

QUETTA VOICE

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PM vows to promote principles of freedom of expression, free media



Rs34b to be spent on 7th population census: Planning Minister

The rising deaths of coal miners in Balochistan

Syed Ali Shah Analysis Plight Coal Miners

Shocking incidents inside the coal mines of Balochistan are almost the order of the day. Worst poverty and unemployment force people to put their lives at peril while extracting coal from mines in Balochistan. At the cost of living, poverty-hit people from Shangla, Swat areas of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, Toba Kakari area of Pishin, and people from southern Afghanistan work in killer coal mines of Balochistan.

At least six coal miners were killed after the mine was filled with methane gas in the Shahrag area of the Hamai district a few days ago. Rescue workers and fellow miners made hectic efforts to save their lives. But, they failed to do so. The officials merely issued condolence statements with no promise of taking action against the responsible people.

Sadly, such incidents make no headlines in the newspapers and tv channels

No action has been taken against the mine owner, contractor, and concerned people. The government has also not announced any compensation for the heirs of the victims. Sadly, such incidents make no headlines in the newspapers



and tv channels. This is also one of the underlying reasons behind rampant incidents inside mines in Balochistan.

Hazardous working conditions have claimed thousands of precious human lives in Dukki, Quetta, Sorange, Marwar, Chamalang, Bolan, Mach, and Hamai areas of Balochistan. Despite repeated appeals on behalf of human rights organizations and labor unions, the Balochistan government has not ensured improved safety conditions inside mines of the province.

Strange: 18 inspectors posted for 3000 mines

Around 60,000 miners have been working in over 3,000 coal mines in Balochistan. For more than 3,000 coal mines, the Balochistan mines and mineral department has appointed only 18 mine inspectors. Under the 1923 mines and mineral act Balochistan, coal miners cannot enter the mine without the inspection of the mine by an inspector.

Women, children, and aged people are not allowed to enter coal mines as per the 1923 mines act. The Balochistan government and mines owners must take steps to improve working conditions for the coal miners before it is already late.

Court bars Balochistan police from registering further cases against Azam Swati

Manan Mandokhail
Syed Muhammad Qaseem

QUETTA: Balochistan High Court (BHC) on Tuesday barred police from registering further first information reports (FIRs) against the Pakistan Tehrik e Insaaf (PTI) leader and former federal minister, Azam Swati. A division bench of the BHC comprising Mr. Justice Muhammad Kamran Khan Mullakhail and Mr. Justice Muhammad Amir Rana passed this order on a constitutional petition filed by the son of Azam Swati.

Senior lawyers Naseebullah Tareen Advocate, Syed Iqbal Shah, and others appeared before the court on behalf of Mr. Swati.

The respondents are directed not to lodge any FIR in respect of the allegation leveled in the appended FIRs already lodged at Kuchlak, Zhob, Khuzdar, Pasni, and other parts of the province.

"No similar FIRs on similar allegations can be registered by the police", the bench ordered.



This order on the part of BHC has come after the registration of five FIRs against the central PTI leader and former

senator Azam Swati. Police in Balochistan registered five FIRs against the former federal minister on various applications by different people for using derogatory and foul language against state institutions. Police have already obtained five days' remand for Mr. Swati in the aforesaid cases. Swati has been kept in Quetta. The bench also directed the Balochistan police chief to submit a report in this regard.

Swati's son had also filed another petition seeking the

quashing of FIRs against his father. In this petition, he pleaded that second FIR can not be registered against Mr. Swati in one incident because FIRs have already been lodged against him in Islamabad, Naseebullah Tareen, the counsel for the former federal minister said.

The son of the former minister also requested the court not to move his father to Khuzdar, Gwadar, Zhob, and other parts of Balochistan in the same FIRs.

Burn units to be established in all DHQs across Balochistan

Health Desk

Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Abdul Quddoos Bizenjo directed the establishment of burn units in all District Headquarters (DHQ) across Balochistan. This will be an important development to increase the treatment facilities in the public interest.

The provincial health department has established a 20-bed general ward, a 5-bed ICU with modern facilities, a burn unit, and a training center for the treatment of burn patients in Civil Hospital Quetta for the first time.



While in the divisional headquarters and district headquarters of the province a training center has been started in this sector with a huge amount of money to build a

burn ward with five to ten beds.

The following facilities will be provided in this department: Any accidental burn patient in the civil hospital after being examined in the dressing room of the casualty department of the burn unit will be provided with bandages and other supplies.

If the patient has to be admitted, then only specific patients will be admitted, in this regard, the Balochistan government will bear the daily expenses of up to one lakh rupees. After the patient enters the ward, he will be treated in the presence of trained young

doctors and nurses, including various operations. Trainees of all Divisional Headquarters Hospitals and District Headquarters Hospitals of Balochistan will be trained in the Burn Training Center.

In this way, after training the staff of 40 district head hospitals and divisional headquarters hospitals, for the first time, people in these areas of Balochistan will have facilities near their homes for the treatment of burn patients. The provincial government will also provide six months' salary and medicines for the burn unit established under BRSP Zhob.



ISLAMABAD: Donald Blome, Ambassador of the United States of America to Pakistan called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

Rs34b to be spent on 7th population census: Planning Minister

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal has said that 34 billion rupees will be spent on 7th population census. The Minister was speaking at the inauguration of Training of Master Trainers for 7th Population and Housing Census in Islamabad on Tuesday. The Planning Minister said for the first time in the history, the government will be conducting a digital census to minimize errors and ensure the most accurate record of the country's actual population. The Minister said census plays its pivotal role in country's progress and development and it is now the need of the hour to immediately go for it.

The Planning Minister said the state has responsibility to provide basic amenities of life to its citizens through fair and reliably conducted census. He said the government allocates developmental budgets on the basis of the census. The Minister said due to floods in Sindh and Balochistan, it will take another six to eight months to recover from the floods. He said Sindh had severe reservations over the results of the last census. He said fresh elections can only be held in October 2023 after the fresh census are completed in April or May and then another four months will be required for the Election Commission of Pakistan to hold fresh delimitations based on the new data. INP

PM vows to promote principles of freedom of expression, free media

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed government's strong commitment to support all efforts that promote and uphold the shining principles of freedom of expression and free media.

He was addressing an event organized by Islamabad Journalist Safety Forum on the theme of the UN ten years Plan of Action on Tuesday.

The Prime Minister said his government believes that the freedom of expression is sacrosanct and will remain at the heart of development

of democracy. Shehbaz Sharif noted democracy and media reinforce each other and there can be no democracy without freedom of expression.

The Prime Minister said his government would be part of efforts aimed at making Pakistani democracy stronger through greater free media.

Pakistan became first country in Asia to pass legislation on the Safety of Journalists

Shehbaz Sharif pointed out that Pakistan became the first country in Asia to pass legislation on the Safety of Journalists at the federal and the provincial level in Sindh province. He said the government will continue to support the ongoing efforts in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan to legislate on safety of journalists.

Shehbaz Sharif said the parliament passed a landmark Protection of Journalists and Media Professional Acts after thorough consultations with all the stakeholders.

