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President Arif Alvi summons NA session on July 27

SC seeks more evidence from PTI to prove 'contempt of court' claim against Rana Sana

Balochistan rains: death toll rises to 99 including 32 children

Syed Ali Shah
Manan Mandokhail

QUETTA: The death toll in Balochistan floods and rains related incidents rose to 99 on Thursday evening. 32 children and 28 women are among the dead, this was revealed in data shared by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA).

Women and children have faced the brunt of the floods and torrential rains in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan. Flash floods unleashed by heavy rainfall played havoc in almost all districts of the province, which covers half of the country in terms of area.

32 children, and 28 women among the dead

"32 children were drowned in floods in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan", Naseer Ahmed Nasar, the Director-General of PDMA revealed. He said some children lost their lives when their mud-walled houses collapsed in Quetta and Loralai.

The Balochistan government has announced Rs.2 million for the heirs of the victims. Balochistan and federal governments each would provide Rs. 1 million to the heirs of the victims. "We will rehabilitate all the affectees and displaced people", Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Quddus Bizenjo said.

PDMA rescue workers made hectics efforts

The PDMA rescue teams made hectic efforts to retrieve the dead bodies of the children. Overall, women and children appeared to be more vulnerable in the aftermath of heavy rainfall and floods in the province.

Floods and rains have left dozens of people injured. Most of the injured are admitted to civil hospital Quetta for medical treatment. Floods had swept away small bridges, and small and delay check dams.

Flash floods unleashed by heavy rainfall also destroyed standing crops and severely damaged the agriculture of the province. "Federal government should announce a package for the farmers of Balochistan", Mir Asadullah Baloch, the Balochistan Agriculture Minister said.

DCs ordered to submit damages assessment report

The provincial government has ordered all concerned departments and deputy commissioners to conduct the damages assessment and submit a report in this regard. On Thursday, Chief Secretary Balochistan, Abdul Aziz Uqaili thoroughly briefed the provincial cabinet meeting about the damages caused by floods and rains in the province.

Torrential rains have also affected the education of 78910 students across Balochistan during the last two weeks. Flash floods unleashed by heavy rainfall played havoc across all 32 districts of the province. Floods have damaged many school buildings in the province depriving students of education.

Nothing secret about Reko Diq project: CM Balochistan

Staff Reporter

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Quddus Bizenjo on Thursday said nothing was secret about the multi-billion dollars gold and copper project of Reko Diq. The CM chaired an important meeting of the provincial cabinet, which made decisions regarding the province.

Mr. Bizenjo also addressed the cabinet and informed the members about his meeting with Barrick Gold Corporation (BGC) Mark Bristow in Quetta.

"Next time Balochistan's share would be 75%", Bizenjo

"We accepted the agreement because of compulsion since we had lost the case in the international court", Mr. Bizenjo mentioned. He said next time the share of Balochistan in other proposed projects would be increased to 75 percent. CM Balochistan reiterated that all stakeholders including the politicians were on board while signing the agreement with the company. "We made everything public", he mentioned. This was difficult to satisfy all political leaders and stakeholders, Mr. Bizenjo said.

Chief Secretary Balochistan, Abdul Aziz Uqaili briefed the cabinet about the rescue and relief operation in the aftermath of heavy rainfall in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan. The cabinet offered fateha for the departed souls in flash floods unleashed by torrential rains in the province.

It is the responsibility of Govt to rehabilitate floods affectees

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister stated that it was the responsibility of the government to rehabilitate the flood affectees and the government has already announced compensation for the heirs of the victims of rains. The Balochistan cabinet also approved the purchase of wheat from Punjab to overcome the problem of shortage of wheat in the province. The cabinet also approved the release of required funds to the Municipal Corporation Quetta to reopen closed water points.

The sewerage system should be improved to overcome the issue of rainy water. Now roads and streets would not be inundated as the MCQ has devised a comprehensive plan. The meeting also decision about the service structure of BCS and BSS groups officers in Balochistan.

ISLAMABAD: Khawaja Muhammad Asif Minister of Defence along with Miftah Ismail Minister of Finance addressing a press conference.

President Arif Alvi summons NA session on July 27

ISLAMABAD: President Arif Alvi on Thursday summoned a session of the National Assembly on July 27, 2022.

According to details President Arif Alvi has summoned a session of the National Assembly on July 27 Wednesday. The session would be held at 4 pm on Wednesday, July 27.

Under Article 54 of the constitution, the President has the authority to summon the session of the National Assembly.

Earlier in June, President Arif Alvi sent back the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and electoral reform amendment bills to the PM for review.

The bills were reverted to PM Shehbaz Sharif under Article 75(B) of the constitution.

The head of the state has advised the Parliamentary committees to review both bills. The bills were passed in a hurry by the National Assembly on May 26 and by the Senate on May 27, 2022, the president remarked.

The President added that legal experts and civil society should be engaged before making the amends. The supreme had also ordered to provide overseas Pakistanis with their right to vote in 2014 and 2018, he added.Overseas Pakistanis can be provided with the facility to vote via technological advancements, Article 17 of the constitution provides them with this right.The bills were reverted to PM Shehbaz Sharif under Article 75(B) of the constitution.The head of the state has advised the Parliamentary committees to review both bills. The bills were passed in a hurry by the National Assembly on May 26 and by the Senate on May 27, 2022, the president remarked.INP

Former DG IB Aftab Sultan appointed NAB chairman

ISLAMABAD: Former Director General (DG) of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) Aftab Sultan has been appointed as chairman National Accountability Bureau (NAB), sources said on Thursday.

According to sources, an agreement was reached between the leader of the House Shehbaz Sharif and the Leader of the Opposition Raja Riaz over the appointment. The federal cabinet has approved the appointment of the NAB chairman.

"The two mulled over the names for the accountability watchdog's chairman and initially discussed three names for the slot," they said and added that the names discussed included former bureaucrat Fawad Hassan Fawad, ex-chairman NAB Qamar uz Zaman and former DG FIA Bashir Memon.INP

Turkish envoy acknowledges PAF's rising capacity in aviation industry

ISLAMABAD: Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Pacaci called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force in his office Thursday.

During the meeting, both the dignitaries discussed matters of professional and mutual interest.

Appreciating professionalism of Pakistan Air Force, Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Pacaci acknowledged PAF's rising indigenous capacity in aviation industry. The Air Chief said that Pakistan and Turkiye have long-standing religious, cultural and historical bonds which were manifested through strong ties between the Air Forces of two countries. INP

2 killed in a firing incident Buleda Turbat

From Our Correspondent

At least two people were killed in a firing incident in Balochistan's Kech district on Thursday. Levies sources said the incident happened in Buleda tehsil of district Kech. Armed accused opened fire and killed two people.

Residents of the area reached the spot and shifted the dead bodies to a nearby hospital. Levies personnel reached the spot as an investigation into the incident went underway.

Gwadar: One person was injured in a remote control blast in the Jewni area of Gwadar district. Police sources said the bomb went off near a government-run school. The injured were rushed to the nearby hospital for medical treatment.

The motive behind both incidents could not be ascertained immediately.

BPSC announces CTD corporal results

Education Desk

The Balochistan Public Service Commission (BPSC) announced the Counter Terrorism Department (CDT) Corporal posts results on Thursday evening. Thousands of young candidates from across Balochistan had participated in the written test for the CTD Corporal posts. This is a grade14 officer's post.

The government of Balochistan had approved 1690 posts for which a large number of applicants applied. The number of candidates that qualified for the written tests is 1936.

The candidates who have passed the written tests of CTD Corporal are qualified for Viva. The date for the Viva will be announced later. A major reason behind the recruitment of such a large number of officers was to enable the CTD to effectively counter terrorism in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan.

SC seeks more evidence from PTI to prove 'contempt of court' claim against Rana Sana

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Thursday asked the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) to share with it more proofs in support of its contempt of court allegation against Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah.

A two-member bench of the apex court, headed by Justice Ijazul Ahsan, heard the PTI's petition against Rana Sana.

