry port for transshipment of goods to the northern areas; and finally, upgradation of Walton Training Centre. In addition, all these improvements and upgradation will lead to an increase in train speed, capacity, and freight volume which will ultimately help reduce the time and cost for the daily train operations, he maintained.

According to the WealthPK research, the state-owned enterprise (SOE) is currently handling only four percent of freight traffic which is envisaged to be increased to over 20 percent, while globally almost 50 percent of the freight traffic is hauled by railways. Moreover, the CPEC Authority stated that the upgradation and doubling of ML-1 will raise the train speed from 65-105km to 120-160km per hour. It also includes rehabilitation and construction of major bridges, which will provide modern signalling and telecom system, con-

version of level crossings into underpasses and flyovers, fencing of tracks, establishment of a dry port near Havelian, and upgradation of the Walton Training Academy. It is important to mention that the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved PC-1 for upgradation of ML-1 on 5th August 2020 at a streamlined cost of \$6.8 billion. As per an official document, ML-1 has three different parts including package-1 of the project at a cost of \$2.7 billion which includes

Nawabshah-Rohri section (183km), Multan-Lahore section (339km), Lahore-Lalamusa section (132km), Kaluwal-Pindora section (52km) and upgradation of the Walton Academy Lahore. Under Package-II, \$2.67 billion was approved for upgradation of Kimari-Hyderabad section (182km) and Hyderabad-Multan section (566km) excluding the work done on Nawabshah-Rohri section in Package-I. Furthermore, under Package-III, the ECNEC approved an amount of \$1.42 billion for construction. INP



KARACHI: A woman is filling the pure water from roadside null, far away from her house as Some areas of the city are suffering from acute shortage of water during the hot summer season in Provincial Capital.

CM KP grieved over loss of precious lives in road mishaps in various districts

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister, Mahmood Khan has expressed his deep grief and sorrow over loss of precious lives in road mishaps in Swat, Dir, Charsadda and other incidents. In a condolence statement issued here on Monday, the chief minister expressed sympathies with the bereaved families and said that they equally shares their pain. CM Mahmood prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed souls in eternal peace and courage for the bereaved families to bear the irreparable loss with fortitude. INP

Denigration of national institutions prime task of incumbent govt: Umar Sarfraz

LAHORE: Governor Punjab Umar Sarfraz Cheema has alleged that denigration of the national institutions is prime task of the incumbent PML-N government. Taking to his twitter handle on Monday, he questioned that how those having mentality of looting national exchequer, remained involved in attack on Supreme Court, have spots of Memogate and Dawn Leaks could be well-wishers of the country and masses. Umar Sarfraz Cheema said that such elements had key role in foreign conspiracies as national exchequer looted by them was in the custody of their foreign masters. He said that these elements hatch conspiracies to weaken national institutions so as to use them for their political and personal interest without any fear of being taken to the task by concerned institutions. INP

Mother of three commits suicide

KARACHI: A mother of three children allegedly committed suicide by drinking toxic spray in Mehmooodabad area of Karachi on Monday. Police said that Muniba w/o Javed residing near Ambala Bakery Al-Naz Biryani annoyed with husband over domestic disputes consumed poisonous spray which proved fatal. The body was shifted to Jinnah Hospital through Chhipa ambulance for postmortem. The police registered a case into the incident and started an investigation. INP

## Rise in tobacco tax to benefit Pakistan's economy

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) has disclosed compelling facts about the burden of tobacco on Pakistan's economy, causing a surge in the health bill, reports WealthPK. According to PIDE, the government collected Rs135 billion in revenue from tobacco tax in FY2021, while the total cost attributable to all smoking-related diseases and deaths in Pakistan was Rs615 billion annually. The tobacco industry's contribution is approximately 22 percent of the total smoking cost. Intriguingly, during the last three years, there has been no increase in the tobacco tax, while the tobacco health levy bill is still pending.

Talking to WealthPK, Muhammad Ali Kemal, Chief of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the Planning Commission, said raising taxes on tobacco products had caused an increase in their prices, making them less affordable. He said 64 percent of the population in Pakistan is youth, who could be easily targeted by the tobacco industry.

Kemal said Pakistan's health expenditure was only 1.2 percent of the country's GDP, which was very less compared to other Asian countries.