Act recognizes the rights of journalists and seeks to protect media persons

He said this act recognizes the rights of journalists and seeks to protect media persons from all kinds of ill treatment and aggression. He assured the full implementation of this legislation. Shehbaz Sharif said his government believes that no journalist should be called out or attacked for exercising their freedom of expression as guaranteed under the constitution of Pakistan. INP

Education going beyond the reach of poor parents

By Abdul Shakoor Khan

"I am the symbolic father of 4000 children, and unless you waive off the fee of all of them I will not leave my just struggle to drag the school business mafia to court," Mohammad Aslam Rind, former Nazim and famous social worker of the Quetta city said narrating his strifes, he made against the private school mafia hounded parents with fee challans for holidays months against the court verdict.

"Against the uncontrolled private schools mainly the branded ones, relevant authorities seem helpless, to mend their ways, and take them to task, it is only parent's headache to fight back such giant mafia minting money for their vested interest."

Aslam Rind told Quetta Voice that following the apex court's verdict on the fee structure of the private schools in 2019, he started raising his voice on different forums. I held several meetings chaired by the then Deputy Commissioner Quetta Zafar Abbasi and the representatives of the private schools operating across the province but all in vain.

"My invincibility and inflexibility of very stance coerced private school body offer me waiving off fee of my children," I have no children in any of the private schools, my struggle is for all children studying in private schools, I cleared to them turning down their offer and sticking to my only demand of getting maximum relief to all parents.

Despite the passage of three years, nothing changed, parents are compelled to deposit a major chunk of their hard-earned money in the banks of schools to equip their children with knowledge being sold out by the business mafia keen to hoard money and least interested in character building of the students.

Private school expenses have forced to change my children's schools, Aslam Rind

The wave of inflation during the PTI regime has not only impacted the



poor but the middle class as well. Parents have started recalculating and cutting monthly household expenses, while on the other hand rising fees in private educational institutions and other relevant expenses have forced them even change their children's schools.

Though parents in droves moved the court and the Private Educational Institutions Registration and Regulatory Authority, not much difference was made.

Millions of parents reeling from the economic downturn across the country are worried about the private schools' tendency to churn out cash from them in the name of quality education.

The price hike of the daily essentials has put parents between the devil and the deep sea. Hardly do they manage a monthly household edible and

other budgets for other necessities, then they come across the unchecked and illegal fees charged by the private schools, sometimes two months at a time as well.

Millions of parents reeling from the economic downturn across the country

"How could you deprive students of taking annual exams, if parents did not pay double fee ie November-December," Abdul Razaq Shaikh, a local journalist told his recent experience when his three kids studying in the missionary school were barred from sitting in the exam on the pretext of non-payment of their two months fee.

Shaikh further deplored that his three kids studying in the country's big brand known for its welfare schooling system were barred from taking exams as he was late to deposit two months' Nov-Dec fee. "There is no check on them, how dare they could take two month's fee at a time violating the laws and liable to contempt of court," he said adding that to save his kids from an embarrassing situation, he took money from a friend of mine and deposited fee."

Parliamentary Secretary of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Dr. Rubaba Buledi commenting on the apathy of the private schools and helplessness of poor parents deplored that parliament has made the laws and formed the authority but implementation of these laws is not satisfactory. "Government, through its different mechanisms, is striving hard to improve the quality of education in the government-run schools," she said, adding that with improvement in the public schools, we can provide relief to the poor parents. Long-term strategy and sustainable steps taken by the government aimed at bringing reforms in the education sector would help free parents from the brutal clutches of the private school mafia running their business in the name of imparting education.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor Asim Khan

Balochistan facing dire financial crisis

Balochistan continues to face a dire financial crisis currently. By any definition, the province's current financial crisis is dire since the government has hinted to stop the salaries of employees. Chief Minister Mir Qudus Bizenjo decided to meet Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif along with all parliamentary leaders of the political parties in the Balochistan Assembly to apprise the premier about the financial crisis.

As per the statistics shared by the Balochistan government, so far, the Planning and Development (P&D) department has released Rs.70bs out of a total of around Rs.200bs under the Public Sector Development Program for the financial year 2022-23. This simply proves bad governance coupled with the serious financial crisis.

Almost half a year passed. Harsh winter has already begun and construction work in most parts of Balochistan comes to halt for around two months. The question arises that how the government would execute development projects worth Rs.130bs within three or four months under the PSDP. Definitely, the government would not be able to complete projects relating to education, health, water, roads, etc.

Such a serious financial crisis surfaced almost after a decade in Balochistan since the province's share in the National Finance Commission (NFC) award was doubled in 2009. This is irony of the fate that successive governments failed to ensure strict financial discipline to develop this most backward province of the country.

Non-development expenditures of the province continue to rise and the volume of development funds falls fast. This subsequently has the worst impact on the socio-economic condition of Balochistan.

For the prevailing financial crisis, both the government and the opposition are responsible since today's opposition is the de-facto government in Balochistan. A strict financial discipline needs to be introduced and implemented in Balochistan to improve the living standard of the people of Balochistan before the situation turns ugly turn.

Our wheat problem

Daud Khan/Ghasharib Shoukat

Wheat is the main staple food in Pakistan. Consumption is around 125 kilograms per head per year — one of the highest in the world. Wheat and wheat-based products account for 60-70% of total calories consumed. As incomes and urbanisation increase, consumers are gradually shifting towards more of a diversified diet with increased consumption of higher-value foods such as fruits, vegetables, meats and dairy products. However, for the foreseeable future wheat will remain of primary importance — and the main source of calories, especially for the poor.

One of the country's principal policy goals is to produce enough wheat to meet national needs, and if possible, a small surplus for export or to put into stock. To meet this objective, the government conducts a rigorous wheat planting campaign every year — targets for planting and yields are set and procurement targets are agreed upon. Thousands of extension agents and agriculture students are instructed to fan out across the country to

encourage and advise wheat farmers — whether they do this, and whether this has any impact is another matter. The government also spends billions on subsidising inputs and buying wheat at a fixed price which is then sold to flour millers at concessional rates to provide cheap atta to consumers.

Over the past decades, this process, despite its myriad inefficiencies, along with better seeds and production systems, has succeeded in increasing wheat production. In 1990 production was 14.4 million tons and crossed 25 million tons in 2011 — an increase of 75% in about 20 years. Since then progress has been much slower — it took 10 years before production hit a new record of 27.5 million tons in 2021 (a 10% increase in 10 years) before falling back to 26.4 million tons in 2022. Prospects for 2023 are highly uncertain as it is still not clear if lower planting, due to areas still being underwater or water-logged, will be offset by higher yields due to enhanced soil fertility caused by silt deposits.

Slower growth in wheat production has made Pakistan increasingly dependent on foreign supplies. Two to three million tons — around 10% of needs — are being imported in the last years. However, high dependence on imported wheat is of some concern. International markets have been volatile and turbulent in recent times, and this may well be a continuing feature for the coming years if not coming decades.

Trade-related decisions in the face of volatility and turbulence is difficult. The situation in the case of wheat is made even more difficult by the lack of reliable real-time data on domestic production and supplies, on regional trade flows — for example to Afghanistan, and on actual public sector stocks whose quality is doubtful and quantities are reportedly inaccurate due to thefts, pilferage and pest attacks. The difficulties of handling the wheat market became clear in 2019 when government estimates suggested a wheat surplus and some 500,000 tons were exported.

But then, as domestic market conditions tightened, the government was forced to change gears and import some 3.4 MMT to meet consumer needs and help rebuild the country's wheat stocks, at a much higher cost. These events created a public uproar and triggered an investigation by the Federal Investigation Agency which was highly critical of the government's handling of the wheat trade.