Justice Ijaz, on the occasion, while referring to the interior minister's statement in which he had said that five members of the Punjab Assembly (MPAs) could disappear prior to the election for the Punjab chief minister on July 22, 2022, remarked that if these MPAs were whisked away by the state, it would be a 'criminal offence', and only then this could be declared 'contempt of court', and not before. "Please tell us as to how we could call it 'contempt of court'," he said, adding the court could not order any action merely on the basis of assumptions. "How can we accept that Rana Sana had made threatening calls to the PTI MPAs and also offered them money?" Justice Ijaz asked, and in the same breath made it clear that the SC had an eye on any breach of the law. To a question by Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Faisal Chaudhry Advocate, representing the PTI in the case, replied that the original copies of the 'affidavits' submitted by the party's MPAs in which they had accused the minister of hurling threats at them and also offering them money were in Lahore.

Justice Muneeb pointed out that none of these affidavits was there a mention of the date on which these calls were received. And when Justice Ijaz inquired from the PTI's counsel as to why his party had not filed contempt of court petition against Punjab Home Minister Ataullah Tarar, he prayed to the court to take suo moto notice of Tarar's statements.INP

Rains affect education of 78910 students across Balochistan

Syed Muhammad Qaseem

Torrential rains have affected the education of 78910 students across Balochistan during the last two weeks. Flash floods unleashed by heavy rainfall played havoc across all 32 districts of the province. Floods have damaged many school buildings in the province depriving students of education.

Abdul Rauf Baloch, Secretary of Secondary Education Balochistan said the number of schools affected by the torrential rains is 574. The condition of these schools is worse and educational activities are paralyzed, he mentioned.

According to a survey conducted by all district education officers a total of 1121 rooms, 264 washrooms, 188 boundary walls, 24 examination halls, and 20 Offices were damaged by heavy rainfall and floods.

" We are trying to ensure all facilities to the affected schools", Mr. Baloch said.

Floods rains affect the education of 78910 students across Balochistan

In Balochistan, over1.1 a million students are enrolled in all 15000 primary, middle and high schools. However, the number of out-of-school children is over 1 Million. The government run schools paint a very bleak picture due to its limited number of facilities and poor quality of education.

Already the COVID-19 has played a negative role in the education of many far-flung areas of Balochistan and including Quetta. Now due to these torrential rains the walls, rooms and buildings of schools are severley affected and the supply of electricity is unavailable. Due to these conditions the studies of many students are paralyzed.

The 574 schools are affected by the flash floods and the enrollment of students in these schools is 78910. " Our first priority is the construction of these schools", Secretary Secondary Education Abdul Rauf Baloch said.

Rooms and offices affected by the torrential rains

Torrential rains claim 75 lives across Balochistan

In the past years, flooding has caused havoc in Balochistan. The reasons behind it is a lack of a proper disaster management mechanism. Torrential rains have already claimed 75 lives in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan. Most of the victims were women, children and aged men.

The rains have damaged many building and have swept away roads, bridges and dams across the province. Chief Secretary Balochitan, Abdul Aziz Uqaili has directed the concerned departments to assess the damages and investigate the breaching of dams throughout Balochistan.

The floods have affected 32 districts of Balochistan. Balochistan government has already declared an emergency in the province. Nine districts are declared calamity-hit areas after the flash floods.

QUETTA VOICE
Editor Asim Khan

Floods expose construction quality of dams in Balochistan

Flash floods unleashed by torrential rains exposed the construction quality of dams across Balochistan. Heavy rainfall wreaked havoc in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan recently. Floods swept away dozens of small delay and check dams in different parts of the province.

Over the years, the provincial and federal governments constructed hundreds of dams to check the wastage of rainy water. Successive governments merely celebrated the completion of projects rather than focusing on the construction quality of dams. Although, the dams and lakes constructed by British colonial rulers in different parts of Balochistan are still intact even after more than a century.

Breaching of dams puts human lives at peril

Breaching of dams not only failed to save rainy water rather it also put human lives at peril in Pishin, Barkhan, Lasbella, Kohlu, Killa Abdullah, Killa Saifullah and other districts of the province. Rains-related incidents have claimed 65 lives till the filing of this editorial. This is simply disastrous and a failure from all concerned quarters.

Flash floods also swept away poorly constructed roads and standing crops in various parts of the province. This all needs a thorough investigation. Irrigation and Communication Works (C&W) departments are known for commission and corruption.

Commission, corruption a common word in C&W and Irrigation departments

This is a good opportunity for those at the helm of affairs to make sure transparency in the utilization of funds by the two departments. Since word commission is an open secret in the two departments, the Chief Secretary of Balochistan should form a high-powered committee comprising committed and honest retired and serving officers to probe into the breaching of dams.

The quality of construction of roads in Quetta and all districts of Balochistan should also be probed to improve socio-economic conditions. The irony with Balochistan is that first the province has meager resources and second they too are ruthlessly used/ swallowed.

Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Quddus Bizenjo and his coalition partners must go beyond words and launch an inquiry into the breaching of dams and damage to roads.

The way to the future

By Kamila Hyat

The writer is a freelance columnist and former newspaper editor.

Things are looking rather grim for Pakistan. Despite attempts by the State Bank to control inflation, with some degree of success, and a change in government policies on a number of issues, there is still a lack of stability and certainty in the country.

The degree to which the country is divided was seen before the by-polls in Punjab, with scuffles and exchange of abusive words reported between the two parties ahead of the balloting. But this of course is not our main problem. We need to look a little beyond immediate policies and think in terms of ideology and leadership. Until there is a clear-cut direction in which to move, we will move nowhere at all but only end up wrangling between the political parties which play their separate roles in our political hemisphere and push forward their own agendas – all of which are remarkably similar.

We need a new party which can offer something new. This process may, of course, take time given the deliberate depoliticization of people which began chiefly under General Ziaul Haq but which has continued in one way or the other since then. But we no longer have time to wait.

In a recent talk show, examples were presented examples of countries such as Colombia, Mexico and even France where ordinary peoples such as school teachers have opted to stand for polls and put forward an essentially socialist agenda, mimicking to some degree the kind of policies we see work so effectively in Scandinavia, and the other countries of northern Europe. This is a landmark in itself at a time when fascist tendencies in the form of Donald Trump and Narendra Modi are taking over the world. We also have our own Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, and its own right-wing fascist extremism, which so many people are following with an astonishing amount of commitment, judging by the vote counts. Of course, we cannot be certain if these vote counts are accurate, but certainly there is support for the TLP, its leader, and for other ultra-right wing religious leaders in the country. This is one ideology that continues to exist in our territory.The question is: how to offer people an alternative. The decision they make regarding what they choose is up to them. It is interesting that a socialist such as Bernie Sanders could gain so many votes in a country like the US, where people such as Donald Trump and a harsh anti-communist agenda has been pursued for years. But had Bernie run for the Democratic leadership in place of Hillary Clinton, he may well have gained enough popular support to take over as the president of the country. Leaders who stand in the middle have really achieved very little at all for all their pretence of liberalism, and a desire to help people. Bilawal Bhutto, Barack Obama, Rahul Gandhi and others count among these.Putting forward a leftist agenda is possibly not as difficult as it seems. While the collation between Colombia and Pakistan is not perfectly precise and not quite accurate, the fact is that people in our country face a similar situation with the elite consuming the bulk of national wealth and leaving very little for the impoverished who are malnourished, have no access to education, and no access to opportunity. The elite and those who hold real power in the country have known this for years, but are not willing to do anything at all about it. It is therefore more ordinary citizens, journalists, lawyers, teachers, activists, and labourers or farmers who will need to act.

A person who aspires for the leadership of a country does not necessarily need to be highly educated, or the graduate of an Ivy League school. His/her task is simply to build a team which can devise policy and work out problems. The leader requires charisma and ability to convince people that their lives do not need to go on as they are today for ever and ever into the future and beyond.

