

# QUETTA VOICE

Email address:  
quettavoic@gmail.com

Friday 20  
May ,2022

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**Govt committed to deepening Pakistan-China partnership: PM Shehbaz**



**'Emergency situation': In a first, complete ban imposed on non-essential items, says Marriyum Aurangzeb**

## A forest fire claims 3 lives, injured 4 : Deputy Commissioner Sherani

Ali Khan Mandokhail

ZHOB: A forest fire has claimed three lives and left four people injured in Balochistan's Sherani district on Thursday. Ejaz Jaffar, the Deputy Commissioner Sherani told Quetta Voice via telephone that seven people who had gone to the top of the mountain were trapped after the fire spread in the forest. "Three people burnt to death", Mr. Jaffar informed. He said the four injured had suffered burn injuries and were being shifted to district headquarters hospital Zhob for medical treatment. Ancient pine trees burnt as a result of the fire. "Fire continues to spread and burning ancient pine trees", Atique Khan Kakar, an officer of the forest



department said. He demanded of the provincial and federal governments to provide more support to control the fire. The DC informed that the fire was spread to four kilometers area. Ancient pine trees have burnt because of the fire.

"One helicopter is not enough to put off the fire", Mr. Jaffar said. This fire has destroyed the livelihood of the people, he mentioned. CJ BHC asks authorities to submit a report about forest fire. Chief Justice Balochistan High Court

(BHC), Mr. Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan and Mr. Justice Rozi Khan Bareech directed the concerned authorities to submit a report in this regard. The court passed this order on a constitutional petition filed by senior lawyer Syed Nazeer Agha Advocate on Thursday. Mr. Agha had requested the bench of the BHC to take notice of the fire, which has burnt ancient pine trees in the area. Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Qudus Bizenjo had taken the notice of rampant fire in the Sar Ghali forest area. An army helicopter reached the affected area on Thursday to put off the flames of fire. However, the forest officials said that one helicopter was not enough to extinguish the flames of fire in the forest.



NEW YORK: Foreign Minister Pakistan Bilawal Bhutto Zardari met the visiting Senate delegation from Pakistan, for International Migration Review Forum at the United Nations.

## 'Emergency situation': In a first, complete ban imposed on non-essential items, says Marriyum Aurangzeb

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb announced Thursday the federal government has devised an economic plan in a bid to take the country out of the financial turmoil and, "for the first time", a complete ban has been imposed on luxury and non-essential items. "This is an emergency situation and Pakistanis will have to make sacrifices under the economic plan. This will have a quick impact on foreign reserves. The ban will have an impact of \$6 billion," the information minister said during a press conference. Aurangzeb added the government's focus was to reduce imports and, therefore, it was about to introduce an export-oriented policy, which would benefit the local industry and producers. The information minister said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was working "day and night to stabilise the economy" and had decided to ban the imports of all items that were not in the use of common people. Aurangzeb added the imports covered food items, decoration items, and luxury vehicles, as she noted that the country was facing a "tough economic situation due to the previous government's policies". Web Desk

## COAS Bajwa urges army officers to stay focused on training, professional pursuits

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Qamar Javed Bajwa visited the School of Artillery, Nowshera on Thursday and attended annual Commanding Officers' conference of Artillery Regiment, ISPR said. According to the military's media wing, the Army Chief also visited various facilities including War Gaming Arena established to undertake training under simulated battle conditions and to facilitate planning/ conduct of war games/exercises. On the occasion, COAS Bajwa was also briefed about the new training modules. While interacting with officers, the Army Chief urged them to stay focused on training and professional pursuits. Earlier, on arrival at Nowshera, the COAS was received by Colonel Commandant Corps of Artillery, Lieutenant General Muhammad Aziz. INP

## Imran Khan to announce call for long march towards Islamabad tomorrow

ISLAMABAD: PTI Chairman Imran Khan announced on Thursday that he would give the call for a long march to Islamabad tomorrow (Friday). Addressing a group of young people at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa House in Islamabad, the former prime minister said that he would announce his call for the much-awaited long march to Islamabad during his address in Multan tomorrow. "Multan will be the last public gathering before the march towards Islamabad begins. The march towards Islamabad will be for real freedom," the PTI chairman said, adding that the "PTI's goal of a fresh election is near." "We do not want an imported government but freedom via elections," Imran Khan said. "The sea of people would not leave Islamabad until and unless the Shehbaz Sharif-led government announces the date of the fresh elections." On April 30, ousted prime minister Imran Khan said that the PTI would begin the anti-government march towards Islamabad in the last week of May. "We will be giving this call to all Pakistanis, not just PTI supporters, as Pakistan has been insulted after the country's most corrupt people were imposed on us by a foreign power," Khan said in a video statement. Former prime minister Khan was ousted from power on April 10 after the National Assembly voted him out through a no-confidence motion — making him the first premier to be voted out through the move. Khan had repeatedly blamed the US for backing the no-confidence motion and has refused to accept newly elected PM Shehbaz Sharif, saying, "there can't INP



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Rana Sana Ullah talking to Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, the Ambassador of Qatar in Pakistan as he arrives for a call on him.

## Govt committed to deepening Pakistan-China partnership: PM Shehbaz Sharif

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, underlining the significance of China in Pakistan's foreign policy, reaffirmed the government's resolve to further deepen the partnership with Beijing. The prime minister's commitment was expressed during a meeting with a Chinese delegation led by China's External Security Commissioner Cheng Guoping, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said. The prime minister affirmed the government's firm resolve to fast-track both the ongoing as well as new projects under the transformational China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which had immensely contributed to the socio-economic development of Pakistan, and also realise its high-quality development. Read more: Chinese premier urges Pakistan to bring perpetrators to justice. He expressed his commitment to working with renewed zeal and enthusiasm, in concert with China, especially on projects of strategic significance for both the countries, such as the ML-1 project. The prime minister said that China-Pakistan relations were based on mutual trust, mutual respect, and cooperation. The premier appreciated that Pakistan and China had always stood by each other to overcome every challenge with solidarity and mutual support. PM Shehbaz reiterated his strong condemnation of the Karachi terrorist attack and stated that the entire Pakistani nation grieved with the families of the victims and the people of China at the loss of precious lives, and offered his heartfelt condolences. He reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to thoroughly investigate the Karachi attack, apprehend the perpetrators at the earliest, and bring them to justice. Referring to his telephonic conversation with Premier Li Keqiang on 16 April 2022, the prime minister affirmed that Pakistan was committed to providing the highest level of safety and security to all Chinese nationals and institutions working on projects in the country. Web Desk

## Quddus Bizenjo vows to face no confidence motion

Staff Reporter

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Qudus Bizenjo has vowed to face a no-confidence motion. Talking to reporters after the inauguration of a function organized in connection with Hazara Culture Day, the Chief Minister said that he has decided to face the no-confidence motion in a democratic way. "If anyone has any complaints, I am ready to listen", Mr. Bizenjo said. Chief Minister's comments have come a day after the former chief minister Jam Kamal Khan, Pakistan Terhik e Insaf (PTI) lawmaker Sardar Yar



Muhammad Rind, and Asghar Khan Achakzai of Awami National Party (ANP) submitted a no-confidence motion against the CM. Mir Qudus Bizenjo however mentioned that there has to be a no no-

confidence motion as the financial budget for the year 2022-23 fast approaches. Jam Kamal group has its own thinking and they specifically targeted the financial budget, he claimed. "Victory or defeat, it

does not make any difference for me", the Chief Minister stated. When asked about the claims of the PTI lawmaker, Sardar Yar Muhammad Rind that the number game was complete. He said, "Sardar Rind is our elder".