A good option for Pakistan would be to try to increase domestic wheat production. At present the average yield of wheat is around 3tons/ha, substantially lower than other comparable countries. There is a huge scope to increase this yield through relatively simple changes in the production system such as reduced tillage, increased use of certified seeds, use of seed drills, a better match between fertiliser applications and soils, and application of micro-nutrients. There is also a large potential scope to reduce on-farm and off-farm losses through improved harvesting, bulk handling and storage in modern silos.

Climate change poses problems for Pakistan as it does for many other countries. However, it also creates opportunities. Changing rainfall patterns have resulted in higher precipitation in some of the arid areas in Balochistan and Sindh. And this has expanded the potential area for wheat. With relatively minor investments, for example, in water storage (small dams) and water spreading technologies, these areas could, in a good year, get a reasonable wheat crop from post-monsoon residual moisture.

These changes and innovations require a much more efficient and dynamic production system than we have at present. There is a need for better inputs, better technology, better machinery and equipment, and better trained technical staff. And if Pakistan needs to make better use of rain-fed areas, production systems need to be agile. In low rainfall years, planting may not be viable. But in a year with good rainfall inputs, man-power and equipment need to be quickly moved into arid areas to plant wheat.

Our 'permacrisis of polycrisis'

By Mosharrar Zaidi

What country ranks 134th out of 192 countries in per capita GDP by purchasing power parity? What country is second from the bottom in the WEF's Global Gender Gap Index? What country is ranked number one in the US Holocaust Memorial Museum for Countries at Risk of Mass Killing? What country is in the top twelve in the world for risk of sovereign default?

Before you guess, here is some more data. Maybe more important.

In the list of countries that are relatively poor, this country has stayed static, in its region and globally — many countries that are as large or larger, as complex, or more complex, as complicated or more complicated, have rocketed past it in terms of GDP per capita. In the list of bottom feeding countries on the Global Gender Gap, this country is a constant, as it is at the top of the list for risk of mass killing. On the list of countries that are constantly flirting with a conversation about default, this country has been the most consistent chart topper, with at least a quarter century of constant chatter about an imminent default.

So conversations about an absence of prosperity, massive gender inequality, insecurity of life and property, and the potential for insolvency are not new conversations in this country — they are constants, all having multi-decades long intros and no coda in sight.

The kicker in all this is not the absence of prosperity, or the quantum of inequality of the sexes, or the constant risk of conflict and mass killing, or even default being constantly around the corner. The kicker is that for each and every one of these deeply worrying indicators, there is no plan for an exit, and no imminent hope of such a plan emerging.

By now, the discerning reader knows that the country in question is Pakistan. The constancy of the country's troubles — which is code for the troubles of the people of the country — is well established. What is less clear to many is that, in the words of Daniel Markey, there is, "no exit from Pakistan" for Pakistan. There is no path to a better economic future (per capita), there is no plan for improved gender equity, there is no plan to address drivers of conflict or ameliorate the risks to the security of Pakistanis, and there is no real medium-term plan for how Pakistan will exit the desperate dash to Beijing and Riyadh cycle as it shadows boxes with a sovereign default.

The polycrisis in Pakistan has the four dimensions I have tried to highlight above in the order that they matter. Microeconomic wellbeing, social exclusion, insecurity and macroeconomic dysfunction.

Ordinary Pakistanis have a standard of living that should be unacceptable to anyone anywhere

in the world, with per capita GDP (PPP) at below \$6,000 per annum. This is lower than Bangladesh and lower than India. It is less than half of the figure for Egypt and it is nine times lower than the figure for Saudi Arabia.

To add insult to the injury of being extraordinarily poor, Pakistanis live in a country where women are denied basic distributive and social justice — leading to a massive array of inter-generational problems. Malnutrition, high rates of infant mortality, high maternal mortality, low school enrolment, low literacy are all products of the original social sin in Pakistan: a massively skewed set of political and social freedoms for women.

For years, Pakistanis pointed at Saudi Arabia and Iran as places that Pakistani women could look to feel better about the oppression they face. Like every other race that Pakistan could once look comfortably upon, the score in both the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (thanks to the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman) and in the Islamic Republic of Iran (thanks to the courage of Iran's young women) is changing fast. Pakistan? The country recently had a prime minister that sought to urge women to cover up more to avoid sexual assault.

Pakistanis also live in a country where mass killings have been normalised. From the north

through the south, from the mountains to the plains, in markets, schools, hospitals and on the battlefield, Pakistani lives are treated cheaply. Most egregious in this list are the terrorist groups, the separatists and the criminals that run around the country with impunity — but watching society and state respond to obvious cases of blatant disregard for human life (like the Noor Muqaddam case, or the Shahzeb Khan case, or the Sara Inam case) reinforces the old adage: you are given the respect that you command.

Pakistanis have been killed wantonly and without consequence by Pakistan's enemies for so long, that the very concept of the sacredness of human life has been reduced to a punchline. When Pakistanis forced to the periphery of a good life complain too loudly, the state and society conspire to relegate them further into the periphery. When such peripheries explode into foreign-funded insurgencies, state and society bury their heads in the sand, hoping the noise and shrapnel will stay in places far away, where social media doesn't penetrate as lucidly as in the leafy cafes where much of English-speaking Pakistan feels optimistic about a future as dark as the coffee some of us insist on.

Perhaps the poster child for all this dysfunction is the one metric of Pakistan that has the potential to damage and

destroy the Pakistani elite the most: a sovereign default. I began a regular space in this newspaper with this column in 2008 and among my first pieces was an exploration of whether perhaps a sovereign default was a necessary step in the country's path toward normalcy. I meant to write the piece only to provoke some thinking. Almost fifteen years later, Pakistan is closer to default and more likely to complete the journey than ever before. There is still no thinking.

Why is there no thinking on such an existential issue, especially one that will permanently alter the lifestyles and standing of the Pakistani elite?

Part of the reason is that the country has enjoyed and continues to enjoy a miraculous ability to evade catastrophe by cycling through different kinds of crises. But what makes the Pakistan polycrisis of 2022 really worrying for anyone that cares to examine the seriousness of the individual crises that make up this polycrisis is that there is no new kind of crisis to stumble into. Sure, Pakistan just experienced the worst flooding on the planet, and in Pakistan's own history this summer, but look around the public discourse. Do you see any sign that it has affected the Pakistani elite? Save perhaps the tireless work being done by Sherry Rehman as the minister for climate change?

DISCOs and price hikes

By Sara Danial

The rising costs of electricity due to the non-availability of the right kind of fuel is irking consumers. DISCOs are helpless as the whole process is under the government's control.

This increase has been triggered by long-term trends such as underinvestment in natural gas and clean energy supply, and short-term developments like reductions in natural gas. Such trends have prompted the government to pump up subsidies to protect business communities leading export-oriented operations against the financial strain. As a result, the energy crisis is now contributing to the rising inflation across the country.

The government is now struggling against the current energy price spike, which has been driven by a mix of increased demand and supply disruptions caused in the wake of fluctuating exchange rates and general instability in the country.

It is important to note that if the input prices keep rising as many analysts expect, without any replaceable raw materials such as LNG and natural gas, they could take a bite out of economic growth and force power outages and load shedding. In the past

recent months, rising tariffs caused protests across the country. People in large numbers protested against exorbitant hikes in electricity bills, rising electricity tariffs and various miscellaneous taxes.