So how is this to happen? In the first place, we need a group of people or a vanguard, which can make people more aware of their ability to bring change through the vote. This first of all requires a ballot which is fair and not manipulated. Ensuring this in itself will be a difficult task but one that people can once again play a role in perhaps by setting up committees of citizens who are not influenced and are well respected in their own localities to look into polling and help establish a fair and violence free poll count as far as is possible. More arduous is the task of persuading people that a move towards a more socialist leaning change could benefit them enormously by ensuring a more equitable education for children, better healthcare for those who cannot afford private hospitals and basic facilities for those who live in shanty towns, where there is no sanitation and certainly no access to safe water. Indeed, the majority of people in the country cannot acquire safe water to drink. The most basic necessity of life is denied to them.

So, how do we go about what is a mammoth task? It will not happen in one go or in one round of campaigning. The effort needs to be built up slowly and with devotion. A charismatic leader who can influence people as Bhutto did in our country or Peron did in Argentina would be of immense benefit. People need to be convinced that the Maliks, the Nawabs, the Sardars, the Nawabzadas, and the others who form the highest level of the elite in the country, including those who wear a uniform of one kind or the other do not necessarily need to rule forever.

They also need to be convinced that as citizens they have rights which are being stolen from them and taken away piece by piece and in huge bulks by those who are more interested in developing hotels and building societies or putting money into places where it is of no benefit to the poor or those who cannot afford even a home costing a few lakhs of rupees.

A look at democracy: Part - II

By Dr Naazir Mahmood

In addition to an academic lens to look at the crisis of democracy, we may also use a behavioural lens. This relates to how communities, individuals, and leaders behave in their personal and social lives. How people respect or do not respect democratic norms in their daily routines.

The behavioural lens to democracy may be wide-ranging and subsume in itself the civic and cultural dimension of a society. If most people within their families follow dictatorial tendencies and the heads of the family impose their own will on all their family members, such families are not going to cultivate a democratic community. Even if regular elections take place and a majority party assumes power, but individuals still tend to favour authoritarian attitudes, that society can hardly be termed as democratic. Behaviourally speaking democracy is about personal choice and respect for others' opinions.

In a country such as Pakistan a family does not even allow a young man or woman to marry of their free will. If a couple defies the family, and moves out to live their own lives, even that is not acceptable. Many couples who have been married for years, had children and live far away are still not safe. Their families hunt them down; such killings in the name of false honour are not uncommon in Pakistan. You may have a democratic setup at the top with elected governments, but looking through a behavioural lens, the society is in crisis.

If a young man or woman cannot choose what subjects to study or whether to become a doctor or engineer or opt for any other profession, this is also a crisis of behaviour that does not allow people to make personal decisions. Then there is also a civic dimension of democracy that relates to how we behave as citizens. A behavioural lens is all about being considerate and respectful in a democratic society. If there is no consideration for other people in society, we can hardly call it democratic behaviour.

If almost nobody is willing to stop at a traffic signal when it is red, it is a behavioural crisis of democracy. When people do not understand – or do not want to understand – the principle of right of way on streets and try to push themselves in, with a complete disregard to decency and law, the behavioural lens of democracy tells us that it is a crisis. Behavioural and civic dimensions are an integral part of a democratic society, without which regular elections at the top won't help much. But it does not mean a complete submission to authority.

When we talk about decency and respect it is not about accepting dictates. A democratic society needs to strike a fine balance between respect and submission. Here it is more related to the cultural norms of a society. Democratic behaviour helps us become more sociable – though sociability is not a sure sign of being democratic. There are people who are fairly sociable in gatherings but highly undemocratic in their families. Still, it is safe to say that in public spheres, people of countries such as India or Pakistan are not pretty sociable.

Sociability means cultural behaviour that brings people together in harmony. Sociable people smile at each other, nod in approval, and send positive vibes without violating somebody else's personal space. These are signs of democratic behaviour which is hardly visible here. Through the behavioural lens of democracy we notice that people appear to be aggressive and hostile. Their mood is ignited at the slightest provocation; even if they have a minor accident on the road, they are more likely to resort to fisticuffs rather than an amicable resolution of the crisis at hand.

This lens also takes us to the conclusion that education should essentially have some effective behaviour-change communication in the curriculum. Civic education paves the way for a democratic society with individual liberties guaranteed. It is sort of a social liberalism that challenges feudal and tribal behaviours that are in essence undemocratic. Behavioural lens is in some cases even more important than other lenses as it exposes the roots of a society as democratic or undemocratic. In countries such as India and Pakistan, democracy is in crisis as successive governments have failed to inculcate democratic norms, and that is the crux of the problem – irrespective of how many democratic or dictatorial governments we have had.

Next, we can use a constitutional lens to look at democracy. It is different from academic and behavioural lenses but does not work in isolation as our constitutions are also a reflection of our academic orientation in constitution-making and the behaviours of those who frame or amend constitutional provisions. Looking at Pakistan through a constitutional lens, we find that it took us nine years to formulate the first constitution as opposed to India which could develop its own within two years by the end of 1949 and promulgated it in January 1950.

Our first constitution could survive only from 1956 to 1958 before being thrown away by Maj-Gen Iskandar Mirza and Gen Ayub Khan, both of whom had no role in the freedom struggle and catapulted themselves to power with the help of the civil and military bureaucracy. Then the 1962 constitution was a handiwork of self-appointed field marshal and president Gen Ayub Khan. The good general usurped power and concentrated all authority in the office of the president, targeting civilian leaders and senior politicians such as Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and Fatima Jinnah. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, there was one constitutional crisis after another resulting in the breakup of the country in 1971.

The constitutional lens shows us that even the 1973 constitution is not ideal as it has had amendments that have changed its shape. There are provisions in the constitution that need improvements or outright removal. The constitution in its present shape is not entirely friendly to all citizens, and has some discriminations embedded within it. We can go on for long discussing the constitutional lens but there are a couple of other lenses too. One of the most significant lenses in an economic lens which helps us see how much a society is divided in economic terms.

If there is a wide gap between the rich and the poor, academic and constitutional debates remain futile. In a truly democratic society, there should be some egalitarian considerations to cater for the underprivileged. We can also call this economic lens a window of equality and equity. There should be equal and equitable economic opportunities. With widespread poverty, democracy can hardly impress.INP

It's come full circle

By Faizaan Qayyum

With one foot on a banana peel, we are standing at an abyss. PM Shehbaz Sharif and the PML-N face mortal political and economic challenges, and the government has shown little resolve to confront them head-on. Domestic petroleum prices are up more than 40 per cent within the last few days, and energy prices have quickly followed suit.

It is morbidly satisfying that Shehbaz Sharif and the PML-N – of motorway, flyover, and underpass fame – should face rising fuel prices in their ultimate battle for political survival. For decades, our cities have facilitated private car owners at the expense of pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. The Shehbaz Sharif model of urban development, albeit with different speeds of execution, pervades other political parties and leaders as well; large-scale gray infrastructure like signal free corridors, flyovers, underpasses, and ring roads with obscene levels of service have become the norm in cities around the country. Cities, from Islamabad to Turbat, have become sprawling sites of speculatively held vacant plots in shady housing schemes.

This is our real tragedy. Our current economic crisis is our own Frankenstein's monster staring right back at us. Consider these examples: Capital Smart City Islamabad is approximately 40 kilometres from Blue Area. DHA City Karachi is over 60kms from Frere Hall. These and other projects exclusively target car owners: only the most influential five per cent of our urban population.

So what to do when the most influential people's financial and residential interests move 50kms from the city's economic hubs? Build expressways, signal-free corridors, ring roads, Lyari Expressways, and Leh Expressways to coddle them. These projects help the elite bypass the city's congestion, often by taking a longer route. Sometimes flyovers and underpasses help address particular points of congestion in the city's road network. As these projects materialize, the richest few begin to travel more and more to reach their workplaces, meet friends, or for other everyday tasks. Because there's no public transit – and whatever transit exists is class incompatible – people drive, often in their sparkling new SUVs.

The same logic has unfortunately extended to inter-city travel. We have prioritized motorways and highways over railways. Our railways network has shrunk from over 8500kms of tracks in 1950s to around 7,800kms today. This has been accompanied by a drastic drop in the railways' share of traffic: while the service carried over 86 per cent of all freight traffic in the 1950s, its current share stands at a meager 4-6 per cent. Similarly, Pakistan Railways has gone from the single largest carrier of passenger traffic in the 1970s to carrying less than 10 per cent of all passengers today.