## Pakistan calls for united action to tackle challenge of food security

NEW YORK: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has called for a united action to tackle the challenge of food security posed by Covid, climate change and conflicts. Addressing "Global Food Security Call to Action" Ministerial Meeting in New York on Thursday, he said recent geopolitical developments have aggravated already difficult situation of food security. The Foreign Minister said Pakistan possesses the potential not only to meet its own food security needs but it can also play its part to feed the people of region and world. He regretted that Pakistan remained unable to unlock its own agricultural and economic potential. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said Pakistan is facing existential threat of climate change, Covid pandemic and poverty. He said this situation has made Pakistan insecure in food,

water and energy. He said Pakistan is playing a leadership role in advocating for humanitarian aid to people of Afghanistan. He said Pakistan has provided humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and Ukraine. He said hunger has no nationality, poverty does not care for the colour of our skin and climate catastrophe does not recognize ethnicity. Highlighting intensity of climate crisis, he said climate change has an ever increasing direct threat to food security. He said Pakistan is facing an acute water shortage and our entire country is currently suffering from drought. He said our agriculture and food security is at risk. He said the roadmap for global food security called to action is important and impressive and it will go a long way to address imminent crisis. INP

## ECP to announce decision on dissident Punjab MPAs' case Today

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is set to announce its verdict in a case pertaining to the 25 dissident members of the Punjab Assembly (MPAs) from PTI tomorrow (Friday). The verdict is expected to be announced at 3pm on Friday. The ECP, which was due to decide the fate of the 25 defecting PTI MPAs who had switched party loyalties ahead of the election of the provincial chief minister, had deferred announcement of the decision a day earlier and said it would first issue notices to the respondents instead. The ECP's verdict gained special significance after the Supreme Court's Tuesday verdict in which — while interpreting Article 63-A of the Constitution — the SC had said the votes of a party's turncoats would not be counted. Punjab Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi had sent a reference to the ECP against 25 PTI dissidents who had reportedly voted against the party policy in the election for the Punjab chief minister on April 16. Earlier, lawyers of all the parties had presented arguments before the ECP. After listening to their arguments, the ECP bench, headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, had reserved the verdict. The Commission, in its May 11 verdict, had rejected the disqualification reference against the MNAs of the PTI involved in floor-crossing during the no-confidence motion against PTI Chairman Imran Khan. The ECP said in its verdict that the reference against defecting MNAs of the PTI was "not in line with the Constitution". Web Desk

## Better to leave govt than burdening masses with inflation: Maryam Nawaz

SARGODHA: PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz said Thursday it was better to leave the government than to burden the people of Pakistan with massive inflation. In her address to the PML-N's Sargodha jalsa, Maryam said PTI Chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan ruled the country for nearly four years and "destroyed" the economy, but now, he is asking PM Shehbaz Sharif to give an account of his four weeks in the government. "For four years, Pakistan witnessed destruction; a clumsy and incompetent person was imposed on 220 million people. Today, the economy is on a ventilator, and terrorism has resurfaced," Maryam said, criticising Khan for his "incompetency". The PML-N once again vehe-

mently criticised the PTI chairman and said: "Imran Khan is the name of a menace and a backstabber. He betrayed all those who were loyal to him." She continued: "Whether you scream, pull your hair, or hang yourself upside down [out of anger and frustration of losing power], your game has finished." "Imran Khan, you deliver speeches about self-sustainability and independence. But talks about sovereignty do not make sense when coming from a person who has never earned a dime in his life," Maryam said. Referring to Khan's claims of piety, Maryam said his "dogs eat more meat in a day as compared to the people living in settlements surrounding Bani Gala" — the PTI chairman's residence. Maryam also slammed Khan for his "fake claims" of a conspiracy and a plot to assassinate him. Web Desk

## Helicopters arrive in Musakhail, Sherani to extinguish forest fire

Ali Khan Mandokhail

ZHOB: Government helicopters arrived in districts Musakhail and Sherani to extinguish forest fire on Thursday morning. It has been more than a week since an ancient forest in Musakhail and Sherani districts caught fire at different locations. "Helicopters engaged in hectic efforts to extinguish flames of the fire", a statement issued by the Chief Minister Balochistan Secretariat said. Roaring flames of fire have burnt ancient pine trees located in Sherani and Musakhail forests. Three people had also suffered burnt injuries in the Sherani forest. The injured were evacuated to district headquarters hospital Zhob for medical treatment. The injured were local residents of the area. Thick smoke arises from the #Musakhail Sherani forest after it caught fire... A #helicopter is engaged in extinguishing flames of fire pic.twitter.com/NoBkPCsjdk Ashar, a movement launched to bring an end to deforestation and protect forests across Balochistan had demanded of the provincial and federal governments to use helicopters to put out fire. "This was our demand from the very first day", Salmeen Khapalwak, the founder of the movement said. Delayed response main reason behind roaring flames of fire. However, people of the area complained that delayed response on the part of the concerned authorities was also one of the reasons behind the destruction of the forest. "We tried on our own to extinguish the fire but failed to do so", Naseeb Khan, another resident of the area said. He lamented that had the authorities arrived on time, the forest would have been protected. Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Qudus Bizenjo took notice of the fire in the ancient forest and directed the authorities to ensure a timely response. Although, he was dismayed over the performance of concerned quarters for the delayed response to put out the fire. The CM has however directed the concerned authorities to double their efforts to put off the flames of fire and submit a report in this regard. "Use all available resources to control the fire", Mr. Bizenjo said.





## QUETTA VOICE

Editor Asim Khan

### Balochistan needs inclusive development

Balochistan, the country's resource-rich province is lagging behind all other provinces in terms of key social indicators including education, health, sanitation, clean drinking water etc. Mismanagement, injudicious distribution of development funds coupled with a lack of political commitments are the underlying reasons behind backwardness of the province.

Track record shows, successive governments have always launched politically motivated development schemes to please their influential supporters. Constituency, individual and political schemes always dominated the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) in every year's financial budget. Nexus among the Chief Minister's Secretariat, the Planning Development and Finance Department continue to deprive the constituencies of other lawmakers.

Opposition's constituencies were ignored. Opposition lawmakers constituencies remained ignored during last three-years of former chief minister, Jam Kamal Khan's government. Despite agitation in and outside the assembly, the opposition lawmakers were not able to force government to allocate funds for their constituencies.

This is irony of fate that the mandate of the lawmakers is to frame laws since the assemblies are called legislative assemblies. But legislators are least bothered about the legislation rather they take keen interest in construction of roads, buildings etc. That's why, provincial governments prefer not to hold local bodies elections rather decentralization of development projects.

Development deficit of Balochistan is likely to be Rs. 100b. Balochistan government announced to have allocated Rs. 172 bs for the PSDP during the financial year 2021-22. However, currently the government has more than Rs. 40bs as per the statement of ruling party's Spokesman Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran. The province has already spent Rs. 40bs and it has more than 40bs for the remaining year. It means the deficit is close to Rs. 100bs.

Chief Minister Qudus Bizenjo needs to put his house in order and introduce a strict financial policy to ensure completion of development projects. The government should ensure inclusive development and end the practice of exclusive development so that this backward province could come at par with other parts of the country. Action should match words now.

If there was ever a 'delicate turn' in Pakistan's history, it is perhaps this current moment. Never has the state ever faced so many crises at once and found itself utterly clueless in its response.

The immediate crisis is one of the economy. The historic verdict delivered on April 9, 2022 led many to assume that the new government will not dither, like the previous one, on the many pressing economic decisions that are needed to be taken. Yet, five weeks later, the only thing that has been transferred between the two governments seems to be the general paralysis restricting the Shehbaz Sharif government taking the 'bold' decisions that many believe it must take to rescue the economy from the grips of uncertainty and a possible collapse.

The economy is truly in shambles. The subsidies announced by Imran Khan earlier this year were unfunded - as they were implemented without a plan to find a revenue source for them. This simply means that the subsidies would have to be debt financed thus widening the fiscal deficit. The finance minister, Miftah Ismail, is on record saying that these subsidies will cost the government more than it does to run its affairs.

With the political

uncertainty that ensued after the vote of no confidence, the rupee has also come under considerable pressure and by the time of writing this article had hit Rs195 to a dollar.

One of the bold decisions being asked of the current government is to remove the PTT's government fuel subsidies that it announced earlier this year. What is surprising is that many experts and non-experts, particularly many journalists, seem to have adopted this line of argument rather uncritically. It is argued that such an action would relay the signal that this government means business and wants to take challenges confronting the economy head on. The idea is that a 'shock treatment' given to the economy by the sudden removal of subsidies and a large increase in interest rates would calm nerves down in the market and help address the prevailing uncertainty.

If the history of such policy actions taken elsewhere in the world is anything to go by, then one must be even more cautious in suggesting this. My intention is here not to suggest keeping the fuel subsidies intact. That they must go is a forgone conclusion. I do, however, want to suggest that the way they are removed must not be the same as is being suggested on our TV screens these days.

Before I elaborate on that, let me compare Pakistan with Indonesia of circa 1997-1998, where such shock treatments were applied in the wake of the Asian currency crisis of Summer 1997.

Indonesia was the worst-hit country of the Asian currency crisis. The economic crisis spiraled quickly into a political crisis as well where first the government's inaction and later its stability and ability to stay in power fed the economic uncertainty as well. Between September 1997 and July 1998, the Indonesian government signed four different agreements with the IMF, which entailed accepting its bailout packages in exchange of implementing the Fund's suggested reforms.

The first one was signed in October 1997 that required the Indonesian government closing down 16 banks as part of the agreement. One of the other IMF demands was to raise the interest rates to control inflation. The agreement with the IMF was approved by the Indonesian government on October 31, 1997 and the closure of 16 privately owned banks took place on November 1, 1998. This resulted in a bank run in Indonesia and instead of raising the interest rates the

Indonesian central bank had to supply the remaining banks with liquidity just to ensure that their banking sector doesn't collapse.