He added that lives could be saved by preventing the consumption of tobacco and that's only possible when more taxes were imposed on tobacco products to reduce their demand.

"Smoking is a silent killer in our society, with 29 million active users. Each year, 170,000 people die as a result of tobacco-related diseases," said Malik Imran Ahmed, Country Head of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kid.

According to Dr. Ziauddin Islam, former technical focal person of the Government of Pakistan to WHO

Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). "Tobacco use among our youth is unacceptably high, and this addictive product is harming their mental and physical health."

Cigarettes are available in our country at the lowest prices in the region, making them affordable for young people. Increasing tobacco taxes will aid in preventing the youth from smoking.

Owing to the increasing demand for nicotine products, tobacco export increased in the first eight months (July-Feb) of the current fiscal year 2021-2022.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), tobacco exports during July-Feb 2021-22 reached US\$36,115, up 62.17 percent compared to the corresponding period of last fiscal year (2020-2021).

Many Asian countries have increased tobacco tax to reduce their consumption. Indonesia increased by 12 percent, Turkey by 47 percent, Russia by 4 percent and the Philippines by five pesos per pack.

Increasing tobacco taxes is the most effective policy to reduce consumption and generate more revenue for the government, which will help finance the health sector (Sehat Sahulat card program).

It is necessary to involve the media to report on the dangers of smoking and tobacco-related diseases. This strategy is still important, as the rise of social media and the rapid spread of misinformation threaten trust in the public health advice.

The media should play a role in highlighting infringements of tobacco control policies and exposing the tobacco industry's deceptive tactics. The government must enact a National Tobacco Control Policy to ensure tobacco consumption reduction, guaranteed child nutrition, and improved public health.INP



DERA ALLAH YAR: A man is filling pure water in cans from roadside null, far away from his house due to the shortage of water during the hot summer season in City.

### 17 professional beggars held in Peshawar

PESHAWAR: The Social Welfare Department on Monday arrested 17 professional beggars, including women, in an operation launched against beggars on public complaints, in the provincial capital.

Officials of the Social Welfare Department with the assistance of police launched the crackdown in different localities of Peshawar and arrested 17 beggars.

The cases against these professional beggars were registered under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Vagrancy Restraint Act and section 188. The female constable also took part in the action.

DC Peshawar Riaz Khan Mehsud has directed the Social Welfare Department and police to launch crackdowns against professional beggars on daily basis to clear the business centres of beggars so as to ease the businessmen and customers.INP

### ECP rejects rumours about cancellation of Balochistan LG elections

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has rejected the rumours on social media regarding the cancellation or changing of the date of Local Government elections in Balochistan.

The ECP clarified on Monday that apart from Quetta and Lasbela, the first phase of Local Government elections would be held in 32 districts of Balochistan on May 29, 2022, as per the ECP schedule.

It said that the process of submitting nomination papers to the Returning Officers for the Local Government elections in 32 districts of Balochistan started on April 15. The Returning Officers received nomination papers from candidates by April 21 of respective districts.

In all Union Councils, 33 percent of seats have been allocated for women, five percent for farmers and workers, and five percent seats for non-Muslims in the Local Government elections. There are 5,345 rural wards besides 914 urban wards.INP

### Secretary Info lauds professional acumen, abilities of retired DGPR officers

LAHORE: Secretary Information and Culture Raja Jahangir has highly appreciated the professional acumen and abilities of the retired officers of Directorate General Public Relations (DGPR) and remarked that these retired officers remained a precious asset and became a source of goodwill in the Public Relations for their department.

He was addressing a farewell ceremony organized in honour of the recently retired officers of DGPR holding the posts of Director Information of DG Khan and Sargodha namely Rahim Talab and Tanveer Khalid respectively. Director General Public Relations Suman Rai along with senior officers of DGPR was present on the occasion.

The retired officers thanked Allah Almighty for attaining retirement with due dignity and respect. They highly appreciated the steps and reforms being undertaken by the worthy Secretary Information and DGPR for the uplift of the department and hoped that these fruitful steps will bring a significant improvement in the performance of the department.