This drastic decline is not coincidental. According to one estimate, the state spent three times as much on intercity road infrastructure than it did on railways. The uniformed state's patronage of entities has combined with private car owners' interests to completely overpower socioeconomic efficiencies associated with rail travel.

All these developments are brazen examples of elite capture. Only around 10 per cent of all urban households own cars, and yet all of our cities have seen massive infrastructural investments that favour private car travel.

'Picturesque' protests

By M Neelika Jayawardane

In March, as Sri Lanka's economic crisis unfolded, desperate people started gathering in front of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa's respective official residences to protest endemic corruption, nepotism and mismanagement in the country.

They set up an encampment on the iconic Galle Face Beach in front of the Parliament, which came to be called GotaGoGama (the village demanding that 'Gota' - President Gotabaya Rajapaksa – resign from office). The Inter University Students' Federation joined the protests in massive, well-organised rallies. Hundreds of trade unions called a general island-wide strike in support.

As I monitored international media's coverage of these protests, I quickly recognised some familiar discrepancies often seen in the coverage of such events in the Global South.

Most news sources, for example, initially referred to the people at the GotaGoGama encampment as "protesters". But as the police and military moved in, deploying tear gas and water cannons, and at times, live bullets against these very same people, rather than describing the events as they are – attacks on protesters by security forces – news reports started referring to what was unfolding as 'clashes'.

When members of the Rajapaksa family and their political cronies reportedly bussed in their supporters – themselves destitute people paid a few thousand rupees and bottles of arrack – to attack the protest site and destroy the 'village', reports containing references to 'mobs', 'rioters' and 'clashes' further proliferated.

As Dilini Algama, a PhD student of English Linguistics at Justus-Liebig-Universitat Giessen in Germany, noted in a conversation on Twitter, it was always clear who was armed, and who instigated the violence. Yet German news outlets referred to chaos and 'unruhen', which, explained Algama, can also mean 'riots'. There was "little to no clarification about the violence of pro-government and pro-Rajapaksa groups, or that tear-gas and water cannon toting military provoked and assaulted protestors". Moreover, "phrasing the violence as a 'clash between two groups' delegitimises the protests and equates people practicing their democratic right to protests with the violence of groups dispatched by the state to intimidate and stop them", she added. This is nothing unique to Sri Lanka – we often see similar narratives of 'clashes' and 'riots' in the international coverage of protests and police actions against them across the Global South, most infamously evident in Palestine.

In Sri Lanka's case, however, the reality of the protests was not only misrepresented through narratives about "clashes". Due to the island's colonial past, and the fact that many Europeans – Scandinavians, Germans, Russians and Britons – regularly holiday there, other problematic attitudes that reduce the protests into one-dimensional Orientalist fantasies have also crept into the coverage.

Sri Lanka's protest movement is idealistic and focused on collective care. Organisers at GotaGoGama, for example, set up a free food station that provides meals for protesters and the destitute, a medical aid tent, and a library, where anyone can come and read books or organise a "People's University" session hosting discussions on social and political issues. The protesters at the village have been consciously and strategically educating each other, through "teach-outs", about the conditions that created this economic crisis, and the way successive leaders have used ethno-nationalism to obtain votes and power. They have been working to bring together people who have purposefully, and for political ends, been divided across ethnic, religious, and class divides since Sri Lanka's independence. The protesters have also put on educational shadow-puppet shows, sung raucous island baila (catchy tunes, often accompanied by cheeky lyrics commenting on social conditions), chanted inventive slogans, and made some of the most hilarious protest posters I've ever seen.In some international news reports, however, these strategic and undeniably effective efforts to bring about change and bring a nation together have been portrayed as youthful naivete, infantalising the movement and making it look somewhat less serious and impactful than its Western counterparts.

Throughout these protests, people from different religious and ethnic groups, who have been trained to be deeply suspicious of each other, broke fast together during the month of Ramadan, celebrated Easter, and had fun on the Buddhist holiday Vesak. On a few occasions, a kattadiya, or an exorcist came to do an exorcism ceremony to cast out evil demons from the island. They've educated each other about the state's violence against their communities – especially violence targeting the country's Muslim and Tamil people; Ambika Satkunanathan and others repeatedly noted why Tamil people, especially those in the North and the East could not, without inviting further state surveillance and bodily harm, protest as freely as did the Sinhala in Colombo. They honoured the Tamil victims of the civil war together, and invited the surviving families of those forcibly 'disappeared' in the North and the South to speak.

Representatives of various religious organisations also attended the protests to bear witness to the events, and try to offer some protection to protesters from the violence of police, Sri Lankan Armed Forces and extrajudicial groups looking to harm them.

Images of Catholic nuns forming human chains to protect protestors were undeniably potent. So were those showing Catholic and Anglican priests, Muslim imams and maulanas, Hindu priests, and Buddhist monks, all in their religious robes sitting together at Galle Face Beach, chatting and sharing views. Together, they have held vigil, overnight, at the main protest.

Palestine's victories

By Ramzy Baroud

In November 2006, the Israeli military prevented all Palestine-based footballers from participating in the final match of the Asian Football Confederation qualification group stage. The news had a major demoralizing effect on all Palestinians. Even rare moments of hope and happiness are often crushed by Israel.

As disappointing as the Israeli decision was, it was hardly compared to the collective shock felt by Palestinians everywhere when, in 2007, Palestinian players were not allowed to participate in a decisive World Cup qualifying game against Singapore. Instead of showing solidarity with Palestinians and condemning Israel, the International Football Association (FIFA) decided to award an automatic victory to Singapore of 3-0.

This is why Palestine's latest qualification is historic, as it is more proof that Palestinian resilience has no bounds. It sends a message to Israel as well, that its unjust draconian measures will never break the spirit of the Palestinian people.

The latest achievement should also be placed within another context. It is the third time in a row that the Palestine national team qualifies for the Asian cup finals, thanks to an impressive squad that represents all Palestinian communities, at home and in the Diaspora. This moment, however, is bittersweet. Many Palestinian footballers, who should have been present in the Sports Center Stadium in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia – where the qualification rounds were held – were missing. Some are in Israeli prisons, others are maimed or killed. Much of the killings happened in 2009.

Indeed, 2009 was a terrible year for Palestinian football. In January 2009, three Palestinian footballers, Ayman Alkurd, Shadi Sbakhe and Wajeh Moshtaha, were killed during the Israeli war on the besieged Gaza Strip. All three were seen as promising athletes with bright futures. Two months later, Saji Darwish was killed by an Israeli sniper near Ramallah. The 18-year-old was slated to become a big name in Palestinian football, too.

In July of that same year, the tragedy of Mahmoud Sarsak began. Sarsak had only been a member of the Palestine National Football Team for six months when he was arrested and tortured by Israel in a painful saga that lasted for three years. He won his freedom after undergoing a hunger strike that lasted for over 90 days. The permanent health issues Sarsak was left with, however, meant that his once-promising sports career was over.

Arrests, torture and killings of Palestinian footballers became a regular headline in Palestine. This includes the killing of former Palestinian football star, Ahed Zaqqut, in 2014, and the deliberate shooting of the feet of Jawhar Nasser Jawhar, 19, and Adam Abd Al Raouf Halabiya, 17. The two players were attempting to cross an Israeli military checkpoint in the occupied West Bank to return home after a long training session.

These are but mere examples. The targeting of Palestinian sports is a constant item on the Israeli military agenda. Palestinian stadiums are often bombed during Israel's brutal wars on Gaza.

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ECP rejects PTI plea to recount votes on PP-7 seat

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday rejected PTI's plea seeking a recount of votes in PP-7 Rawalpindi-II — which it lost to the PML-N by a razor-thin 49 vote margin.

The decision was announced by a five-member bench headed by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikander Sultan Raja.

In the brief ruling, he said that the petitioner, PTI candidate Shabbir Awan, could neither prove any fraud or irregularity during the polls, nor was he able to state the reasons for the recount.