The IMF later realized and agreed that demanding a sudden closure of these banks was perhaps not the best move to make to deal with the crisis in the Indonesian economy. By the time the third agreement was signed in April 1998, the IMF was also pushing for removing the subsidies on fuel but had agreed to let the Indonesian government implement it over a period of six months. Yet, the Suharto government decided to remove the fuel subsidies in a 'shock' move all at once in the beginning of May 1998. This immediately led to riots on the street in which five students were killed in Jakarta. The riots spiraled out of control over the next few days and by the time the situation calmed down around 1000 Indonesian had lost their lives. The Suharto government resigned on May 14, 1998. It took Indonesia another year or so to recover from its political and economic crises.

Of course, the above narration is not an attempt to create an exact similarity between the current crises facing Pakistan and those that Indonesia faced back in

By Fahd Ali

1997-1998. I only intend to make two points using the Indonesian example. First, when an economic and political crisis builds up, it becomes impossible to disentangle the effects of one from the other. Second, a 'shock treatment' administered to the economy in such a scenario can quickly have consequences that no one anticipates. Instead of calming down the situation and removing the uncertainty, it can easily result in even more uncertainty and economic hardship for the people. How must we deal with the crisis we are faced with now? This is particularly important when almost all analysts seem to agree that a sudden removal of subsidies will increase the inflation rate to as high as 20 percent.

First, the government must not reduce fuel subsidies all at once. Instead, it must negotiate a three-to-six-month timeline with the IMF in which the subsidies can completely disappear. This must be accompanied with a clear roadmap of a minimum price increase each fortnight to let businesses and households incorporate them into their costs and expenditure plans, respectively. Second, as reported in the National Human Development Report of 2020, the elite enjoy vast privileges that amount to Rs2.66 trillion in 2017-18.

## Our multiverse of disinformation

By Shaukat Ahmed

The rise of populism and populist leaders worldwide rely on a key human trait: it's far more convenient to blame someone or something else for our misfortunes than to accept responsibility for our actions.

Inspired by the success of Trumpian politics, populist leaders are adopting that philosophy in a copycat phenomenon that is slowly evolving into a global populist pandemic. Although the tactics are similar and essentially based on the exploitation of existing prejudices, much like a virus each region is generating its own unique mutation designed to thrive and spread in the environment it has had a genesis in.

Recently ousted prime minister Imran Khan is a disturbing iteration of this phenomenon. Removed through a constitutionally prescribed democratic process of a no-confidence vote, he has effectively shifted the narrative from the disadvantageous reality that he failed at almost every aspect of governance and his dismal performance has left Pakistan's economy in a critical condition, to a fabricated narrative that he is the victim of an alleged US regime change conspiracy. A recently evolved mainstream media and a social media rapidly growing in use and adoption in Pakistan's new normal have been the key

weapons in his campaign to reinvent himself as a demagogue. He has even managed to escalate the gravity of his narrative to present it as a fight for our independence and sovereignty and a tacit declaration of all those who oppose him as treacherous traitors.

It is still an open debate whether the extreme positioning of media outlets, now not uncommon in the world, is a major cause of the rising populism or its byproduct. Following this trend and amidst the rapidly escalating political conflict in Pakistan some of the mainstream media seems to have descended into a 'multiverse of disinformation'. Divergent and dissenting viewpoints are conducive to productive debate, but some established channels with substantial viewership are now engaged in an outright propaganda war - presenting an alternate reality that has transformed free speech into a free for all. The incessant need to sensationalize has now degenerated into a need to fictionalize. Bias is precipitously morphing into hate. It is incredibly unsettling to watch some TV anchors on these channels admiringly laugh at the way the president and Punjab governor recently made a mockery of the constitution and court verdicts. This is also indicative of a dark ethical numbness

rapidly spreading in our country.

Disseminating a false narrative has become as simple as sharing or generating a thought and then letting collaborators run amok with it. The ruthless efficiency with which this has been accomplished in Pakistan has astounded many - and our institutions have also been caught off guard. A mature democracy is more resilient to this onslaught. In Pakistan, which is gradually evolving from a repressed society where thought and expression have been traditionally monitored, controlled, and even engineered, the newfound freedom that the information age provides is resulting in unpredictable, unexpected and sometimes potentially dire consequences.

Case in point, it is beyond absurd how much debate on television and how many tweets are generated each day either in support or in rebuttal of a US regime change conspiracy in Pakistan. One man's gift for political theatre and subterfuge has created a nationwide discussion on a non-existent concocted issue without providing a shred of evidence. The problem with false narratives is that once widespread enough they establish a life of their own. Consequently, this debate is now starting to fuel emotions and outrage on both sides, reducing it in

nature to a no-holds-barred brawl as opposed to a discourse based on rationality and tangibility.

In Pakistan the noise generated by paid bots is especially effective in drowning out the truth. Ironically, the cynicism and mistrust prevalent in our society has driven people in droves towards social media perceiving it as a source of unbiased, credible and unfiltered information. In fact, the opposite is true. It is far easier to fabricate information on social media anonymously with almost no accountability as well as instantly. This combined with the pervasive use of smartphones in almost all segments of society, from the working class to the affluent, has made the dissemination of information or disinformation, opinion sharing and access to information available to all with a simple tap on these devices. The more widely and rapidly one is able to deploy information in this new normal, the more effectively perception and opinion can be influenced and manipulated.

Politicians with the help of their propaganda collaborators are now easily able to repackage reality and rebrand themselves. We have a former information minister who oversaw the victimization and suppression of the media now championing freedom of the press. A

former finance minister whose stint is a case study in catastrophic indecisiveness and who was removed by his own prime minister in a matter of months demonstrating that he had neither the ability nor the experience to manage a national economy is now offering a critique on economic management and paralysis in decision making. An energy minister whose inexcusable negligence in the timely procurement of energy supplies resulted in rising prices as well as severe shortages is now advocating efficient energy supply management. A human rights minister who was notably silent in her tenure on human rights violations now constantly engages in Twitter rants condemning encroachment of civil liberties.

These politicians are much like a salesperson who was peddling a product found harmful to the public and discontinued. After loss of power and authority they have effectively used the media to start peddling the same product in new packaging. However, much like the salesman in this analogy, new packaging notwithstanding, the product is still harmful to the public and must remain off the shelves.

The anonymity that social media provides is also an ideal setup for the good cop, bad cop tactic. Party leaders

## Covid-19 mortality

By Binoy Kampmark

It has dominated news cycles, debates and policies since 2020, but COVID-19 continues to exercise the interest of number crunchers and tallies.

While the ghoulish daily press announcements about infections and deaths across many a country have diminished and, in some cases, disappeared altogether, publications about how many were taken in the pandemic. The World Health Organization, ever that herald of dark news, has offered a revised assessment of the SARS-CoV-2 death toll associated either directly or indirectly with the pandemic. Between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021, the global health body suggests that the mortality figure is closer to 14.9 million, with a range of 13.3 million to 16.6 million.

The number considers excess mortality, the figure reached after accounting for the difference between the number of deaths that have occurred, and the number expected in the absence of the pandemic. It also accounts for deaths occasioned directly by COVID-19, or indirectly (for instance, the pandemic's disruption of society and health systems). The impact, as expected, has been disproportionate in terms of which countries have suffered more. Of the excess deaths, 68 per cent were concentrated in 10 countries - Brazil, Egypt,

India, Indonesia, Peru, Russia, South Africa, Turkey, and the United States. Middle-income countries accounted for 81 per cent of excess deaths; high-income countries, for 15 per cent, and low-income countries, 4 per cent.

The United States, if only for being ascendant in terms of power, wealth, and incompetence in dealing with the virus, finds itself in the undistinguished position of having lost a million people. "Today," remarked President Joe Biden, "we mark a tragic milestone here in the United States, one million Covid deaths, one million empty chairs around the family dinner table, each irreplaceable, irreplaceable losses, each leaving behind a family, a community forever changed because of this pandemic." Chief Medical Adviser to the President, Anthony Fauci, rued the fact that "at least a quarter of those deaths, namely about 250,000" might have been saved by vaccinations. He also warned about the ugly prospect of a resurgence in numbers, and not bringing "down our guard".

In light of such figures, WHO Director-General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, reiterates the line he and his colleagues have done so for months. Pandemics demand more "resilient health systems that can sustain essential health services during crises, including stronger

health information systems". His organisation "was committed to working with all countries to strengthen their health information systems to generate better data for better decisions and better outcomes." Much of this will be wishful thinking. Figures, certainly when they concern matters of mortality, can become the subject of bitter dispute. Covid-19 has proved no exception.

It has dominated news cycles, debates and policies since 2020, but COVID-19 continues to exercise the interest of number crunchers and tallies. While the ghoulish daily press announcements about infections and deaths across many a country have diminished and, in some cases, disappeared altogether, publications about how many were taken in the pandemic. The World Health Organization, ever that herald of dark news, has offered a revised assessment across of the SARS-CoV-2 death toll associated either directly or indirectly with the pandemic. Between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021, the global health body suggests that the mortality figure is closer to 14.9 million, with a range of 13.3 million to 16.6 million.