DGPR Suman Rai paid glowing tributes to the professional abilities of the retired officers and appreciated their utmost devotion during deliverance of their duties and remarked that these officers held impeccable professional career along with earning good reputation and gentle behaviour. She further remarked that these officers proved their abilities and worth by performing their official duties with diligence as well as dedication. The senior officers of the department also greatly acknowledged the abilities of the retired officers. Secretary Information Raja Jahangir in connection with Eid Milan and Mother's Day cut a cake with the retired officers and also presented flower bouquets, honorary shields and gifts to the retired officers. Later, a group photo was also organized for the retired officers.INP

### NA condemns PTI chief for maligning state institutions in Abbottabad

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Monday strongly condemned the Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan for maligning the state institutions in his address to a public gathering in Abbottabad the other day.

"No one will be allowed to malign state institutions for political gains," the Lower House unanimously resolved.

After Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's speech, Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf observed that such attack on the state and security institutions launched with the purpose to weaken them were against the national interest.

"Whoever utters such words, he/she negates the national interest. Our Constitution does allow anyone

to launch such attacks on the armed forces or the judiciary."

Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif said the words uttered by the PTI chief at the public meetings against the armed forces were extremely regrettable.

Terming Imran Khan in the present scenario "Mir Jaffar and Mir Sadiq", he said the PTI chairman was in the pain as all the state institutions were working within their constitution ambit. Recently, Khawaja Asif said, political parties in the National Assembly brought an in-house change through a constitutional way, passing a no-confidence motion against Imran Khan. He said there should be a national consensus to defend the state institutions so that no one could.INP

### ITP's campaign to check traffic rules violations in full swing

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) campaign to check violation of traffic rules is in full swing and special efforts are being made to maintain traffic discipline in the city.

The main objective of this road safety campaign is to ensure safety to people while road users are being educated for lane discipline during drive.

Following directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younis, Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Rai Mazhar Iqbal has constituted special teams to control lane violation on various roads and ensure smooth flow of traffic in the city. Strict checking is being made against those not using helmets during bike ride, using mobile phone and not fastening seat belts during drive.

ITP's team remain present on all important roads including Islamabad Expressway, Srinagar (Kashmir) highway to educate road users about traffic rules

ITP's FM Radio 92.4 is also disseminating the messages about road safety and to educate audience about traffic rules.

SSP (Traffic) has appealed the citizens to cooperate with the force by following traffic laws. He said that action would be taken against those not following lanes during drive as the sole purpose is to ensure safe road environment in the city.

He hoped that citizens will follow traffic rules and help ITP through their cooperation in ensuring secure traffic system in the city.

Those violating traffic rules will be fined and safer road environment would be ensured through constant monitoring, SSP (Traffic) Rai Mazhar Iqbal maintained.

The force issues traffic violation tickets not as a punitive measure but the purpose is to ensure safe road environment in the Capital and secure the lives of the people, the SSP (Traffic) added.INP

### IFC appoints new country manager for Afghanistan & Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The International Finance Corporation (IFC) has named Zeeshan Sheikh as its new country manager for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Sheikh will aim to mobilize private sector investment across key sectors, building on IFC's global expertise and influence as a partner of choice for both public and private sector stakeholders.

Sheikh, a British national, joined IFC in 2010. He has worked extensively on public-private partnerships and innovative infrastructure investments across the Middle East and North Africa, often in frontier markets like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Jordan. In 2018, he moved to Washington D.C. where he supported IFC's regional operations for Europe, Central Asia, and Latin

America. Prior to joining IFC, he worked in London for several years in corporate finance, mergers and acquisitions, and private equity investments.

"Zeeshan's diverse experience and expertise across different sectors and geographies will be critical in expanding IFC's work in the region," said Khawaja Aftab Ahmed, IFC Regional Director for the Middle East, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. "We are delighted to have him on board."

Sheikh steps into a region deeply affected by COVID-19 and years of geopolitical instability. Afghanistan is facing an economic and humanitarian crisis while one in five Pakistan residents live in poverty. Despite these challenges, the region also presents significant opportunities for enhancing private sector participation.INP



ISLAMABAD: Business delegation led by Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, Former President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) calling on Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani at Parliament House.