During the hearing, the lawyer of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate Shabbir Awan said that the petitioner lost by 49 votes, our request for recount is not being processed. On this, the Chief Election Commissioner said that no application has been filed on your behalf in the Election Commission. No application has been received by the Election Commission till 5 pm yesterday. You filed the petition after the High Court judgment. You have accused that ECP is not looking at your application.On this, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidate Raja Sagheer's lawyer said that Shabbir Awan had no proof of rigging. They came to ECP after Lahore High Court (LHC). Raja Sagheer s lawyer called PTI's request "baseless". "They failed to prove their point even in front of the RO.

"At first they were talking about the entire constituency. Now they are talking about 21 polling stations," he said, adding that PTI s stance was invalid because it kept changing.

After hearing the arguments of both parties, ECP rejected the plea of PTI to recount the votes.INP

Alarm bells as Pakistani markets fall short on essential medicines

ISLAMABAD: An alarming situation has arisen as markets in the country are short on several essential medicines, including suicide prevention drugs, due to a hike in their production costs — creating fear of an increased suicide rate in the country.

"None of the brands selling lithium carbonate are available in the market for the last couple of months," a renowned psychiatrist and former president of the Pakistan Psychiatric Society (PPS) said while referring to the formulation known as the most effective medicine for the treatment of several psychiatric illnesses, including bipolar disorder.

Similarly, some other essential medicines, including methylphenidate for the treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children and clonazepam drops and tablets for epilepsy in children and adults, are also not available in the market, physicians and pharmacists said.

Several other psychiatrists at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), Shifa International Hospital Islamabad and Mayo Hospital Lahore as well as psychiatrists in Peshawar also confirmed that relatives of patients diagnosed with bipolar disorder were moving from pillar to post for lithium carbonate, but none of its brands were available in the market.

"There are some alternatives to this medicine but they are not effective as lithium carbonate," said Iqbal Afridi, adding that pharmaceutical companies and the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) were requested to ensure the availability of this drug as hundreds of patients are suffering due to shortage of this important medicine.

Another senior pharmacist, Salwa Ahsan, from Islamabad said the medicine lithium carbonate was not available throughout the country, adding that the cost of raw materials had gone up and companies were no more manufacturing them.

"Nine pharmaceutical companies used to produce these drugs but now none of the companies are manufacturing them. Officials in the local pharmaceutical industry claimed over 60 medicines, including those used for the treatment of tuberculosis, psychiatric illnesses, neurological disorders including epilepsy, anti-depressant medicines, anticoagulants (blood thinners), painkillers, anti-hypertensive and several other essential medicines are not available in community pharmacies".

A survey of several pharmacies in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad revealed that several important medicines for the treatment of TB, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, depression, cardiovascular disease and others were not available as pharmaceutical companies were not manufacturing them due to high cost of production.

"Some important medicines for the treatment and management of psychiatric disorders, especially the one for the treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children, are also not available in the market", a senior community pharmacist Arif Aslam said.

Qazi Mansoor Dilawar, the chairperson of the Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association (PPMA), conceded that several medicines were not available in the local market, as their cost of production had increased to the extent where it was not viable.INP

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar in a meeting with Secretary General of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Ambassador Zhang Ming.

Circular debt reduced by Rs214b over last three months: Dastgir

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Khurram Dastgir has said the circular debt has been reduced by two hundred and fourteen billion rupees over the last three months.

Addressing a news conference along with Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Malik in Islamabad on Thursday, he said we are addressing pending issues in the power sector.

Khurram Dastgir said that uninterrupted power supply is being ensured to the industrial sector so that there is no impact on the livelihoods of the people.

The Minister for Power said a comprehensive solar policy is being announced next month with the aim to enable the people to shift to solar energy and reduce dependence on the imported fuel.

Khurram Dastgir assured there will be no increase in the power prices for the consumers using up to one hundred units. He said there is also a subsidy plan for the consumers using up to two hundred units.The Minister for Power said the coalition government is defender of the economic future of the people.Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Malik said record reserves of petrol and diesel are available in the country. He said there is no threat of shortage of petroleum products in the country. He pointed out that there has also been reduction in the usage of petrol and diesel during the months of June and July this year as compared to the corresponding periods of last year. He said this happened because of our effective management which will help reduce our import bill and stabilize the rupee.

Khurram Dastgir assured there will be no increase in the power prices for the consumers using up to one hundred units. He said there is also a subsidy plan for the consumers using up to two hundred units.

The Minister for Power said the coalition government is defender of the economic future of the people.INP

'No guests' as sops issued for Punjab Assembly session to elect CM Punjab

LAHORE: Secretary Punjab Assembly Muhammad Khan Bhatti has issued SOPs for the crucial Punjab Assembly session on the directives of the Supreme Court to hold elections for Punjab chief minister.

According to the SOPs issued by the secretary, the members of the Punjab Assembly (MPAs) and staff have been directed against bringing guests inside the assembly. "The speaker's box, officers' box and visitors' gallery will remain close and only the media gallery will remain open," the secretary said, adding that media will be allowed to cover the election from the gallery.

The MPAs have been directed to carry NICs and leave their phone outside the assembly premises. "The police will only perform administrative affairs outside the gate of the assembly secretariat," he said.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Supreme Court of Pakistan has issued detailed order regarding Chief Minister (CM) Punjab's election on July 22.

The 10-page detailed order from the three-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Umar Ata Bandial was written by Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan.

It said that the election for chief minister in Punjab will be held on July 22 at the Punjab Assembly building and the proceedings would be led by the deputy speaker.

The order read that during the first phase of voting, the votes of the members would be counted and if both candidates fail to get desired numbers then a recount would be held. It said that Hamza Shahbaz will run the province as chief minister until July 22 and he and his cabinet would ensure free and fair by-elections in the 20 constituencies.INP

Sadiqabad boat capsize: 28 dead bodies of victims retrieved

SADIQABAD: In Machhka boat drowning incident, 28 dead bodies of persons drowned in River Indus, have been retrieved so far, according to Assistant Commissioner Sadiqabad.

Among 28 dead bodies, 24 are women and four children, he said.

The data of aggrieved families being collected on the instructions of deputy commissioner Sadiqabad Syed Musa Raza, the official said.

"The affected families have confirmed that a woman and a child have been still untraced and the rescue operation has been launched for their search", he added.

According to earlier reports, a boat with 94 persons of a wedding party on board capsized in the river in Machhka Union Council of Sadiqabad Tehsil on Monday. According to police sources, two boats carrying a wedding party of around 150 people were coming from Rojhan to Machhka, when one of them overturned.

The incident took place in the Sadiqabad district, about 350 kilometers (210 miles) south of Multan.INP

PTI denies report of electoral alliance in KP with ANP

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister (SACM) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Barrister Saif Thursday denied reports of an electoral alliance of the PTI with ANP and said that the party does not want a political or electoral alliance with any party.

In a statement issued Thursdaya, Barrister Saif said that he rejects reports of electoral alliance with the Awami National Party (ANP) and that the PTI could never think of forging an alliance with a party that was part of the 'regime change operation' in the country.

"PTI enjoys a two-third majority in the KP Assembly and is the most popular party in the country," he said and added that they would continue to work for democratic stability with the support of the masses.It is pertinent to mention here that a report recently stated that another coalition partner of the unity government in the Centre led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the Awami National Party (ANP), is mulling.INP

TANK: Chairman NDMA, Lt. General Akhtar Nawaz distributed one million rupees each cheque among NOKs of Flood Victims during his visit to Tank District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

ECP issues victory notification of 19 Punjab MPAs

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued victory notifications for 19 candidates, who were elected as MPA in the recent Punjab by-polls.

On July 17, by-elections on the 20 vacant seats of the Punjab Assembly were held after the ECP de-seated dissident MPAs of PTI.

The result of PP-7 Rawalpindi is withheld as the case is under hearing in the ECP on the orders of the Lahore High Court's Rawalpindi bench.

It may be noted that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) emerged victorious in the majority of the seats in the crucial by-elections on the 20 Punjab Assembly.

Out of 20, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) secured 15 seats, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz clinched four seats and one seat was secured by an independent candidate.