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## The ugly era of hatred

By Kamila Hyat

For those of us who remember, and for those of us who have been told by persons older than us, there was a time when politics of ideology existed in Pakistan. In the early days of the PPP, after Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came to power, there was talk of land reforms, of providing basic amenities to the people and of creating a liberal, progressive, secular state.

In contrast to the PPP, other parties including the JI opposed this agenda. But the debate between the two was healthy and a good way to make voters determine who they wish to cast their vote for. Of course, this politics of ideology has begun to vanish around the world. It is barely visible in the US where the Trump era has brought in what can only be called the dynamics of Donald Trump and his bizarre theories about both the world and his own country. There are those who support those and there are those who support Joe Biden and the Democrats. But ideologically speaking, in terms of economic reform or labour rights or rights for the people, there is very little difference between the two. Yet it is astonishing how much people yearn for the difference.

The fact that Bernie Sanders, who himself states that he is a socialist, could gain so much popularity in the US is proof of this. Indeed, there are many who

believe that had Sanders been the Democratic candidate against Trump instead of Hillary Clinton in the election previous to the most recent one, he could well have won it by taking the seats in key states. The same lack of ideology is visible in Britain and in India the ugliest form of Hindu supremacists have taken hold of power destroying the secular, shining India of Nehru, Gandhi and at least some of those who followed.

In our own country, we also see ideology vanishing from politics. It has been replaced by what we can only call a culture of sheer hatred. In speeches, the PML-N too is now resorting to similar tactics as those used and popularized by the PTI, viciously attacking opponents and not raising issues of policy rather than the issues of personality. Marriyum Aurangzeb's diatribe attacking the mysterious Farah Shehzaadi or Farah Gogi was an example. Marriyum in this case sounded no different to the PTI spokespersons we have heard in the past.

This is unfortunate. Hatred has been injected into our politics and it is difficult to remove this from the blood. The PTI of course continues its own vehement attacks on opponents and sticks to an ideology based on calling others criminals while ignoring their own deeds. As a result, we

can say we have a two-party system in the country. There are those who like and would vote once again for Imran Khan and there are those who dislike him and would not do so. The side backing Imran Khan as well as Imran Khan himself terms all those who oppose him traitors, essentially on the basis of the strange 'letter-gate' story that he still sticks to and insists it was an attempt to regime change. We have only rarely seen regime change in the country, most notably when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was removed from power, and it is right now not in the interest of the US to create instability in Pakistan. This the PTI apparently does not think about.

In this situation, hatred as its main agenda and hatred also becoming the main agenda of other mainstream parties, we are in a very unfortunate position. At the moment we cannot call the divide that exists in the country polarization. It is more like a civil war. And indeed, there have been predictions that the civil war could break out. The attack at Masjid-e-Nabvi, the attack on Qasim Soori at Kohsar Market, and other incidents show that people appear to have lost both their common sense and their sense of decency. All political parties should be promoting decency, and simple rational behaviour given the

harm the attack in Saudi Arabia has caused to the nation as a whole and simply because we would surely like to appear before the world as a nation of human beings able to handle affairs with acumen and tact rather than viciousness, vindictiveness and the ugly hatred that can be seen scattered all over social media apps like Twitter. In some cases, it is clear that automated programmes are being used to send out messages directed at a particular person, one at a time. Women TV anchors have often been the target of these attacks. This is perhaps the sorriest state of politics we have ever seen in Pakistan. For journalists the era that is now upon us is worse than the times under General Zia. There is again a clear divide with those who are seen as pro-Imran and those seen as anti-Imran. There has been absolutely no talk even in the media of educating people to act in a more civilized manner and no attempt to ask what precisely the politics of a particular group or a particular party is to be in the future. We should be asking the PML-N and its long list of allies what they intend to do to put a staggering economy back on track. The answers given so far by Miftah Ismail and Ishaq Dar have not been convincing. But most importantly of all, we need to remove hatred so that our youth is not destroyed. This is

already happening. The youth, like those everywhere in the world, are most vulnerable to cult-like following and behaviour which emulates their leaders. We are seeing this happening in Pakistan with Imran virtually behaving like a cult figure rather than a politician. This situation cannot continue indefinitely. If we encourage mobs of young people to act violently, we could have a very dangerous situation in Islamabad when the long march takes place. Already from various towns and cities, there have been reports of clashes between the two sides who today make up the complicated, confused and non-ideological politics of Pakistan.

Pakistan badly needs an ideology. People need to decide once and for all what kind of state they wish to live in. Do they want a state which provides for the needs of the people? This is especially relevant at a time when UN reports talk of rising hunger and food insecurity and warns it could worsen in the future. We must also talk about farmers and their situation as well as those who work on minimum wage or often under it, with only a few employers ready to pay the minimum wage. But these issues do not come up in a parliament which is largely irrelevant and where instead of acts, ordinances are used to pass bills. This is dangerous and has to end.

## Horror in Ukraine

By Kevin Martin

The tragic, illegal war of aggression by Russia against Ukraine should end now, with a ceasefire and then a comprehensive peace agreement. It could be based on the previously negotiated 2015 Minsk II agreement, which is quite detailed and balanced in seeking to resolve territorial, political, cultural and linguistic disputes. What makes this war so ghastly is the eventual outcome was widely known and achievable before Russia invaded, namely Ukrainian neutrality, no Nato membership, and territorial, legal and political accommodations over Crimea and the Donbas region.

Nato expansion eastward toward Russia's borders and US/Western post-Cold War triumphalism was and is a problem. It was a strategic mistake to treat Russia, with its justifiably proud history and culture, as a miserable, groveling loser that had no choice but to swallow Western supremacy in Eurasia and the world after the collapse of the Soviet Union. But none of that excuses Russian President Vladimir Putin's illegal invasion. Moreover, it has backfired horribly, as Finland and Sweden are now likely to join Nato.

Ukraine has the right to defend itself, and US and Western arms manufacturers and politicians are glad to oblige with military aid and weapons transfers, but the risk of escalation, up

to and including threats of using nuclear weapons, needs to be taken seriously. Unfortunately, the conflict also has potentially dire ripple effects. The Middle East and Africa face a serious food security crisis as wheat, other grains and food, and fertilizer prices are soaring from shortages due to the war, which has and will continue to decrease agricultural production in Ukraine and Russia, the breadbasket for hundreds of millions of people.

"I have to say that I am deeply concerned, namely with the risks of hunger becoming widespread in different parts of the world because of the dramatic food security situation we are facing because of the war in Ukraine," UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said recently. The solution to ending this tragic war might well be to go big and go broad, with multi-lateral negotiations to address areas of common interest to the US, Russia, Ukraine, Europe and the world, on the following issues:

End the war now, as noted above. Not one more Ukrainian civilian, or Ukrainian or Russian soldier, needs to die or be maimed for life in this senseless slaughter. As noted, the issues to resolve are clear and well-known to all parties. Let's get on with peace talks, brokered by whomever is most trusted to bring them to a successful conclusion. Revive negotiations on nuclear disarmament. As

the Doomsday Clock stands at a mere 100 seconds to midnight, the two most heavily armed nuclear powers cannot be allowed to dither, or worse, accelerate a nascent new arms race.

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PTI's Asad Umar urges govt to call elections forthwith

ISLAMABAD: Describing the four-year period of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government as a "golden era" in the country's history, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) leader and former federal minister Asad Umar on Thursday asked the present coalition government to immediately call elections given its inability to control the uncertain economic situation.

were at the helm of the affairs," he added. He also utilized the occasion to lash out at the present coalition government, saying it was the result of a "foreign conspiracy". "But people are well aware of this fact. And they will not spare it," he hoped. Asad said it was crystal clear that people were now politically conscious, and they supported PTI Chairman Imran Khan. He was of the view that the government was "confused". "No matter how many arrests you make, we are not going to be intimidated, and will not relent," he vowed. Responding to a ques-

tion about the date for the much talked-about long march towards Islamabad, PTI stalwart said only the party chairman knew it. "But the government will be stunned to see the spate of people on roads once Imran gives the call for it," he said. Asad said it was unfortunate the government was providing security to those on bail. "But there is no security for the leader of the stature of Imran Khan," he regretted. He was of the view that the government was "confused". "No matter how many arrests you make, we are not going to be intimidated, and will not relent," he vowed. INP



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Director General of International Water Management Institute Dr Rachael McDonnell addressing during Seminar "Expected Climate Change Impact" at National Agricultural Research Centre in Federal Capital.