### Those involved in scurrilous attacks on institutions will be taken to task: CM Hamza

PAKPATTAN: Punjab Chief Minister Muhammad Hamza Shahbaz has asserted that those involved in scurrilous attacks against the state institution will be taken to task as no one should take the liberty to say anything offensive about the institutions according to his own desire and will. A defeated person is ridiculing the state institutions, constitution and the security of the country.

While talking to the media at the residence of PML-N MPA Mian Naveed in Pakpattan on Monday, he argued that the steps and statements of PTI chief Imran Niazi are against the security of the country. Even the friendly countries have become a victim of his vitriol and as a result, they have distanced themselves from Pakistan due to Imran Niazi; he regretted and pointed out that Imran Niazi, who claimed to be an advocate of Pakistan and Kashmir cause, has miserably failed to fulfil his commitment. Imran Niazi will have to be answerable for all his sins very soon, he stated. Imran Niazi will have to be answerable even in the court of the public, he added.

To a question, Hamza Shahbaz explained that Imran Niazi is trying to play with the constitution and pointed out that doors of the Supreme Court were opened to uphold the constitution. There would have been no constitution in the country if the doors of the Supreme Court were not opened in the dead of night, he added. What has been done during the last four years, except taking revenge, and creating chaos in the country while fake promises were made with the youth about employment and a circus going on in Punjab? The Punjab governor has played havoc with the constitution, he commented. To another question, the Punjab CM maintained that the price hike has made people mentally sick. The government is trying to create

ease in the lives of the common man and a public welfare agenda would be brought out within the next few days. A decrease in the prices of edibles would be the first part of this agenda; he disclosed and added that the murder of the father of Mian Naveed would be investigated and criminals would be taken to task. Earlier, the CM visited the residence of PML-N MPA Mian Naveed Ali Arain and condoled with the bereaved family. He offered feteiha for the departed soul and assured that the requirements of justice would be fulfilled. Senior politician Ata Manika, MPAs namely Kh. Salman Rafique, Kh. Imran Nazir, Majid Zahoor, Imran Goraya and party workers were also present.

The CM also went to the shrine of Hazrat Baba Fareed-Uddin Masood Ganj Shakar (RA). He laid the floral wreath and prayed for the welfare and prosperity of the country. The CM also offered Nawafil in Masjid-e-Aulia and inspected various sections of the mausoleum. Talking on this occasion, Hamza Shahbaz pointed out that the promotion of brotherhood, harmony and tolerance was the gist of the teachings of various Sufi Saints. There is a need to promote their traditions as Islam was spread in the Indo-Pak sub-continent through Sufi Saints and religious leaders. The religious leaders have further promoted the message of Islam and one feels spiritual contentment at the shrines of Sufi Saints, he added. The chief minister inspected various sections of DHQ hospital Pakpattan and inquired the patients and their attendants about the facilities. He directed to move a little girl, sitting in the waiting area, to the emergency ward for treatment without delay. Talking on this occasion, Hamza disclosed that the 2nd shift of the hepatitis clinics would be started soon. Provision of the best medical facilities to the people.INP

### Change of Governor Punjab to take place in line with Constitution: Sana

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah has expressed the hope that the change of Punjab Governor would take place in line with the Constitution.

In a statement issued on Monday, Interior Minister said that the President was constitutionally bound to implement the advice of prime minister in that regard.

All the constitutional parameters would hopefully be followed vis-a-vis the appointment of new Punjab governor, Rana Sanaullah added.INP

### Siraj appeals political parties to stop questioning patriotism of opponents

LAHORE: Emir Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Sirajul Haq has appealed to the political parties to stop questioning patriotism of opponents and branding them foreign agents.

While presiding over the meeting of the central leadership at Mansoorah on Monday, he said that the polarization in the society reached to the dangerous level and the country could no longer afford this division.

The meeting decided to hold workers conventions across the country and demanded elections to bring the country out of prevailing crises. It reiterated the JI will participate in polls under its own flag and electoral symbol and give candidates in all over the country with maximum number of youth contesters.