An independent candidate, Syed Muhammad Rafi ud Din, won PP-228 Lodhran V, with 45,020 votes as against PTI candidate Izzat Javaid Khan, who bagged 38,338.

The polling process was continued from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm uninterrupted before its conclusion amid reports of clashes and arrests.INP

Punjab politics to see upset Today: Kundi

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Information Secretary Faisal Karim Kundi claimed that there would be an upset in Punjab (Punjab Assembly) on Friday amid the Punjab chief minister elections.

Kundi said that Friday will be an important day in the politics of Punjab.

He was addressing a press conference along with the Shazia Marri in Islamabad.

Taking a jibe at PTI, he said why always one party member sold their votes.

Faisal said that PTI is afraid of Asif Ali Zardari's presence in Punjab.

He said that PPP wants local bodies elections in Punjab but ECP has postponed it.

Shazia Marri said that Asif Ali Zardari promoted politics of reconciliation in Pakistan. She alleged that Imran Khan's politics' revolved only around lies.

Marri schooled Fawad Chaudhary for being a turncoat himself who changed many parties and at least Fawad must not talk about the changing loyalties.

Shazia Marri urged PTI to present evidence of alleged buying of their MPs. INP

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate Mirza Muhammad Afridi presiding over a meeting of the Pakistan -Canada Parliamentary Friendship Group in the Senate at Parliament house.

Pakistan's ICT exports to keep growing: Experts

ISLAMABAD:Pakistan 's ICT exports could grow by 30% over the next few years as long as we provide well-trained human resources, infrastructure for ICT projects in universities, support industry in terms of tax incentives and take full advantage of ICT cooperation opportunities under the CPEC framework.

This was stated by Prof. Dr. Waqar Mahmood, Director of Al-Khwarizmi Institute of Computer Science (KICS), University of Engineering and Technology (UET) in an interview with Gwadar Pro.

Pakistan's telecommunication, computer and information services exports during the first 11 months of fiscal year 2021-2022 surged to ?2.381 billion at a growth rate of 25.45 percent in comparison to ?1.898 billion during the corresponding period of last fiscal year, according to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

Prof. Dr. B.S. Chowdhry, Professor Emeritus of Faculty of Electrical, Electronics, & Computer Engineering, and Advisor of Mehran University of Engineering & Technology (MUET), Jamshoro, believes that the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic created a unique opportunity for Pakistan's ICT exports. Government subsidies and Pakistan's overall labor cost advantage attract customers from all over the world.

As per Pakistan Economic Survey 2021-2022, investment (FDI & local) in the telecom sector during July to February FY2022 crossed ?930.1 million. During July-March FY2022, the telecom sector contributed Rs. 163.3 billion (estimated) to the national exchequer in terms of taxes, regulatory fees, initial and annual license fees, activation tax, and other taxes.

Good infrastructure and well-trained workforce are necessary for the development of ICT. Prof. Dr. Waqar explained that Pakistan has 44 million broadband subscribers and more than 100 million mobile users, which obviously shows that ordinary people have access to some ICT services. 25,000 + graduates enter the industry every year and 600,000 + individuals are employed in all aspects of the industry.

"In addition to big cities, Pakistan also needs to look for opportunities in other far flung cities where youths can work as freelancers and provide other outsourced services.

They can participate in the export of ICT's overall products once they are assisted by the government's cutting-edge services and tool training." Prof. Dr. Waqar further said.

Dr. Miftah Ismail, Minister for Finance and Revenue announced in the federal budget 2022-2023 speech that the government has allocated.INP

Pakistan's GDP to remain moderate in FY22, recover slightly in FY23: ADB

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank Thursday projected that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in Pakistan was expected to moderate in FY2022 (ended 30 June 2022) on fiscal tightening measures to manage growing demand pressures and contain external and fiscal imbalances.

The growth in Fiscal Year 2023 is projected to recover slightly supported by structural reforms, the ADB said in its Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2022 Supplement.

The reported added that Pakistan's inflation was marginally revised up for FY2022 and substantially so for FY2023.

In addition to the effects of elevated global energy and food prices, the government's efforts to revive the stalled International Monetary Fund (IMF) program had meant raising power tariffs and withdrawing subsidies in the oil and power sectors.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) also lowered its economic growth forecast for developing Asia and the Pacific to 4.6% this year due to slower expansion in the People's Republic of China (PRC), more aggressive monetary tightening in advanced economies, and fallout from the continued Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The outlook compares with a projection of 5.2% issued by ADB in April.

The bank also raised its forecast for inflation in the region, amid higher prices for food and fuel. Developing Asia and the Pacific is continuing its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many countries are easing mobility restrictions, which is strengthening economic activity. However, growth has slowed in the PRC, the region's largest economy, due to disruption from new COVID-19 lockdowns, as well as weaker global demand.

"The economic impact of the pandemic has declined across most of Asia, but we're far from a full and sustainable recovery," said ADB Chief Economist Albert Park.

"On top of the slowdown in the PRC, fallout from the war in Ukraine has added to inflationary pressure that's causing central banks around the world to raise interest rates, acting as a brake on growth. It's crucial to address all these global uncertainties, which continue to pose risks to the region's recovery."

The PRC's economy is poised to expand 4.0% this year, compared with an earlier forecast of 5.0%. ADB also lowered its growth outlook for India to 7.2% from 7.5% amid higher-than-expected inflation and monetary tightening.

Inflation in developing Asia and the Pacific is predicted to accelerate to 4.2% this year, compared with a previous forecast of 3.7%. However, inflation pressure in the region as a whole is still lower than elsewhere in the world.INP

Pakistan gears up to decarbonise economy: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan aims to decarbonize China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) by re-directing Chinese infrastructure investments away from emission-intensive coal-based projects towards green energy enterprises like wind, solar and hydropower.

Under CPEC, Pakistan is also in the process of developing Special Economic Zones (SEZs). The development of 'green' SEZs is on the pattern of their Chinese counterparts, which have fuelled industrial development and growth in China.

Talking to WealthPK, Principal Scientific Officer, Global Change Impact Studies Centre (GCISC), Ministry of Climate Change, Muhammad Arif Goheer said that Pakistan had made policies and taken initiatives to ensure speedy transition towards green energy resources to neutralise the climate change threat. "Steps have been taken to start the process of decarbonising the economy."

Arif Goheer maintained that the government had formulated a number of steps over the past years to move towards a low-carbon economy. "These included the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act 2016, National Transmission and Dispatch Company Expansion Plan 2018-40, Alternate Renewable Energy Policy, National Transport Policy 2018, National Electric Vehicle Policy, National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Policy 2022 (draft), Sustainable Energy for All, National Action Plan, Minimum Energy Performance Standards for Electric Motors and Fans, Energy Efficient Lighting Programme – Solarisation of Public Schools, Mosques and Public Buildings."

He further said: "Pakistan has already identified market and non-market-based approaches to help diversify the funding sources, including nature performance bonds, green/blue bonds, carbon pricing instruments, etc."

"Pakistan encourages the private sector to play role in development of NBS (nature-based solution) to mitigate effects of climate change across sectors," he said.

Arif Goheer pointed out that main barriers to sector-wise transformation were a lack of liquidity to invest in renewable energy, weak enforcement of environmental regulations and lack of awareness about benefits of renewable energy resources."Pakistan should formulate strategies for a green investment roadmap to move CPEC-related investments to cleaner energy projects," he remarked.He said given Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change, capital-intensive transition towards green growth economy was a must. He said Pakistan planned to enhance access to international climate financing to contribute.INP

ISLAMABAD: Secretary General of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Ambassador Zhang Ming, called on Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Syed Amin Ul Haque.

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Solar tube wells powered by Chinese technology successful in Pakistan: Report

ISLAMABAD: Solar tube wells powered by Chinese technology is a success story in Pakistan, and the same technology will be used in the KP's southern district of Tank, Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday.

To resolve the longstanding water problem in the area, the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has decided to set up solar-powered tube wells in the area.

Talking to Gwadar Pro, Engineer Muhammad Suhail said that the solar tube wells are the easiest way to permanently resolve the drinking water issue in Tank.