Also, electricity distribution companies have not been able to procure natural gas, despite specific instructions from the court. One must note that DISCOs are powerless in such a situation — in the sense that higher rates will not solve the energy shortage, nor are they responsible for leveraging one industry over another. In all fairness to them, they have little choice but to at least appear to be addressing the crisis they all see coming. We can hope that they might make good decisions for the public.

While both residents and commercial users are affected by fuel-cost adjustments and high tariffs, export-oriented industries are being provided natural gas, enjoying cost savings and operational efficiencies, and disrupting the industry norm. Distribution companies are facing the brunt of this privilege extended to these industries.

The reality here is that Pakistan faces an energy crisis that is mainly a product of the government's decision-making.

A shortage that has been artificially created by government restrictions on energy production, distribution, and usage. Those policies were formed beyond any external coercion, and they have played a major role in creating the crisis.

Such economic policies of the incumbent government will fail to control the rising and the economy. Pakistani authorities must step up and take measures to contain the price hikes. They must shift away from policies that directly seek to limit prices. This approach will ensure that the support provided is fair and effective on the part of the government. And while all of us agree that the global fuel prices have also had an impact on the local scenario, the government must realize that it is a driving factor behind the worsening outlook for both growth and prosperity.

In addition, broad and equitable access to alternative energy sources is a prerequisite for an effective and publicly acceptable longer-term strategy for the state to direct and distribution companies to implement. The state must devise a plan for an "emergency intervention" into the collective's power markets in an effort to stabilize electricity prices.

Floods, animals and pets

By Awais Anwer Khawaja

Pakistan has been battered by flash floods that have claimed the lives of nearly 1,500 people and one million animals, including cattle. Between 1999 and 2018, Pakistan ranked as the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change.

A low literacy rate has made Pakistani society hostile towards animals and pets. A large segment of society believes that dogs, in particular, bring bad luck.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres visited Pakistan in September and appealed the world for generous relief efforts and cooperation to mitigate the challenges faced by the country. He has called the floods a 'monsoon on steroids' and said that rich polluters have turned a blind eye to the country that has been victimized by their reckless emissions.

Some countries including the US, UK, Canada, France, Italy, UAE and Turkey have sent aid to help the country repair the damage caused. Several relief items including tents, medicines, dry food, clothes and other essential items have been donated. But the most vulnerable members of the ecosystem — animals and livestock — have escaped the attention of almost everyone. Lumpy skin disease, an infection that causes nodules on the skin of

cattle, was already rife in the southern parts of Pakistan, and now the cataclysmic floods have further exacerbated the misery of these animals. The floods have already washed away several crops and agricultural produce. The shortage of food and lack of medical facilities are not only making the lives of the flood-affected people miserable but also creating difficulties for animals.

Climate change is also affecting migratory birds that travel long distances to escape the harsh winter, flying all the way from Siberia through the international migration route known as the Indus Flyway, over the Karakoram, Hindu Kush, and Sulaiman ranges (Koh Sulaiman) along the Indus, down to the delta.

These migratory birds include ducks and waders, geese, teal, houbara bustard, cranes, pintail, mallard, spoon bills, raptors, and passerines such as warblers, pipits and buntings. Some species, including the common and Demoiselle cranes, snipe and pelican enter through Kurram Agency, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

More floods are likely to cause severe damage to the natural habitat of these migratory birds. Unethical hunting, pollution in the wetlands and anthropogenic structures abutting the

wetlands are some of the threats faced by these birds.

Bird hunting in Pakistan is one of the favourite sports of the young royals from the Middle East. In 2014, a foreign national was reported to have killed 2,000 houbara bustards even though he had the permit to hunt only 100 birds. Pakistan keeps ignoring such violations because of its economic woes — it relies on friendly countries for financial bailouts. Such economic compulsions pose threats to the safety of migratory birds, especially houbara bustard, in this country.

Some duck species are also facing massive depopulation, including white-eyed pochard, marbled teal and garganey. Cranes, popular for their size and unique calls, and complex behaviour, are the favourite prey of hunters.

Animal cruelty is also rife in Pakistan where thousands of dogs get brutally culled every year by state authorities, particularly in parts of Sindh, to curb the uncontrolled population of stray dogs. Government officials do not allocate a sufficient amount of funds for neutering and other humane ways of controlling the population of stray dogs.

Poaching is also rampant in Pakistan with pangolins fast losing their population.

Pangolin scales are high in demand for medicinal use. Gilgit-Baltistan is also home to the trophy hunting of ibexes and 'markhors', both rare species of the goat family.

There are other financial issues that indirectly affect animals. Pakistan sets aside a huge part of its annual budget for non-development expenses. The huge gap between its exports and imports has caused a massive budget deficit that in turn has brought the nation to the verge of default. Pakistan, a few months back, had to restrict its imports to balance its foreign reserves. As a result, the import of pet food was also banned. There is no local production of pets' vaccines and their dry food. Thus, the ban was likely to cause a shortage of pets' medical supplies and dry food. It rightly attracted backlash from pet owners that forced the government to lift the ban. But now the prices of pet food items have skyrocketed.

Pakistan has not been able to build enough reservoirs to store the water that travels in the monsoon season from the peaks of Himalayas to the highlands of KP, onto the plains of Punjab and finally entering the Arabian Sea. Discord among the four provinces of the country has swayed the focus of the dam-building

process from a technological challenge to political brandishing. Sindh has repeatedly expressed its reservations that the coastal line of the province is gradually submerging in the Arabian sea, and the building of dams will further accelerate the land erosion process as the flow of water will be crippled, which is a natural deterrent against the submerging of the coastal line in the sea. Distrust, among the provinces, in water distribution resources, is also one of the reasons Pakistan does not have enough water reservoirs. With heavy rainfall this year, the country's agricultural produce has been badly damaged. This has caused a famine-like situation for humans, cattle and livestock.

People living in the developed world are not fully aware of the damage caused by the apocalyptic floods in Pakistan and other vulnerable countries, which was triggered by their extravagant and environmentally insensitive lifestyle. Pakistan cannot take enough measures on its own to counter the challenges posed by climate change.

It is time the biggest carbon polluters took effective measures to deal with the climate challenge. Their failure to do so will pose threats to humans and animals alike.

Animal cruelty in Pakistan

Syed Mohammad Ali

The indifference, callousness, and contempt that so many people exhibit toward animals is evil first because it results in great suffering in animals, and second because it results in an incalculably great impoverishment of the human spirit. I did not pen these words. Albert Einstein did. Islam also forbids treating animals cruelly or killing them except for food. Zabiha rules stipulate how an animal to be slaughtered must not be mistreated or caused undue pain. Yet, animal cruelty is rampant and exists in varied forms in countries like ours.

We live in a country where political leaders have been known to hold political rallies with caged and chained lions, and where animals like turtles given away as party favours at children's birthdays. Many well-to-do people pay a lot of money to purchase expensive cats, dogs, or birds but treat them callously. Cruelty towards animals is not the reserve of rich people only. Cruelty to animals especially donkeys, horses and mules is also widespread. These animals are overworked, under-fed, and harshly beaten by their owners.

Some recent attempts at humane dog population management and mass vaccinations in Karachi have dissipated. Instead,

the recent uproar following the negligence of animal owners and attacks by guard dogs on pedestrians in Karachi unleashed another unwarranted attacks on dogs all over the country. Several neighbourhoods started instigating municipal organisations to shoot stray dogs on sight. Use of strychnine poison was once again allowed to poison dogs.