Leaders preferring personal interests over national interests

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Thursday said the government is taking decisions in its own interest instead of the national interest. The rulers have failed to take a clear stand on oil, gas and electricity subsidies as well as the agreement with the IMF which is adding to the anxiety of the people and investors, it said. The government should act accordingly to arrest the fall of the rupee otherwise Pakistan will become another Sri Lanka, said Brig. (ret) Aslam Khan, Chairman PEW. In a statement issued here today, he said that the consultations of the government and its allies are not ending which is affecting the economy and the credibility of the ruling coalition. Aslam Khan said that the differences between the ruling coalition on important economic matters are also adding to the prob-

lems while the PTI's protests are further aggravating the political and economic situation. He said that the government is accusing the PTI of ruining the economy and but it is also fueling it with indecision. He noted that the subsidies announced by the PTI have brought the economy to a standstill, but the present government cannot make the tough decision to end the subsidy, which destroying the fragile economy. What can be expected from a government which is not able to stop unnecessary imports which are eroding the exchequer? If the government cannot make the right decisions based on national interests, then why the no-confidence motion was brought and why homework was not done before this decision? If the government wants to shield itself from important decisions and is not in the mood to

fulfil any kind of responsibility, it should leave power instead of suspending the necessary matters so that the caretaker government can save the country from complete bankruptcy, he demanded. He said that the government is accusing the PTI of ruining the economy and but it is also fueling it with indecision. He noted that the subsidies announced by the PTI have brought the economy to a standstill, but the present government cannot make the tough decision to end the subsidy, which destroying the fragile economy. What can be expected from a government which is not able to stop unnecessary imports which are eroding the exchequer? If the government cannot make the right decisions based on national interests, then why the no-confidence motion was brought and why homework was not done before this decision? INP

Lahore police baton-charge protesting students at Kalma chowk

LAHORE: Police on Thursday baton-charged and fired tear gas on the protesting students of Islami Jamiat Tulba (IJT) at Lahore's Kalma chowk. The students hailing from different universities and colleges were protesting under the banner of IJT against the recent raid of police at Punjab University and the alleged arrest of the students. The protesting students blocked both the tracks at Kalma Chowk and chanted slogans against the police. The police tried to get the roads clear for traffic, but they failed in doing so and later baton-charged and used tear gas to disperse them. The students also reportedly pelted stones over the police party. Later, they started to damaged vehicles and motorcycles in protest. On the other hand, fresh contingents of the police have been called in at the Kalma chowk to control the worsening situation. The area is giving a view of the battlefield after the clash. INP

PM for 10-day Yaum-e-Takbeer celebrations

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Thursday said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed for 10 days celebrations on completion of 24 years of historic nuclear tests by Pakistan on May 28, 1998. In a tweet, Marriyum Aurangzeb said that the prime minister has directed that on the pattern of diamond jubilee celebrations of Pakistan, Yaum-e-Takbeer should be celebrated in a befitting manner. The Prime Minister has directed the governments of the federation, the four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan to hold joint celebrations. National celebrations on Yaum-e-Takbeer will begin on May 19. INP

Sindh changes intermediate exam timings

KARACHI: The Sindh government on Thursday announced changing timings for HSC Part I and II examinations in light of the prevailing heatwave. A notification was also issued by the Universities and Boards Department in this regard. The decision was taken in a meeting of the Inter-Provincial Educational Ministers held a day earlier, with Federal Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain in the chair. The committee approved the following timings for Sindh. INP

Agriculture sector was not on rise in PTI Govt tenure in FY21'

LAHORE: Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) have rejected the claim of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief that agriculture was booming during the PTI rule. PTI chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan shared on Wednesday a tweet, giving statistics showing an agriculture boom in the financial year 2021. It was claimed that 18.6 per cent growth was witnessed in cotton production, 9.6pc in sugarcane, 51.6pc in grams, 34.8pc in potato, 10.7pc in rice, 8.6pc in maize and 28.9pc in moong bean in FY21. PBF Vice President, Ahmad Jawad stated iam taken aback that how PTI claimed that they made a massive boom withinside the agriculture area for FY21. He said cost of production were increased of the farmers at substantial level, if we only talk about fertilisers sector the significant jump were witnessed up to 150 per cent especially in DAP and Potash. The situation of local manufactured urea were also bleak, farmers have been waited withinside the lengthy queue to get one bag and address such humiliation and in reaction now we could face wheat crises. Now we

will import minimum 3 million tons of wheat to feed our population. Similarly tractors have been additionally went past the fee tag of the farmers pocket. Including the electricity tariff of tube wells were also increased. How PTI chief says agriculture area become confirmed massive boom. Can previous government may tell what was their contribution for the increase of the production of the said crops? It's only due to efforts of the farming community. We have to keep away from to take useless credit. Jawad also demanded that the incumbent government must pay fertiliser subsidy directly to farmers through the Ministry of National Food Security and provincial governments in an effort to reduce prices, which have skyrocketed and led to less-than-required consumption. Di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) prices have crossed Rs10,000 per bag, dealing a major blow to the farmers. In order to give up the manipulation of marketplace through fertiliser dealers, who have been allegedly concerned in black-advertising and profiteering, the authorities ought to sign up them. PBF official also

viewed Pakistan agriculture have to shift to fashionable irrigation technology inclusive of drip and sprinkle irrigation. Many superior international locations had been the use of those strategies for years now as those strategies have proved to be pretty powerful and enabled those international locations to get excessive yields at the same time as the use of much less water. Similarly, terming smuggling of numerous food items including wheat and wheat related products to Afghanistan is a challenge for the present government, called for taking measures to enhance agriculture quarter. Ahmad Jawad further stated that Pakistan is an agricultural country and by no means suffered a disaster in this sector ever before. The incumbent government wishes to take positive measures to enhance the arena as people of the country have hopes with the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, he stated. He in addition stated the provincial governments want to collaborate with the federal authorities to triumph over the problems associated with the agriculture quarter and enhance the industry. It is the obligation. INP

USPICC, Greater New York Chamber to hold single country expo: Sajjad Qamar

ISLAMABAD: The US-Pakistan International Chamber of Commerce (USPICC) and Greater New York Chamber have affirmed their existing partnership and agreed to hold a single country exhibition in New York on September 23. This was decided in a meeting between President of USPICC Sajjad Qamar, Zubair Tufail, President of the United Business Group (UBG) and former president of FPCCI, Secretary-General of USPICC Malik Sohail and President and CEO of the Greater New York Chamber of Commerce Mr Mark Jaffe. They agreed to work together to promote trade and commerce by exploring opportunities in both countries and to promote networking between both

chambers so that their members can benefit from the experience of their partners. At the occasion, Sajjad Qamar said the United States has been one of the top investors in Pakistan with major investments concentrated in consumer goods, chemicals, energy, agriculture, business process outsourcing, transportation, and communications. Zubair Tufail said the United States is a very important country; it is one of Pakistan's largest export destinations and we want to improve bilateral relations. We are seeking deeper commercial ties and want to work with the US to achieve further business enhancements, he added. Malik Sohail said the US has played a very important role in Pakistan's social and economic

development, improved security, stability, prosperity, and self-reliance. Meanwhile, Sajjad Qamar said that USPICC has also decided to hold a three-day single country exhibition in the New York, United States from Sept 26 to Sept 28 to promote the economic interests of Pakistan. The expo will showcase Pakistani products including rice, agriculture products, textiles, chemicals, IT services etc. to attract buyers which will increase Pakistan's exports to the US. He said that a delegation from Pakistan comprising leading businessmen led by Muhammad Ahmed, President USPICC, Pakistan Chapter and will also take part in the expo. INP



QUETTA: Former Inspector General of Police Dr Syed Kaleem Imam addressing press conference in Provincial Capital.

Opportunities in Pakistan-China vocational training coop to be further tapped

ISLAMABAD: "There is a strong need from both Pakistan and China to cooperate in vocational education. Much progress has been made, and it's just the start," said Syed Javed Hassan, Chairman National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTC). He told China Economic Net (CEN) in an interview that China has provided hundreds of Pakistani schools with vocational training and technical equipment that was worth about 500 million rupees. About 200 Pakistanis have been sent on scholarship to get short-term training in Chinese vocational institutions. "Dialogues are ongoing regarding how to further enhance the cooperation", he added. According to Syed Javed Hassan, there is a lot that can be done in Pakistan in vocational training. First is capacity

building. "The total amount of capacity of formal vocational training is about 400,000, but what we need is probably as much as 2 million". Just as important is the training of trainers. "It is not simply a question of having classrooms and equipment, but it is also very important to have the right kind of trainers", Syed Hassan told CEN that communication is underway as to what training of trainers can take place both by bringing Chinese trainers to Pakistan and by sending trainers to China to get trained there. Then there is also a question of course certification. "We would like to see some joint programs between the two countries so that for example, if Chinese employers come to Pakistan, they should be able to immediately employ those with mutual-recognized certification and vice versa", Syed

Hassan opined. "More institutes, training equipment of higher quality, better trainers, the curriculum in line with international standards and market demand, this is where Pakistan's vocational education is going", he added. Educational institutions on both sides are responding to this huge demand. "This year, we will see cooperation established with about ten institutions in Pakistan", Mr. Ma Xiaoyan from Tang International Education Group told CEN. The group, which launched the China-Pakistan modern dual-degree joint talent training program at the end of last year, selected 210 majors out of over 700 vocational majors in China to be introduced to Pakistan. In the third year of the program, students shall have a chance to study in China for Sino-Pak Dual Diploma. INP