Several villages in Tank lack portable water and villagers rely on rain-fed ponds, causing water-borne diseases such as hepatitis, cholera, typhoid, diarrhea, etc.

In many areas of the district, people and animals drink water from the same rain-fed ponds.

However, the provincial government has come up with an idea to resolve the longstanding water issue of Tank with photovoltaic technology.

"Solar tube wells powered by Chinese technology is a success story in Pakistan, and the same technology will be used in this project," he added.

"Twenty-eight solar-powered drinking water tube wells have been approved for the district," said Faisal Amin Khan, Minister for Local Government, Elections and Rural Development Department. He said that tenders have been issued and work will start shortly.

According to Mr. Khan, another 25 more tube wells are in pipeline under Chief Minister's special package for city and villages in Tank, adding "These will resolve the longstanding water issue".

According to Mr. Suhail, solar energy is one of the cheapest and most viable solutions for the energy crisis in Pakistan.

Under Annual Development Programme 2022-23, the Government of KP has allocated Rs 150 million for the construction of water supply sanitation schemes, and solar electrification of solar tube wells in Tank.

Solar is one of the key business areas in KP province. The government solar projects in the public sector include the electrification of 4,000 masjids and the solarisation of 8,000 schools and basic health units in the province. Besides, the government has approved five feasibility studies of a total of 249.5 MW solar projects in the private sector. INP

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan Seyyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini called on the Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Agha Hassan Baloch.

One killed, 18 injured as van plunges into ravine in Murree

MURREE: One person was killed and 18 other sustained injuries when a van carrying tourists plunged into ravine in Murree in the wee hours of Thursday.

According to details, a van carrying members of the same family belonging to Rahim Yar Khan fell into gorge in Aliyot area of Murree while taking a sharp turn, killing a man and 18 other persons.

Rescue teams reached the spot and shifted the dead and injured to hospital. Rescue sources informed that the deceased was identified as 55-year-old Tahir Sadiq. They also said that four women and five children are among the injured.INP

Heavy rain in Lahore inundates low-lying areas

LAHORE: Heavy rain with thunderstorm in Lahore and its adjacent areas in the wee hours of Thursday turned the weather pleasant.

The heavy rain was reported from different parts of the city including Lakshmi Chowk, Mall Road, Shimla Pahari, Data Darbar, Gulshan Ravi, Samanabad, Green Town, Multan Road, Ferozepur Road, Band Road, Sabzazar, Mughalpura and other areas of the city.

Heavy rain in provincial capital inundated low-lying areas. The rainwater entered the houses located in the low-lying areas of the city. Roads were submerged under rainwater causing problems to the flow of traffic.

Dozens of LESCO feeders tripped due to heavy rain and strong wind in the city, resulting in power outage in various areas. Almost half of the city was without electricity.

According to Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), Rain-wind/thundershower is expected in Kashmir, Punjab, Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan and northeastern Balochistan during the next 24 hours.

The Met Office has also issued warning the heavy rains may generate urban flooding in Lahore, Rawalpindi/Islamabad, Peshawar, Nowshera, Mardan, Faisalabad and Gujranwala from 20th to 23rd July. Rainfall may trigger landslides in Kashmir, Galiyat, Murree, Chillas, Diamir, Gilgit, Hunza, Astore and Skardu during the forecast period.INP

Pakistan reports 599 new coronavirus cases; 3 deaths

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan reported 599 new coronavirus cases along with no new virus-related deaths during the last 24 hours, showed the data released by the National Institute of Health Pakistan on Thursday morning.

According to the statistics released by the NIH, after seven more coronavirus-related deaths, the death reached 30,455, which represents a ratio of 2.0 percent. All the three patients died belonged to Sindh.

The positivity ratio of the coronavirus cases in Pakistan was recorded at 2.81 percent, as 599 new coronavirus cases emerged in the last 24 hours after conducting 21,315 tests. It takes the total cases tally to 1,548,394.

The number of active patients is 9,673 with 170 patients in critical condition.

There were 265 more recoveries recorded in the last 24 hours as the number of total recovered cases reached 1,507,935 with a 97.4% recovery rate.

The highest rate of Corona cases across the country was recorded in Diamer. The positivity ratio reached 21.43 percent in 24 hours in Diamer.

The positivity ratio of the coronavirus cases was recorded at 36.24 percent in Hyderabad, 25 percent in Swabi, 5.86 percent in Lahore, 5 percent in Nowshera, 3.85 percent in Muzaffarabad, 3.33 percent in Mardan, 2.87 percent in Karachi, 2.85 percent in Peshawar, 2.58 percent in Rawalpindi and 1.88 percent in Islamabad. INP

Islamabad court extends Imran Khan's interim bail in 10 cases

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad District Sessions Court Thursday granted an extension to bails granted to former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Imran Khan in 10 cases related to PTI's recent long march.

Sessions Court Judge Kamran Basharat Mufti heard Imran Khan's interim bail applications in the Islamabad District Sessions Court and extended interim bails of Imran Khan in 10 cases of till July 30.

However, the court refused to grant Khan bail in a fresh case number 425 registered at Kohsar Police station over the absence of the accused.

The court accepted Imran Khan's request for exemption from attendance as the latter is in Lahore.

The judge remarked that the cases are of political natures but the accused must also appear.

Junior lawyer Rai Tajmal told the court that Babar Awan could not appear before the court as he is going abroad.

The judge remarked that Imran Khan must appear in case number 425 registered in Kohsar police station.

"It is a fresh bail in case number 425 and if the accused appears, then I will issue the order," remarked the judge.He also ordered to fix the fresh bail application for the next hearing on July 30 on the application of Rai Tajamal.INP

Lahore receives 185mm rain in seven-hour long unabated downpour

LAHORE : A seven-hour spell of heavy rainfall lashed parts of Lahore on Thursday as the provincial capital of the Punjab province received at most 185 mm of downpour during the period.

According to details, Tajpura area of the city received the maximum rainfall of 185mm, followed by 160mm in the airport area, 149 mm in Mughalpura, 148mm at Nakhuda Chowk (roundabout), 128 mm at Lakshmi Chowk, and 105mm in Gulshan-e-Ravi.

Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz Sharif has directed authorities concerned to remain alert in the wake of rains in Lahore and other cities. In a statement, he asked elected representatives to go out in the field and monitor the drainage work in their areas.

Calling the need to utilize all the resources for drainage from low-lying areas, Hamza Shahbaz urged to complete the drainage work in minimum time.

According to Radio Pakistan, Rain and wind thundershower is expected in Kashmir, Punjab, Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan and northeastern Balochistan during the next 12 hours.

Scattered heavy falls are likely in Kashmir, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, upper Punjab and upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. INP

PTI to challenge ECP decision to put off Sindh local govt elections in court

HYDERABAD: The PTI has rejected the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to postpone the Sindh local body elections and plans to challenge it in court Thursday.

Addressing a gathering in Hyderabad, PTI leader Ali Zaidi said the party condemns ECP's decision, adding that the Commission was already controversial.

Apart from that, former Sindh governor Imran Ismail stated that the postponement of local body elections and the NA-245 poll is a sign of the PPP and MQM-P's defeat.

He claimed that the buyers and sellers of consciences are fleeing Sindh elections by setting up a market in Punjab and that the "thappa" mafia has escaped yet again today.

On the other hand, PTI leader Khurram Sher Zaman stated at a press conference in Karachi that the ECP had failed to conduct transparent elections. He said that the election commissioner should resign, adding that MQM-P and PPP had rigged the election ahead of time.

The second phase of Sindh's local body elections was scheduled to take place on July 24, but ECP postponed a day earlier due to the latest forecast of rain by the Pakistan Meteorological Department.

A meeting was held under the chairmanship of Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, and it was decided to postpone the Sindh local government elections.

The decision was made at the request of the MQM, the chief secretary of the GDA, and the provincial election commissioner.INP

QUETTA: Government Teacher Association hold protest outside QPC.

After IMF program, Pakistan likely to avoid default: EIU report

ISLAMABAD: Even as monetary policy tightening in the US and other major Western economies has put a question mark on the sustainability of emerging-market sovereign debt, Pakistan will manage to avert default.