There is a general absence of adequate laws related to animal welfare and animal slaughter, and the existing laws that exist are not adequately implemented. Pakistan's Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1890) aims to protect many animals, including draught animals. This law is however outdated and does not reflect the prevalent scientific, cultural, or commercial compulsions pertaining to animal welfare.

It is time to update this law to protect both pet and wild animals, to institute mechanisms for their care, and define consequence for those who are neglectful towards animals.

It is encouraging that the Halal Authority Act (2015) has not only mandated humane treatment of animals throughout the slaughter process, but also prohibited animals from seeing one another being slaughtered. However, there has been little implementation of this law.

While animal abandon-

ment is illegal in Pakistan, there is scant regulation on how animal owners should care for their animals. Moreover, zoos across Pakistan are notorious for their poor conditions. Prompted by international criticism over the Islamabad zoo's maltreatment of the elephant, Kaavan, the Islamabad High Court issued an unprecedented ruling last year. It ordered that the entire zoo of over four hundred animals to be closed and all the animals within it to be transferred to appropriate wildlife sanctuaries in the short period of two months. The rush to empty the zoo caused the death of a pair of lions which passed away, two days apart, during their transfer from the zoo to a farmhouse in Kasur city instead of a sanctuary as had been directly by the court.

Pakistan also urgently needs to enact legislation detailing specific welfare requirements for the rearing of farm animals during distinct phases of rearing, transport, and slaughter. Such requirements must be legally binding and species-specific and aligned with international animal welfare standards. Regular inspections of farms and slaughter establishments would have to be carried out with a special focus on animal welfare or the situation on the ground will not change for the better.

PEW warns of food insecurity amid differences of centre, provinces over wheat issue

LAHORE: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Tuesday warned of severe food insecurity amid endless differences between the central and provincial governments over wheat issue.

In a statement issued here, President PEW Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that for the first time in the country's history central and provincial officials are holding meetings after taking critical decisions which is amazing.

He said that keeping the price of wheat uniform across the country has now become difficult

as the government lacks resources and provinces are taking decisions without consulting other important stakeholders.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that Sindh has increased wheat procurement prices by 45 per cent unilaterally which was a record in the history of Pakistan. Soon, Punjab increased its price by 26 per cent and now the same province is planning to revise the price upward leaving the center puzzled, he added.

The President PEW said that wheat is being imported at different prices while the private

sector, hoarders, and profiteers are also using the opportunity to reap maximum benefits.

Currently, the three main stakeholders of wheat, which include Punjab, Sindh, and the central government, are not agreeing on the price of wheat and are busy giving priority to their political interests which is unfortunate. The food security situation is not improving but rather deteriorating, hoarders are taking full advantage of this situation, while the people are paying the price of politically-motivated decisions. INP



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi write comments on condolences book over the sad demise of former Chinese President, Jiang Zemin at Chinese Embassy.

Ji Chief, Turkish Envoy discuss issues of mutual interest

ISLAMABAD: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Sirajul Haq and Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Pacaci discussed bilateral relations of the two countries and matters of mutual interests during a meeting held here on Tuesday.

Director JI Foreign Affairs Department, Asif Luqman Qazi was also present on the occasion.

Speaking on occasion, Sirajul Haq said that JI highly values brotherly relations with Turkey and Pakistan and wanted to see Ummah united for common cause. He said both the countries could provide leadership to the Muslim world to cope with the different challenges particularly Islamophobia.

Appreciating the role of Turkish President on issues of Palestine and Kashmir, the JI chief said that both the nations supported each other on Kashmir and Northern Cyprus. He highlighted the Islamic world should set aside their mutual differences and pose unity among their ranks. He said unity among Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran was the need of the hour to counter the influence of western civilization. He said that Turkey and

Pakistan were two bodies with a single soul, and they had centuries old religious and cultural relations.

Siraj said Turkey occupied a distinct position in the Muslim world and the government of President Erdogan was the torch-bearer of great Turkish civilization and glory.

The JI chief said that the eyes of the entire Muslim world were on Turkey.

The Turkish ambassador expressed his gratitude to the people of Pakistan and the JI chief for expressing their love and unanimity with the Turkish people. INP

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Three injured as tenants, shop owner clash in Sukkur

SUKKUR: Three people were injured in clash between tenants and shop owner here on Tuesday. Police arrested two culprits, recovered illegal arms and ammunition from their possession.

According to details, over dispute of changing locks, the tenants and shop owner clashed at Muhmmadi Chowk in jurisdiction of A-Section police station. Three people were injured in the clash and shifted to hospital.

In line with the directives of SP Sukkur Singhar Malik, the police conducted snap checking in jurisdiction of A-Section and Abad police stations jurisdictions and arrested two culprits Zulfiqar Kaladi and Sajjad Mangi besides recovering two unlicensed TT Pistols, magazines and bullets from their possession.

Separate cases in clash and arms recovery were registered and investigations were underway. INP

Pakistan's seafood exports to China up 41pc in Jan-Oct 2022

BEIJING: Pakistan's seafood exports to China topped \$166.56 million, an increase of 41% in the month of January-October year-on-year, while last year it was \$118.07 million, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday quoting the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC).

GACC's data shows that in the first ten months this year, Pakistan's exports of frozen fish, commodity code (03038990), to China, crossed \$45.47 million, which were \$21.80 million during the same period last year.

In terms of volume, in January-October more than 22331.728 tons of frozen fish were exported to China whereas last year during the same period it was 13084.984 tons.

Data shows that in January-October this year exports of fresh & chilled crabs, commodity code

(03063399), to China touched \$22.46 million.

However last year in the same period they were \$17.14 million, an increase of 31%. In terms of quantity, in the first ten months of this year it was 3174.391 tons and last year in the same duration it was 2445.136 tons, an increase of nearly 30%.

Conferring to the data, in January-October this year, exports of molluscs and shellfish, commodity code (16055900), to China, crossed \$19.77 million, whereas they were just \$1.89 million during the same period last year.

Ghulam Qadir, Commercial Counsellor, Pakistani Embassy in Beijing, told CEN that China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement helped many Pakistani products enter the Chinese market, and Pakistan's seafood exports to China are increasing day-by-day due to this agreement.

"Now many Pakistani seafood exporters enjoy zero-traffic duty on seafood items while they are getting more awareness about China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement.

Recently, we registered new species under the 2nd phase of CPFTA which helped increase exports to China and we are negotiating with GACC to add more species to our seafood export list under CPFTA," he added.

Qadir further said that many Pakistani seafood exporters want to increase collaboration with Chinese partners to enhance exports by using China's latest technologies, techniques, and best practices in this field.

He said that the Marine Fisheries Department (MFD) in Sindh and GACC are closely cooperating to enhance seafood exports to China by adding new species under zero-tariff rate. INP

'Pakistan will not face us sanctions on procuring oil from Russia'

ISLAMABAD: State Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik has asserted that Pakistan will not face any United States (US) sanctions on procuring oil from Russia.

Talking to journalists in Islamabad, the state minister noted that several European countries have procured oil from Russia recently and did not face any sanctions from the United States (US).

Musadik Malik further said that the incumbent government was discussing the purchase of oil and gas with Russia and hopefully, all details of the deals will be made public by January 20.