Federal board announces dates for intermediate exams

ISLAMABAD: Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) has announced dates for intermediate exams in the country. According to the schedule, the first paper under the federal board will begin on June 14 and will continue until July 08. The practical exams under FBISE will begin on July 19. Contrary to the federal board, according to a recent report, the Sindh education department plans to delay intermediate exams in the province owing to the first phase of local government elections scheduled on June 16. The secretary of school education would decide on the delay which could further delay the commencement of the academic session. According to the decisions taken by the education ministry's steering committee, the intermediate exams were scheduled to begin on June 15, which could now be affected owing to local bodies elections on June 16 in 14 districts of the province. Meanwhile, the education ministry has opposed any delay in intermediate exams in Karachi and Hyderabad where local government elections will take place in the second phase. INP

All eyes on SC's historic hearing on suo motu notice: Fawad

ISLAMABAD: Former Federal Minister Fawad Chaudhry on Thursday has said that all eyes are on the historic hearing of Supreme Court on government's interference in investigative institutions. In his statement, Fawad said that the case management by the mafia has been destroyed by the suo motu notice. He said that in the past, investigations and testimonies have been destroyed under government influence. He further said that it is important for Pakistan that the cases against Zardari and Shehbaz Sharif reach their logical conclusion in a transparent manner. Earlier on Wednesday, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial took notice of the government's interference in the investigative agencies. The hearing of the suo motu notice taken by CJP Bandial is scheduled to be held on Thursday and a five-member larger bench comprises of Justice Ejaz-ul-Haq, Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Mazahir Ali Akbar Naqvi and Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, headed by the CJP will hear the case. INP



QUETTA: Leader of Women Foundation Yasmeen Mughal addressing press conference at press club in Provincial Capital.

Pakistan yet to tap strategic, economic benefits of chromite: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is blessed with abundant deposits of chromite, but almost no consumption at home forces the country to export the entire production without any value addition, thus depriving it of the mineral's strategic and economic benefits. China is a major buyer of Pakistani chromite ore among other countries, including Japan, South Korea, and Poland. All the importing countries are getting great economic and strategic benefits. Despite being rich in the deposits, Pakistan pays no proper attention to getting any benefit from this precious mineral. Chromite is a critical and only mineral from which both chromium compounds and metallic chromium are obtained. Market share of chromite is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 4.71% to \$3.51 billion by 2026. "Chromite can be a substantial source of revenue generation for Pakistan if it is exported in value added form. It will help enhance the level of sustainable livelihoods for communities involved in mining," said Imran Babar, who is involved in chromite mining and trading, while talking to WealthPK about the economic and strategic value of chromite. Continuing the discussion, he added, "Chromite is the only commercial ore, from which chromium can be extracted. It is used to improve the chromium deficiency in body, cure diabetes, high cholesterol, bipolar disorder, used as a supplement in nutritional intra venous (IV) drips, etc. Chromite is also used to electroplate the iron objects to prevent corrosion/rusting; ceramic glazing is done

ing handsome foreign exchange. "This never allows the people depending upon mines for their livelihoods to come out of the vicious poverty cycle. If the government focuses on these issues, a great socio-economic change will be seen in our society," he stressed. INP

Chinese language learner plays key role working in KKH as CPEC pioneer

BEIJING: A Mandarin learner's over one decade journey along KKH speaks high of his work as CPEC Pioneer, says a report published by Gwadar Pro on Thursday. Chinese language has grabbed attention globally with the boom in Chinese economic growth in recent years. Since China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was launched in 2015, a growing number of Chinese language learners have emerged in Pakistan too. Yousuf Karim, office assistant at Karakoram Highway (KKH) Phase-II Havelian-Thakot, winning the award of "Outstanding Pakistani Staff of CPEC 2021" by

the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, may be one of the few Chinese learning 'pioneers' who started to intertwine with the language as early as nearly twenty years ago. "I obtained a diploma in Mandarin from National University of Modern Languages in 2007. I was amongst the first few students who opted to learn the Chinese language. CPEC has brought huge employment opportunities to the locals. It offered direct jobs for me on completion of the diploma," Yousuf told Gwadar Pro. Yousuf began to work as a Chinese language translator in 2008. In 2010, he joined China

Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) as an interpreter on KKH Phase-I project in 2010, and subsequently transferred to KKH Phase-II project in 2016. The Karakoram Highway, spanning an 887-kilometer-long distance between the China-Pakistan border and Hasan Abdal, is a symbol of China-Pakistan friendship in both peoples' eyes. The upgradation of the Khunjerab-Raikot section of KKH under Phase-I formed an important part of CPEC, and the remaining portion from Raikot to Islamabad divided into three sub-sections, i.e. Raikot-Thakot, Thakot-Havelian and Havelian-Islamabad

are being upgraded. So far, the Havelian-Thakot section with a length of 120 KM is already completed by CRBC under Phase-II. The upgradation of KKH will promote tourism in the picturesque Gilgit-Baltistan as well as generate economic activities for the local people. The construction of road network at such a fast pace reflects the prudent policies of Pakistan, which not only improve north-south connectivity, but also provide all-weather linkage to neighboring China," Yousuf said. For over one decade, Yousuf shifted his duties in different areas/stations, ranging from Hunza to Havelian along the Karakoram

Highway. "Being on this job for such a long time, personally I have not only improved the Chinese language, but also learned the administrative and official coordination and liaison process with government departments. I have two kids, both gaining quality education. I expect to further improve the standard of living of my family in the future," he said with confidence. Currently, although Yousuf's daily work is busy, he still tries to arrange time to learn Chinese. "I love Chinese. Chinese is quite difficult, however persistence and hard work have paid-off. Now daily communication at various levels within and outside. INP

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Notice Inviting Tender for the Executive Engineer (Building), CW, PP&H Department Quetta, invites sealed percentage tender based on composite schedule of rate 2018, Government of Balochistan amended up-to date from interested contractor / firms for the work listed below: Earnest Money 244200/-, Tender Fee Rs.1000/- (In shape of green challan form deposited in head of account (C-02716) and Time Limit 12 Months for the work.

S.No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost
1	Establishment of FM Radio & Construction of Studios at Information Department. PSDP No.1630/2021.22 TSE-21220589963	12208000/-

The procurement shall be carried out in accordance with Balochistan Public Procurement Regulatory Authority rules, 2014. BASIC ELIGIBILITY: The Contractor must have valid registration with Pakistan Engineering Council in relevant category C-6, or above in relevant discipline renewed for the year 2022 and registration with tax authorities i.e. NTN & Sales Tax Department and BRA where applicable (who are on active Taxpayer List (ATL) of FBR). Work Experience 01 Projects completed in last 3 years of similar nature. Turn-over of last one Year. METHOD OF PROCUREMENT: Single stage- One envelope Bidding Procedure. BIDDING / TENDER DOCUMENTS: Issuance: The Contractor / Firms having registered with PEC in aforementioned category in relevant discipline can obtain the bidding documents from the address mentioned below on production of green challan form for an amount of Rs.1000/- (Non-refundable) deposited in the head of account C-02716 through Government Treasury / National Bank of Pakistan or can be downloaded from website of BPPRA, from the date of publication of this invitation on the website of BPPRA till one day prior to the last date of submission. The contractor / firms who obtain bidding documents by downloading them from BPPRA website will also be required to produce deposited green challan from above mentioned fee. The documents if requested by mail will be promptly dispatched by registered mail for which cost of mail will be borne by the applicant, however, under no circumstances the Procuring Agency will be held responsible for late delivery or loss of documents so mailed. Earnest Money as mentioned above should be submitted in the form of bank guarantee or Deposit at Call from a scheduled Bank. Dead Line of Submission: The Bidding Documents duly filled and attached with copies of supporting documents must be delivered in sealed envelopes by hand or through registered mail to the address mentioned below on or before 06-06-2022, at 11:00 Hrs. Opening: The tender document will be opened on 06-06-2022, at 12:00 Hrs, before the procurement committee in the presence of contractors or their authorized representatives. Place of issuance and submission will be: Address: Executive Engineer (Building), CW, PP&H Department, Spiny Road Quetta. Telephone No: 8213555. Terms and Conditions: Terms and conditions are mentioned (incorporated) in detail in bidding documents. A Procuring Agency may cancel the bidding process at any time prior to acceptance of bid or proposal, as per provision in BPPRA, from the date of publication of this invitation on the website of BPPRA. Entering and firm's complete Title Name should be written on the Call Deposit. Only original contractors are allowed to participate in the tender's agent / representative will not be allowed.

Executive Engineer (Building), CW, PP&H Department, Quetta.

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## SC bars transfers, new appointments in high-profile criminal cases

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday barred authorities from making new appointments and transferring officials involved in "high-profile" and National Accountability Bureau (NAB) cases as well as those being heard by special courts.