However, its economy will remain in a precarious position.

This was stated in the "Sovereign debt challenges in Asia" report by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) released on Thursday.

According to the report, Sri Lanka and Pakistan were already on a high-risk path before the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

It added that Pakistan along with Mongolia, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos stand out in terms of Asian countries which are vulnerable to repayment difficulties based on economic fundamentals and external creditor relations.

The report said that Pakistan was already on the brink when it approached the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to extend the fund facility it had signed on to in 2016.

But the fund halted the three-year programme in 2021 after key domestic reforms stalled, including independence of the central bank and using foreign exchange reserves to slow the depreciation of the rupee.

The programme resumed after Islamabad passed laws on central bank autonomy and implemented fiscal austerity measures.

The EIU estimated that it expects per its baseline scenario, that the measures will help Pakistan avoid default.

Key issues

The report noted that one of the major issues with Pakistan's economy in recent years has been surging imports which have caused a widening of the current-account deficit.

As with Sri Lanka, the report noted that a narrow tax base was a major weakness for Pakistan's economy.

"Nonetheless, the risk of Pakistan failing to meet its obligations will remain high over the next three years, owing to an onerous repayment schedule and ingrained political instability in government that may derail fiscal consolidation," it said.

Pakistan, the report added, faces external debt repayments of $3.2 billion in 2022, with subsequent repayments totalling $3.2 billion spread over 2023-24.

"Large current-account deficits and weak prospects for foreign investment will mean that honoring these commitments is contingent on new debt inflows, which even with IMF support may not be sufficient," the report concluded.

The report also looked at monetary policy tightening in the US and other major Western economies and its impact on the sustainability of emerging-market sovereign debt.

"Rising rates have pushed up borrowing costs," the report said, adding that a stronger US dollar is also increasing the cost of external repayment for governments.

Rising inflation is compounding the issue by pushing national authorities to provide additional fiscal relief before many have managed to rein in budget deficits that ballooned during the novel coronavirus (covid-19) pandemic.

The report ranked Pakistan's deficit for the fiscal year 2022-23 to be greater than 5% as a percentage of its GDP.Moreover, public debt as a percentage of GDP in FY 2022-23 was greater than 60%.INP

K-Electric seeks Rs11.39 per unit power tariff hike

KARACHI: K-Electric, the sole power utility in Karachi, on Thursday submitted a request to the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) seeking another hike of Rs11.39 in tariff under fuel adjustment charges.

According to the request, the power utility has requested a massive increase of Rs11.39 for the month of June 2022.

The national power regulator will take up the KE's plea for a hearing on July 28, 2022.

Earlier, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) heard the federal government's petition seeking Rs 7.91 per unit hike in basic power tariff.

The electric power regulator will decide on the matter after the hearing and forward its decision to the government for notification.

The NEPRA hearing presided over by its chairman Tauseef Farooqui will take decision over the government plea for hike in basic tariff of all power distribution companies including the K-electric, the power utility, which supplies electricity to Karachi.INP

CM Punjab directs authorities to remain alert in wake of rains in Lahore, other cities

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz Sharif has directed authorities concerned to remain alert in the wake of rains in Lahore and other cities.

In a statement, he asked elected representatives to go out in the field and monitor the drainage work in their areas.

Calling the need to utilize all the resources for drainage from low-lying areas, Hamza Shahbaz urged to complete the drainage work in minimum time.

Heavy rain in provincial capital inundated low-lying areas. The rainwater entered the houses located in the low-lying areas of the city. Roads were submerged under rainwater causing problems to the flow of traffic. INP

General elections will be held in Oct 2023: Khurram Dastagir

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Power Khurram Dastagir said Thursday while addressing a press conference in Islamabad along with State Minister for Petroleum Musaddiq Malik that the current government would complete its term and the general elections would be held in October 2023.

"On July 17, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government conducted transparent elections. People's vote and their opinion is important for us," he said.

"All four narratives of Imran Khan were dashed to the ground. The narrative of X and Y has also been destroyed. Our competition is with a fascist party," he added.

"Imran Khan's agenda is to destroy democracy and the constitutional institutions. The economy was destroyed by Imran Khan's false narratives," he deplored.

The federal power minister also questioned who was supporting the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on July 17—the date for the by-elections in Punjab."Every time the 'Imrani Fitnah' raises its heads, the economy starts sinking," he said, claiming that efforts were being made [by the government] to reduce inflation in the country.He also maintained that the government brought the petrol prices in the country equal to the international petrol prices.On the occasion, State Minister for Petroleum Musaddiq Malik said that Pakistan currently had 34-day stock of petrol.He said that the rupee would also stabilise soon. "We also have reserves; energy security is also there. God willing! We will bring more improvement to the country's economy."INP

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance And Revenue, Dr. Aisha Ghous Pasha held a meeting with CEO Total Parco Pakistan Limited Mehmat Celepoglu at Finance Division.

SHC reserves verdict in Dua Zahra kidnapping case

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Thursday reserved its verdict in the high profile case pertaining to the alleged kidnapping of Dua Zahra, the teenager who had mysteriously disappeared from Karachi in April but it was later reported that she had run away from home to marry 21-year-old Zaheer Ahmed.

A two-member bench of the SHC, headed by Justice Iqbal Kalhoro, heard the case.

Zaheer was produced in court at the outset of the hearing of the case filed by Dua Zahra's father Mehdi Kazmi, accusing the young man of kidnapping the girl from her house in Karachi's Alfalah neighbourhood.

During the hearing, Justice Kalhoro remarked that Dua Zahra must be brought to Karachi and the case will be heard here as she went missing from this city.

"There are shelter homes in Karachi as well where security arrangements will be made. There will be no threat to the girl in Karachi," the judge remarked.

He asked Zaheer's lawyer if he wants Dua to not get shifted to Karachi. At this, the lawyer said that the girl cannot be shifted to Karachi or forced to meet anyone if she doesn't want to.

"Even the court cannot tell the girl to meet anyone," he said.

At this, the court remarked that Dua Zahra has been declared a minor and, therefore, her statement has no legal value. It, however, observed that no order to give the girl into her parents' custody is being issued.

Meanwhile, the lawyers representing Sindh and the federal governments also favoured shifting Dua Zahra to Karachi.After this, the court reserved its verdict on Kazmi's plea and said it will be announced later in the day.A Lahore court on Tuesday sent Karachi teenager Dua Zahra to a shelter home following a court order.

Dua appeared before a magistrate's court and claimed that her life was in danger as her parents were threatening her. She also claimed that they used to physically abuse.INP

Pakistan calls for action to advance UN's development agenda in Africa

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan spotlighted the development of Africa at a key UN meeting on Wednesday, with a call for advancing the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, which is aimed at eliminating extreme poverty, reducing inequality and protecting the planet.

Participating in a high-level dialogue on "The Africa We Want: Reconfirming the Development of Africa as a Priority of the United Nations System", Ambassador Munir Akram said that the coronavirus pandemic had pushed 43 million people into extreme poverty in Africa alone, as it devastated economies and endangered livelihoods around the world."Now," the Pakistani envoy said, "efforts towards an inclusive and sustainable recovery have been halted by the global food, fuel and finance emergency".Climate change had contributed to and was compounding these challenges, he said, adding that Africa was the most vulnerable region in the world, with several countries facing a series of disasters, including floods, droughts and heat waves.

The ambitious climate commitments in Glasgow, COP 27, must turn to action and to implementation of the agreements and commitments, Ambassador Akram stressed.

In this regard, he underscored the need for developed countries to fulfill their long overdue commitment of US $100 billion in annual climate finance, and this must be separate and additional to their existing provision of Official Development Assistance (ODA).Even this amount will be insufficient to combat the monumental challenges of transformation to dynamic models of sustainable development, Ambassador Akram said, adding that deliberations for a new and more commensurate collective quantified finance goal from a floor of US $100 billion must be agreed.The Pakistani envoy said the estimated the annual cost of adaptation in developing countries could be as high as US $300 billion until 2030. In African countries, he said, building resilience and responding to climate related disasters is expected to cost 5% of their GDP annually by 2030.INP