Speaking of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI)

claims of importing oil from Russia, the party was only making tall claims as the minutes of their talks for cheap oil are nowhere to be found.

The petroleum minister claimed that when he asked Ambassador of Russia about the previous government's regarding oil pact, the official said the previous government only talked to them about the gas pipeline.

He claimed that the minutes of their meetings with Moscow officials can prove their claims. In response to a question, Malik said that government was not deliberating on imposing any economic emergency, reiterating that the country would not default.

Musadik Malik further said that the incumbent government was discussing the purchase of oil and gas with Russia and hopefully, all details of the deals will be made public by January 20.

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NAB green signals unfreezing of Ishaq Dar's assets

LAHORE: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lahore on Tuesday issued a dispatch to the district administration to unfreeze Federal Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar's assets.

According to details, a dispatch has been issued to the district administration in Lahore to release the frozen assets of federal minister Ishaq Dar.

The dispatch stated that frozen bank accounts containing Rs 5 billion, Rs 580 million, Rs 80 lacs, Rs 73,000, Rs 2,000, Rs 432, and Rs 239 should be released.

Furthermore, Dar's assets will be released when the NAB letter is confirmed. INP

Govt urged to release vegetable containers stuck at Karachi Port

KARACHI: Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Associations Tuesday urged the government to release the vegetable containers stuck at the Karachi port.

Containers loaded with onions and garlic are stuck at the Karachi port as the commercial banks have refused to provide clearing documents to the importers.

The worth of stuck vegetables is said to be \$5.5 million. The association has said delay in clearance of the vegetable containers will ultimately result in a price hike in the market.

The government has been urged by the Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Association to ensure immediate clearance of the imported onion and garlic. INP



ISLAMABAD: Vice Foreign minister of Argentina Pablo Tettamanti called on Deputy Speaker National Assembly Zahid Akram Durran.

Traders, PTI leaders condemn authorities' move to seal Centaurus Mall

ISLAMABAD: Traders and PTI leaders on Tuesday denounced Islamabad authorities' move to seal Centaurus Mall a high-rise shopping centre located in the capital's F-8 sector on the confluence of Jinnah and Faisal avenues overnight, claiming that it was an act of political revenge.

However, a notice pasted outside the mall states: "The premises has been sealed on account of non-comforming use by order of director building control-city, CDA (Capital Development Authority). In a December 2 notification, the CDA said that the orders to seal the mall were being issued on account of the failure to remove building violations.

The notification stated, "Consequent upon the persistent non-compliance to remove building violations conveyed vide numerous 15 days notices served by Building Control Directorate and a show-cause notice the sealing order of the subject premises/ property is hereby issued, in accordance with Islamabad Capital Territory Building Control Regulations 2020 framed thereunder CDA Ordinance 1960 and terms and conditions of allotment/ sale agreement."

The PTI linked the sealing of the mall to criticism of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif by Azad Jammu and Kashmir premier Sardar

Tanveer Ilyas.

PM Shehbaz inaugurated the refurbishment project of units 5 and 6 of the Mangla Dam Hydroelectric Power Plant, built on the Jhelum river in Mangla area of AJK, on Monday where he addressed the project's inauguration ceremony. As he was winding up his speech, Ilyas interrupted him and asked what he had done for AJK.

In a video clip that went viral on social media, PM Shehbaz could be seen gesturing to the AJK premier to sit down and raise his concerns after the speech.

According to a witness, after wrapping up his speech, PM Shehbaz hurriedly left the venue without heading to AJK PM Ilyas. INP

Gas supply schedule announced for Punjab, KP

KARACHI: Consumers in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) provinces are likely to face 16-hour gas outages this winter season, whereas, the SNGPL MD unveils a new schedule.

Gas outages are likely to intensify in Punjab and KP provinces.

The Managing Director of Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) Ali J Hamdani said, "Only eight hours of gas will be supplied to domestic consumers in the span of 24 hours across Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)."

While speaking to the media in Lahore, Ali J Hamdani blamed Ukraine and Russia for the gas crisis saying, that the increase in RLNG price in the global market was the outcome of the Ukraine-Russia war, which affects the supply across Pakistan.

Not much RLNG could be bought this year, due to the expensive RLNG in the global market. Meanwhile, people are installing compressors and stealing gas worth billions.

MD SNGPL urged that gas prices should be increased as they are unable to purchase expensive gas and resell it at a low price. INP

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ISLAMABAD: PML-N senator Nuzhat Aamir giving notification of PML-N Federal Capital Woman Wing President to Farrah Khan.

MoU signed for promotion, popularization of space science, technology

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Science Foundation and Institute of Space Technology on Tuesday signed a memorandum of understanding for promotion and popularization of science, technology and its application. The MoU signing ceremony held in the ministry of Science and Technology was witnessed by the Federal Minister Agha Hassan Baloch, the Secretary GM Memon and other senior officers of the ministry, PSF and IST. Chairman PSF Prof Dr. Shahid Mahmood Baig and Vice Chancellor IST Major General (R) Rehan Abdul Baqi signed the MoU on behalf of concerned institutions. In this programme of cooperation, the PSF has planned to organize a teenager Space Maker Camp for young Pakistani students, for which Chinese leading organization the China Youth Science Centre (CYSC) of China Association of Science and Technology (CAST) has very kindly provided ten space maker kits to PSF.

The PSF, today handed over these kits to IST and the both would jointly undertake the space maker camp. Teenage student will be trained to make space balloons by these kits which would reach up to 30 kilometres in the space. The objective of this MoU was to define the general framework of Scientific and technological cooperation between the parties.

In addition the MOU is aimed on getting benefits from each other's expertise through mutual collaboration and interaction in joint scientific activities. The MoU will also cover the areas of joint management, organizing and preparation of participation in international Olympiads, moots, galas and competitions.

In his remarks regarding the space maker camp, Federal Minister Agha Hassan Baloch said that this was the first program of its nature & it would borne positive results by uplifting the teenager students' scientific skills and harness their talent in the right direction. INP

Chinese investors donate 400 tents for flood affectees

ISLAMABAD: All-Pakistan Chinese Enterprises Association (APCEA) has donated 400 tents to the people of flood-hit sites across Pakistan.

In this connection, a ceremony was held at the Chinese Embassy which was attended by businessmen, social activists, and diplomats.

During the occasion, Vice Chairman APCEA, Mr. Sun Youcheng remarked Pakistan-China friendship has always stood the test of time, in the face of all

disasters.

He also shared the APCEA contribution of Rs15.5 million to the Prime Minister's Flood Relief Fund 2022 in August and since then it had launched various rounds of donations.

He also expressed his gratitude to IWCCI and JWP for their valuable assistance in this regard.

President IWCCI, Ms. Rizwana Asif expressed her heartfelt gratitude to the government of China and the business community for their consistent support in these testing

times.

She especially thanked APCEA for its generous donation of 200 tents.

Chief Coordinator Jamhoori Wattan Party Balochistan and Chairman Municipal Committee Dera Bugti, Mr. Mir Chakkar Bugti thanked APCEA for its donation of 200 tents that have provided shelter to 200 families which are facing the impact of the flood.

These families have no roof over their heads and are struggling even more so due to winters.

Earlier today, JWP held a ceremony in Dera Bugti, Balochistan, acknowledging APCEA's donation and celebrating the Pakistan-China friendship with the local communities.