Sirajul Haq said that free and fair elections was the only way forward to end uncertainty, adding the institutions must maintain their neutrality and stop interfering into political matters. Similarly, he asked the politicians not to drag the institutions into politics. He called for strict implementations of the Article 62 and 63 of the Constitution and end the role of wealth in the elections. The JI chief said the political parties who ruled over country for years badly exposed and failed to provide relief to the masses. The ruling parties, he said, only protected self-interests while staying in power. It was pitying that two percent political elites were controlling all the wealth of the country where millions were deprived.INP

### Zardari alleges Imran Khan of conspiring against Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPP-P), Asif Ali Zardari strongly condemning the PTI chief Imran Khan's hate campaign against national institutions has declared it a vicious attempt to avoid accountability.

Reacting to Imran Khan's speech, he said on Monday that chairman PTI had lost his mental balance after being ousted from power by the people through a constitutional process and an elected parliament so is now attacking national institutions.

Asif Zardari said that there was fear of corruption cases and foreign funding case behind Imran Khan's harassment against national institutions, in which he was trying to make national institutions controversial to avoid punishment.

He said that in the lure of power, Imran Niazi is crossing all boundaries and the path he is taking seems to be

a conspiracy against the country. He said that apart from running a trend on social media against national institutions, Imran himself was trying to provoke people's sentiments by making false conspiratorial statements in meetings which is reprehensible.

The PPP-P President said that Imran Khan is harming not only Pakistan but also national institutions by spreading hatred for the sake of power which would not be tolerated. He said that due to these actions of PTI chief, the country has regressed instead of progressing.

He said the campaign Imran has launched to discredit and sow discord in the institutions is dangerous for the security of Pakistan and will benefit the enemy forces. He said that Pakistan Army is not only the protector of Pakistan's borders but its responsibility is also to protect the constitution.INP



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Speaker National Assembly Zahid Akram Durrani calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

### Trade deficit of \$39.3b in 10 months not sustainable: President FPCCI

KARACHI: President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Irfan Iqbal Sheikh has said that the economy cannot sustain the current level of trade deficit; which stands at \$39.3 billion for merely 10 months of the current fiscal year, i.e. July 2021 - April 2022. He added that it translates into approximately \$4 billion per month on an average and will be close to \$50 billion when the year ends; which is unprecedented in our history.

In a statement issued here on Monday, Irfan Iqbal Sheikh emphasized that the government should tangibly incentivize & subsidize industrialization, import substitution, exploration of new import markets for competitive imports, IT exports and facilitate Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the export-oriented industries for the near-term gains.

He also made it clear that the access to finance should be made affordable to create an enabling environment for the businesses to remain

competitive in the regional and international markets.

The FPCCI chief noted that the growth rate in imports is double than that of growth in exports; and, therefore, it has nullified the diligent hard work of the exporters in the current fiscal year to earn the precious foreign exchange for the country.

He further said that the time has come to take tough decisions swiftly to support exporters as SBP's foreign exchange reserves (FER) of \$10.5 billion are not even sufficient to cover two months of imports. Imports for the period of July 2021 - April 2022 stand at \$65.5 billion; which shows an enormous and unsustainable increase of \$20.8 billion in absolute terms. Keeping politics aside, Mr. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh said that it is pertinent to note that the Government of Pakistan had estimated that the total imports in the Fiscal Year 2021 - 22 would be \$55.2 billion; and contrarily, we have done \$65.5 billion worth of imports in just 10 months. This phenomenon needs to be thoroughly assessed and analyzed.INP

### Nawabsha police arrest three high profile criminals

NAWABSHAH: Police have arrested three alleged high profile criminals in a successful raid in the Qazi Ahmed area of Nawabshah who were wanted in dozens of cases on Monday.

Those who got arrested were identified as Sharif Khoso, Dhani Baksh Khoso and Mitho Khoso. According to the police, the accused have also confessed to the murder of Azeem Khoso that happened a few days ago.

The police say there were dozens of cases registered against the three arrested accused in different police stations of the Nawabshah district related to murder, kidnapping for ransom and terrorism. SSP Shaheed Benazir Abad Ameer Saud Magsi said the police have also recovered two rifles and a TT pistol from the possession of the arrested accused.

He also announced prizes and certificates for SHO Saifullah Bhagio and his team for conducting a suc-

cessful operation to arrest the accused. Police have arrested three alleged high profile criminals in a successful raid in the Qazi Ahmed area of Nawabshah who were wanted in dozens of cases on Monday.

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