The directives came as a five-judge larger bench took up the suo motu case on the apprehensions that criminal justice might be undermined by people in positions of authority. The bench comprised Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijazul Ahsan, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Sayyed Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi and Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar.

The court also issued notices to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) director general, the NAB chairman and the interior secretary. The court asked the parties concerned to give an explanation as to why there was "interference" in criminal cases. Notices were also issued to all the provincial prosecutor generals and the FIA's legal director.

During the hearing, the CJP observed that there should be "no interference in the prosecution process or the prosecution wing".

The CJP also said that FIA's former director Mohammad Rizwan, who was probing the money laundering charges against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his son Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz, was also transferred and later died of a heart attack.

"We are concerned over these developments," the CJP said. Justice Bandial also stated that according to news reports, "thousands" of people had benefitted after their names were removed from the no-fly list.

"We have been seeing such news reports for the past one month. This has an effect on the rule of law," the

CJP said, adding that it was the court's responsibility to maintain peace and trust in society under the Constitution.

The CJP also stated that the suo motu was not meant to embarrass or hold anyone responsible. "It is meant to protect the criminal justice system and the rule of law," he observed.

The court wants the implementation of Article 10-A (right to fair trial) and Article 4 (due process), he said, adding that notices were being issued to the parties concerned. He also expressed the hope that the federal government would cooperate in providing an explanation.

A day earlier, the CJP had taken suo motu notice on the recommendations of a SC judge on perceived interference in the independence of the prosecution branch in the performance of its power and duties for investigation and prosecution of pending criminal matters involving persons in authority in government. According to a press release issued by the apex court, such interference could influence the prosecution of cases, result in tampering or disappearing of evidence in courts or in possession of prosecuting agencies and lead to transfers and postings of officers on key posts. The press release said that such actions, along with "media reports" about changes in accountability laws, were likely to "undermine" the functioning of the country's criminal justice system. "That [is tantamount] to violation of fundamental rights affecting the society as a whole and eroding [of] the confidence of the people in the rule of law and constitutionalism in the country," it added. The SC press release did not indicate which "pending criminal matters" it was referring to. However, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) is currently pursuing a money laundering case against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz, whose indictment has been delayed since February. INP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman offering condolences on the sad demise of the Former President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, at Uae Embassy..

## Pakistan can use coal to make power with 'zero' emissions: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan should apply eco-friendly techniques like underground coal gasification, carbon capture and chemical looping to use coal efficiently to make electricity without compromising on its international commitments to reducing carbon emissions.

According to the Planning Commission's report titled "Mineral Transformation Plan 2025", Pakistan's total reserves of coal stood at 186.476 billion tonnes, excluding the recent discovery of three billion tonnes of reserves in Thar.

The Sindh province has the largest amount of reserves of 185.3 billion, accounting for over 99% of the total.

Despite having such huge amounts of reserves, Pakistan is an importer of coal. Pakistan imports coal from Afghanistan, South Africa and Indonesia. Higher demand for the cement sector due to surge in construction industry increases the demand for coal.

As a result of increasing demand, the share of coal in Pakistan's import bill is increasing.

Increasing the overall productivity and profitability of coal could be made possible with the support from the government and the private sector.

While increasing the production of coal and using it to produce energy, Pakistan, however, must stick to its commitments to the international community to reduce activities harmful to the environment.

Countries' commitment to keeping the global temperature below 2°C under the Paris Agreement is gradually limiting the use of coal to make electricity worldwide.

Coal burning is one of the top carbon emitters as it produces Sulfur dioxide, Nitrogen oxide, and Carbon dioxide, which are very harmful to the environment.

Now the question arises as to how can Pakistan and other countries with huge coal reserves stop using this asset, which is important for their energy production and economy.

There are many pieces of research underway to use coal efficiently to make it a zero-carbon producer.

One of the technologies being used is the gasification of coal. Instead of burning coal, the technology chemically transforms coal into synthetic natural gas (SNG). US and China both are using this technology.

Along with this, underground coal gasification (UCG) is also a process being used in Uzbekistan, Australia and South Africa. The process is an environment-friendly way of harnessing the energy of coal.

Moreover, researchers at the Ohio State University in Columbus believe that they have found a process called chemical looping to use coal.

Dr Liang-Shih Fan, a professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering, said that he and his team had been able to use the process called coal-direct chemical looping to burn coal without emitting pollution.

Pakistan needs to establish a research institution to study the use of these methods and also to determine if there are any other ways through which it can utilise its huge coal reserves without compromising international commitments on global warming. INP

## ECP begins county-wide survey of polling stations ahead of elections

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has kicked off a county-wide survey of polling stations ahead of holding general elections.

As per details, the ECP while gearing up preparations for the upcoming general elections has sought reports from the district officers regarding required funds, while the fresh delimitations in the national and provincial assemblies constituencies is also underway.

The ECP is carrying out delimitations as per the 2017 census results and in this regard, the body has started preparing the initial lists regarding delimitation.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court of Pakistan has set a Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) plea against fresh delimitations to be carried out by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for hearing from June 6.

The court has also directed the PTI to submit a plan of fresh delimitations from the ECP. The Supreme Court of Pakistan has previously returned the plea from the PTI against delimitations from the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). INP

## ECP to announce verdict in dissident PTI MPAs case today

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is likely to announce its verdict on references seeking the disqualification of 25 dissident MPAs of the PTI who voted for PML-N's Hamza Shahbaz in the election for Punjab chief minister today.

The election body had reserved its verdict on Tuesday. The ECP, which was set to deliver its verdict on Wednesday, postponed the announcement after SC issued an order on Article 63(A) presidential reference.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) reportedly approached the Supreme Court of Pakistan to get a copy of a verdict on the presidential reference on Article 63 (A) in order to decide on a disqualification reference against 25 rebel MPAs of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI).

Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja also chaired an important INP.

During a joint press conference headed by Murtaza Wahab and DIG CTD Khurram Ali, multiple CCTV footage was shared with media showing the alleged terrorist carrying the motorcycle used in the attack.

The video showed him carrying a vehicle on foot and later parking at the blast site. He could be further seen sitting at a hotel and later apparently pushing the remote-control device inside his pocket to cause the blast which resulted in the death of a woman and injured many others.

The CTD official detailing the entire incident said that Allah Dino was killed in yesterday's raid and was living in the Gizri area of Karachi along with another accomplice named Nawab.

## Abid Sher Ali confirms Nawaz Sharif's return to Pakistan

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Abid Sher Ali on Thursday confirmed the return of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif to Pakistan soon.

Talking to newsmen after returning to Pakistan from London, the former federal minister alleged that efforts were being made to turn Pakistan into a Banana Republic State and the PML-N came forward for the rescue.

Abid Sher Ali confirmed that Nawaz Sharif will also come to Pakistan soon. Recalling the conviction of former prime minister, Abid Sher Ali claimed that the PML-N supremo was given a sentence on fabricated proof.

Nawaz Sharif is living in

England's capital London for two years due to health reasons.

Earlier, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had directed the interior ministry on Tuesday to issue a diplomatic passport to former prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

Shehbaz Sharif after assuming charge of his office got a briefing from the diplomatic staff about the issuance of a passport to the PML-N supremo. Pakistan's mission in London was directed to issue diplomatic passports to former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and former finance minister Ishaq Dar. However, the diplomatic staff said only Nawaz Sharif can be issued a diplomatic passport, not Ishaq Dar, on which PM Shehbaz Sharif directed to issue a normal Pakistani passport to Dar. INP



ISLAMABAD: Belgium Ambassador to Pakistan Philippe Bronchain called on Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif..

## US assures Pakistan of support in rebuilding economy

WASHINGTON: The United States has announced that it will continue to help Pakistan rebuild its economy.

A State Department spokesperson on Thursday assured Pakistan of strong US support for their efforts to rebuild the Pakistani economy.

The United States "will continue to work bilaterally on ways to grow investment and trade opportunities to build a prosperous and stable Pakistan," the spokesperson said in Washington.

The United States also "welcomes the ongoing International Monetary Fund (IMF) deliberations with Pakistan," the spokesperson added. A public expression of US support would boost Islamabad's efforts to revive the programme and could smooth bullish market trends as well.

Donald Armin Blome has taken oath as new US ambassador to Pakistan, the State Department's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs announced on Wednesday.

The appointment of a US ambassador to the South Asian country was made around three years after

Blome's predecessor David Hale left Islamabad in August 2018.

"We welcome Amb. Donald A. Blome as Ambassador to Pakistan! Amb. Blome is excited to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan. He has a long and distinguished career as an American diplomat and previously served as U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia," read the tweet.

Blome looks forward to strengthening broad cooperation with Pakistan. Both countries seek strong partnerships particularly on health, clean energy, trade, & investment, with commitment to promoting transparent, high-quality investments funded via sustainable financing.