Minister Counsellor, Mr. Xie Guoxiang lauded APCEA as the representative of the Chinese Business community in Pakistan and its efforts in leading social and economic contributions.

He acknowledged APCEA's donation of 400 tents to IWCCI and JWP. He also remarked

that China has been on top in the list of countries that have helped Pakistan in the flood crisis with donations exceeding 644.1 million RMB.

Ms. Naima Ansari, Former President of IWCCI also requested China to play a proactive role in Pakistan's economic recovery and reiterated Pakistan's strong desire to deepen cooperation with China in areas of green development, climate resilience, and disaster management. INP



MUZAFFARABAD: Workers of PTI shouting slogans during protest in favor of their demands outside press club in the city.

EC has authority to take action under constitution: CJP

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial has remarked Election Commission (EC) has authority to take action under the constitution. Justice Athar Minallah remarked a constitutional institution was made dysfunctional apparently due to the order of high court. Supreme Court (SC) while directing high court to decide the case of contempt of election commission against Imran Khan, Fawad Chaudhry and Asad Umar soon wrapped up the case to the extent of SC. The court maintained in its order that according to election commission Lahore High Court (LHC) has restrained them from issuing order against PTI leadership. Lahore high court has not stopped from initiating contempt of election commission proceedings but it has stopped from giving final decision. As per law the proceedings of contempt of election commission will continue. A 3-member bench of SC presided over by the CJP took up the matter for hearing Tuesday. The counsel for Election Commission (EC) told the court LHC has restrained EC from taking action against Imran Khan, Fawad Chaudhry and Asad Umar. Justice Ayesha Malik remarked the action will be taken when the proceedings of contempt of election commission matter is completed. No high court has stopped election commission from initiating proceedings. The election commission has stopped contempt of election commission proceedings on its own after October. SC order will be premature. Lahore High Court order is not restraining election commission from initiating contempt of election proceedings. The plea of election commission for clubbing the pending cases in high court is premature. Election commission should tell that how the contempt of commission proceedings has been initiated.

Counsel for election commission told the court section 10 of election act allows election commission to launch contempt proceedings. Imran Khan, Fawad Chaudhry and Asad Umar are not appearing before election commission. High court orders have stopped election commission. The counsel for election commission requested the court to issue orders to the high courts to decide the petitions filed against the contempt of election commission soon besides ordering Imran Khan, Fawad Chaudhry and Asad Umar to appear before election commission. The PTI had challenged the notices pertaining to contempt of election commission and powers in high courts. The election commission had resorted to SC for issuance of order for clubbing the cases which are running in various high courts. As per law the proceedings of contempt of election commission will continue. A 3-member bench of SC presided over by the CJP took up the matter for hearing Tuesday. The counsel for Election Commission (EC) told the court LHC has restrained EC from taking action against Imran Khan, Fawad Chaudhry and Asad Umar. Justice Ayesha Malik remarked the action will be taken when the proceedings of contempt of election commission matter is completed. No high court has stopped election commission from initiating proceedings. The election commission has stopped contempt of election commission proceedings on its own after October. SC order will be premature. Lahore High Court order is not restraining election commission from initiating contempt of election proceedings. The plea of election commission for clubbing the pending cases in high court is premature. Election commission should tell that how the contempt of commission proceedings has been initiated. INP



QUETTA: JUI-F Secretary General Senator Abdul Ghafoor Haideri addressing a press conference.

Newborn snatched from mother's hand in Karachi

KARACHI: Unidentified men snatched a newborn girl from the hands of her mother in Karachi's Baldia town. According to details, a woman who was coming back after a medical checkup of her newborn in a public transport bus faced a shocking situation when some unidentified men came and snatched the plastic cot wherein her child was resting. The mother, while narrating her ordeal to the police, said that she kept the baby in plastic cot to save her from the cold breeze but feels that the abductors were some robbers who thought she was keeping money or valuables in the covered cot. "My wife wrapped our daughter in the plastic cot to keep her warm, the accused snatched her in no time, and run away." The husband stated in First Information Report. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Keamari Fida Hussain told the media that an investigation into the incident has been launched, they are receiving CCTV footage of the incident, which will help start the search for the suspects. At present, the whereabouts of the baby girl and her kidnappers are unknown. INP

Govt urged to formulate Pakistan National Healthy Diet Policy

ISLAMABAD: Speakers of consultation session on Tuesday urged the government to formulate a Pakistan National Healthy Diet Policy to encourage healthy eating practices and to address the burden of disease in the country. Led by Director Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) Steve Godfrey, a team of the alliance currently visiting Pakistan, held a consultation session with Director Nutrition/Health Programs, Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination (NHSR&C), Government of Pakistan Dr. Baseer Khan Achakzai. In the discussion, the need for a National Health Diet Policy for Pakistan was emphasized, Steve Godfrey, shared the GAIN's vision on food systems transformation and healthy diets. Godfrey said that globally, three billion people cannot afford a healthy diet and in Pakistan, more than two third of the country's population which is about 68 percent of Pakistanis cannot afford a healthy diet. Poor diet contributes to six of the top ten risk factors for the global disease burden, Godfrey said, adding that we are confident that this policy provides a roadmap for the country to ensure the provision of a nutritious and healthy diet for its population but also overcome the challenges posed by a high prevalence of malnutrition. "Dr. Baseer Khan Achakzai, Director of Nutrition/Health Programs, MNHSR&C said, "To address the challenge of ensuring the availability and consumption of healthy, safe, and nutritious diets by all population groups, the Government of Pakistan is committed to formulating a National Healthy Diet Policy with the technical assistance of Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN). This policy will provide strategic guidance for the country to ensure the provision of a healthy and nutritious diet. INP

Continuity of policies vital for development of institutions: Governor

LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman has said that the continuity of policies is very important for the development of institutions. He said that all political parties should agree on the Charter of Economy so that policies do not change with the change of governments. He was speaking as special guest during the All Pakistan Students Societies Conference held at Government College University on Tuesday. In the conference, a panel discussion was organized to deal with the challenges faced by higher education sector. Vice Chancellor Prof. Asghar Zaidi and other educational experts also addressed. Addressing the conference, Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that the international ranking of Pakistani universities is improving, which is a welcome thing. He said that during the Muslim League (N) tenures, there was a record increase in the number of universities and the funding of HEC. He said that women education and women empowerment is very important. He said that Muslim League (N) established the first women's university, Fatima Jinnah Women's University. He said that the education and empowerment of women is very important for the development of the country. Governor Punjab further said that there is a need to strengthen the links of academia with the industry and align research with the local industry. He said that students should make research a part of their lives, adding he said that applied research should be promoted in the universities. On this occasion, Vice Chancellor Government College University, Professor Asghar Zaidi said that universities need INP

IHC adjourns hearing in Noor Mukadam case till today

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday adjourned hearing till today Wednesday on various appeals in Noor Mukadam murder case. The court also served notices to respondents on a petition seeking medical analysis of the main accused Zahir Jaffar. A two-judge bench comprising Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Sardar Ijaz Ishaq Khan heard the appeals of the plaintiff and accused in the murder case. At the outset of the hearing, defence lawyer Usman Khosa pleaded that the record of the phone talk of the accused with his parents didn't exist, adding that the forensic analysis of the mobile was also not done. The mobile in possession was different from the one in the record, he said, adding that the IMEI number of the mobile of the victim girl was also different. The lawyer said that the FIR had mentioned the telephonic conversation of Noor Mukadam with her parents but the mobiles were not taken into custody. He said that WhatsApp data could be recovered but no such attempt was made. The defence lawyer said that the mobile of Zahir Jaffar was recovered from his house's almira after seven days after the incident and its forensic analysis couldn't be done due to a broken screen. He said Noor Mukadam had arrived at the house of the accused herself on July 18, 2021, and returned on the 19th. Later, she again came wherein the accused forcibly stopped her from leaving. To a question, the lawyer said that the two bags seen in the CCTV footage couldn't be recovered, adding that the trial court relied on CCTV only. The advocate said that the identification of the accused on CCTV cameras was also necessary. INP