The newly commencing the cooperation between the US and Pakistan on everything from COVID-19 to climate change as we advance mutually-beneficial partnerships.

"He is honored to be assuming this posting during the 75th year of U.S.-Pakistan relations," read the twitter. Last year in October, US President Joe Biden named Blome as new ambassador to Pakistan. INP

## CTD shares video, audio evidence of Allah Dino's role in Karachi blast

KARACHI: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Thursday shared evidence of Allah Dino's involvement in the IED blast in Karachi through video and audio evidence, a day after he was killed in a law enforcement agencies (LEAs) raid.

During a joint press conference headed by Murtaza Wahab and DIG CTD Khurram Ali, multiple CCTV footage was shared with media showing the alleged terrorist carrying the motorcycle used in the attack.

The video showed him carrying a vehicle on foot and later parking at the blast site. He could be further seen sitting at a hotel and later apparently pushing the remote-control device inside his pocket to cause the blast which resulted in the death of a woman and injured many others.

The CTD official detailing the entire incident said that Allah Dino was killed in yesterday's raid and was living in the Gizri area of Karachi along with another accomplice named Nawab.

towards his involvement in the Karachi blast," DIG Khurram Ali said and added that he was also arrested previously and a case was registered against him for his role in terrorist acts.

The official said that Allah Dino was trained in Iran as an IED expert and was allegedly involved in multiple attacks on rail tracks. Besides, Khurram Ali said that his financial accounts revealed that he had received nearly 200,000 from abroad. "He remained in touch with his handlers abroad," he said.

Later, audio was also played during the presser in which a man named Asghar Shah was talking to Allah Dino and conveying that his identification could be revealed after multiple CCTV footage ran on TV showed his uncovered face.

The alleged handler could be heard admonishing him for not wearing a facemask during the terrorist act and further said that his possible arrest and confiscation of explosive material by LEAs could lead to a disaster for the terror module. INP

## PML-N's Abid Sher Ali back to Pakistan after over four years

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and former federal minister Abid Sher Ali reached Lahore from London on Thursday after a gap of four and a half years.

Abid Sher Ali, who arrived on board an international airline, will head to Faisalabad after holding meetings with party leadership in Lahore.

The PML-N workers, who had gathered at Allama Iqbal International Airport, shouted the slogans of 'Sher, Sher' to welcome him. INP

## Two gypsies die in Neelum Valley truck plunge

NEELUM VALLEY: At least two persons were killed and eight others injured when a truck carrying gypsies fell into a deep gorge in Serikhwaja area of Neelum Valley on Thursday.

As per Rescue 1122, the condition of two injured persons is critical, whereas, 50 goats also perished in the accident.

The Rescue 1122 teams had rushed to the spot following the accident and rescued the injured. They, with the help of locals, had also shifted the injured to a nearby hospital.

According to the eyewitnesses, the accident occurred due to overloading and speeding. INP

## Six shops gutted after fire erupts in AJK bazaar

KAHUTA: Goods worth millions of rupees stored in six shops were destroyed after a fire ripped through a bazaar in Halan Shumali, a suburban village of Haveli Kahuta in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on Thursday.

Despite the fact that the fire brigade vehicles reached site of the fire, still that was not enough to put out the blaze and the shopkeepers had also to make efforts to extinguish it.

Later, Deputy Commissioner, SP and tehsildar Haveli reached site of the incident to monitor the relief and rescue efforts. INP

## Omar Cheema moves IHC against his removal as Governor Punjab

ISLAMABAD: Omar Sarfaraz Cheema on Thursday moved Islamabad High Court (IHC) against his removal as Governor Punjab.

The petition states that removal of Omar Sarfaraz Cheema is illegal and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif made the move to benefit his own son Hamza Shahbaz.

The plea also asks the court to take action against those who issued the notification of cabinet division as the notifications are against constitution of the country.

However, the registrar office of the court has raised objection on the plea and said that the issue is of Punjab and is not in the jurisdiction of the court so the plea is not maintainable.

Meanwhile, country's most populous province is still without a governor and oath taking of the provincial cabinet is facing delays as Speaker Punjab Assembly has not taken oath as acting governor. INP

## CM Murad Ali Shah leaves for US

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah on Thursday departed for the United States (US) on a private trip.

Well-informed sources told that Sindh's chief minister along with his family has left for US on a private visit via a foreign airline flight.

The chief minister would also meet with Foreign Minister and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari who is already in US for the Global Food Security conference, they added.

Sources disclosed that CM Murad Ali Shah will stay in US for a few days where he will undergo a medical examination.

He is likely to return to Pakistan next week, sources added. INP

## Punjab govt reduces price of 10kg flour bag to Rs 490

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Hamza Shahbaz has announced relief for the people of the province and reduced price of 10 kg flour bag from Rs.650 to Rs.490.

Talking to a presser in Lahore, CM Hamza said that people will not have to stand in queues for flour in Punjab.

While attacking the Imran Khan-led government, he said that Imran has played with the people of Pakistan. He further said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government has destroyed the economy.

"They are not doing politics but spreading anarchy," he said. CM Hamza went on to say that Imran Khan wants anarchy and chaos in the country. "He talks about revolution now but he has destroyed the country from his Tsunami."

He also said that the economy is on ventilator while political turmoil is on the rise. Talking about enemies of Pakistan, he said that the enemy is trying to harm the country while Imran is trying to divide army with his

conspiracies. "Imran is trying to destroy the institutions," he said.

The CM also attacked Speaker Punjab Assembly Pervaiz Elahi, saying that he is the custodian of the house but he used hooligans in uniforms to attack the Assembly. He further lamented that it has been more than a month but I don't have any cabinet.

While talking about his government in Punjab, he said that it will last till Almighty's will. They (Imran Khan) cannot stop me from providing my services to the people. "They are not doing politics but spreading anarchy," he said. CM Hamza went on to say that Imran Khan wants anarchy and chaos in the country. "He talks about revolution now but he has destroyed the country from his Tsunami."

He also said that the economy is on ventilator while political turmoil is on the rise. Talking about enemies of Pakistan, he said that the enemy is trying to harm the country while Imran is trying to divide. INP

## Dollar shatters all records, hits Rs200 in interbank

ISLAMABAD: The US dollar reached the startling milestone of Rs200 in interbank trading on Thursday morning, gaining Rs1 from the previous day's close of Rs199, data by the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP) showed.

According to the FAP, the US currency had reached the Rs200 mark — an all-time high — around 11am.

A day ago, the greenback had made a significant gain of more than Rs2 from Tuesday's close and settled at Rs199 at the session's end, which was the latest in a string of record highs that the US currency has been hitting since last Tuesday.

While the FAP recorded the previous day's closing rate at Rs199, data released by the State Bank of Pakistan stated the closing rate as Rs198.39 — still remarkably close to the Rs200 milestone that the international currency was being anticipated to reach earlier in the day on account of the coun-

try's rising import bill, growing current account deficit and depleting foreign exchange reserves.

The dollar's value already reached Rs200 in the open market yesterday.

According to Saad Bin Naseer, co-founder and director of web-based financial data and analytics portal Mettis Global, the rupee's fall is mainly on account of a lack of clarity from the government on its plans to arrest the decline in foreign exchange reserves.

He pointed out that the central bank's reserves were down by \$7.5bn since January 1, adding that importers were engaged in panic buying as they were uncertain about whether the government would be able to secure funding from China, Saudi Arabia and the International Monetary Fund, talks with which are underway.

"Meanwhile, exporters are holding their earnings outside the country amid a consistent fall in the rupee's value," he said. INP

## Structural reforms crucial for Pakistan to reap CPEC benefits

ISLAMABAD: The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) alone would not produce ideal outcomes until structural reforms are implemented in Pakistan to reap its full benefits, according to a report of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), says a report carried by WealthPK on Thursday.

The Pakistan Development Update released by the World Bank shows that economic activity maintained its momentum through July-December 2021 in Pakistan.

During this time, high demand pressures and rising global commodity prices resulted in double-digit inflation and a significant increase in the import bill.

The rupee has suffered due to all these events. Furthermore, the long-standing structural deficiencies in the economy, such as low investment,

exports, and productivity growth, pose a threat to a long-term recovery.

It has also been noted that as a result of the strengthening labor market and economic recovery, poverty measurements at the lower middle income class poverty level of \$3.20 purchasing power parity (PPP) per day fell from 37% in FY20 to 34% in FY21.

On the other hand, rising food and energy prices are predicted to reduce the purchasing power of people. This is harming poor and vulnerable households that spend a larger portion of their budget on these products.

The World Bank report also shows that due to large base effects and recent monetary tightening, the real GDP (gross domestic product) growth is predicted to decelerate to 4.3% and 4.0% in FY22 and FY23, respectively. INP



ISLAMABAD: Sajjad haider President RWP ISB Photojournalist Association (Professional) offering condolences on the sad demise of the Former President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan with UAE Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Al-Zaabi, at Uae Embassy..