SC's orders, FIR of Arshad Sharif's murder registered

ISLAMABAD: Following the directions of Supreme Court, the Islamabad police on Tuesday registered a first information report (FIR) of journalist Arshad Sharif murder. In FIR registered at Ramna police station of the federal capital, three accused Waqar Ahmed, Khurram Ahmed and Tariq Ahmed Wasi have been nominated. Earlier on the day, Supreme Court directed the interior secretary to register the FIR of brutal killing of the senior journalist. Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial took suo motu notice of the incident after which the orders were issued. Earlier, notices were issued to Foreign Affairs Secretary Asad Majeed, Information and Broadcasting Secretary Shahera Shahid, Federal Investigation Agency Director General (DG) Mohsin Butt, DG Intelligence Bureau, the interior secretary and president of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) Afzal Butt. INP

Progress on development, maintenance work at Parliament Lodges, in family suites discussed

ISLAMABAD: The Senate House Committee discussed the status of development work at Parliament Lodges and progress on maintenance work in family suites as demanded by Senators. Chaired by Sardar Muhammad Shafiq Tareen, the meeting of Senate House Committee held at Parliament Lodges was attended by Senator Falak Naz, Senator Rubina Khalid, Senator Shahdat Awan, Senator Muhammad Tahir Bizenjo, Senator Dr. Afnan Ullah Khan, Senator Ejaz Ahmed Chaudhary and senior officers from the CDA along with all concerned. The agenda brought to the table included implementation status of recommendations of the Committee of the meeting held on 8th September, 2022. Also discussed were status of under construction additional block of Parliament Lodges and progress on maintenance work in family suites as demanded by Senators. The meeting commenced with reviewing implementation status of the recommendations made in the meeting held on 8th September, 2022. The issue of Lodge occupancy of non-authorized individuals was raised. The Committee stressed the need to ensure that all residential units were being occupied by authorised individuals. It was asserted that an occupancy list be submitted to the Committee in the next meeting. INP

Centre, provinces differences to result in food insecurity

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Tuesday said endless differences between the central and provincial governments over wheat issue the country may face a severe food security issue. For the first time in the country's history central and provincial officials are holding meetings after taking critical decisions which is amazing, it said. Keeping the price of wheat uniform across the country has now become difficult as the government lacks resources and provinces are taking decisions without consulting other important stakeholders, said Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President PREW. He said that Sindh has increased wheat procurement prices by 45 percent unilaterally which was a record in the history of Pakistan. Soon, Punjab increased its price by 26 percent and now the same province is planning to revise the price upward leaving the center puzzled, he added. Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that wheat is being imported at different prices while the private sector, hoarders, and profiteers are also using the opportunity to reap maximum benefits. Currently, the three main stakeholders of wheat, which include Punjab, Sindh, and the central government, are not agreeing on the price of wheat and are busy giving priority to their political interests which is unfortunate. The food security situation is not improving but rather deteriorating, hoarders are taking full advantage of this situation, while the people are paying the price of politically-motivated decisions. For the first time in the country's history central and provincial officials are holding meetings after taking critical decisions which is amazing, it said.

30 years completed since Babri Masjid demolished in Ayodhya

ISLAMABAD: The 6th December, marks 30 years since extremist Hindus backed by state apparatus reduced to rubble the historic Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. According to a report released by Kashmir Media Service, the painful scenes of Babri Masjid demolition by BJP-RSS led Hindu mob on this day in 1992 are still fresh in the minds of Muslims across the world. Babri Masjid demolition was not a case of mob frenzy going out of control but elaborately planned by top Hindutva leaders. Through a biased verdict in November 2019, Indian Supreme Court had allowed the Hindus to construct a temple at the site of the historic Babri Masjid. Ironically, the then Chief Justice of India, Justice Ranjan Gogoi, was later rewarded for pronouncing verdict in Babri Masjid case that was in line with a key ideological commitment of BJP. He was picked for Rajya Sabha by BJP-led Indian government after ruling in favor of Hindus in the Babri Masjid case. The Indian judiciary gave priority to Hindutva ideology while announcing verdict in the Babri Masjid demolition case. It could not be given any other name except for travesty of justice that Indian judiciary acquitted BJP veterans like Advani involved in demolition of the historic mosque. In India, particularly under Modi, the KMS report said, religious sites of Muslims are vandalized by Hindutva forces with impunity. RSS-backed BJP has marked thousands of mosques for demolition and to build temples in their place in India. Even Muslim names of institutions, places and highways are being rechristened to Hindu names. The situation has turned so ugly for Muslims that even animals have more rights than Muslims in India. They are tortured and killed in broad daylight on the pretext of eating beef and transporting cattle. The fact is the RSS-inspired BJP government is planning ethnic cleansing of Muslims, which needs urgent attention by the global community as there has already been a warning of possible genocide of Muslims in India and Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. INP

FM to pay three-day official visits to Indonesia, Singapore from Today

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will embark on three-day official visits to Indonesia and Singapore from Wednesday. In Bali, Indonesia, the Foreign Minister will hold a bilateral meeting with Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi and will attend 15th Bali Democracy Forum and International Conference on Afghan Women's Education. At the Bali Democracy Forum, the Foreign Minister will underscore Pakistan's commitment to democratic values and the importance of democracy in responding to modern day challenges. At the International Conference on Afghan Women's Education, he will highlight Pakistan's efforts for lasting peace and development in Afghanistan, including the importance of equal access to education for all segments of society. In Singapore, the Foreign Minister will hold a meeting with his Singaporean counterpart Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan and will also call on President Halimah Yacob. He will discuss a wide spectrum of bilateral relations during these meetings. The Foreign Minister's visits to Indonesia and Singapore are a reflection of high priority that Pakistan accords to its relations with ASEAN countries, and its commitment. INP



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner Dr. Christian Turner along with UNDP Consultant Sir Michael Barber called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

Pakistan lacks substantial information, data capacities, says experts

ISLAMABAD: Stressing the need for strengthening structures at community level to reduce the impact of disasters and effective social protection services delivery, experts said that financing to upgrade and modernize weather forecasting systems and building the capacity of communities can play a crucial role in responding to disasters in future. This was the crux of a panel discussion titled: "Adaptive Social Protection: Preparing for Future Disasters", on the 2nd day of 25th Sustainable Development Conference (SDC) organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and jointly held alongside UNESCAP's 6th South and Southwest Asia High-level Political Forum and Policy Dialogue on SDGs. Mr Gul Najam Jami, Senior Technical Advisor of the World Bank, Pakistan, said the local communities have tremendous potential to adapt and respond to emerging challenges. However, the focus needs to be paid on strengthening linkages between the stakeholders and building resilience of the communities through capacity enhancement initiatives. Ms Anum Zeb, the Programme Coordinator Climate Advocacy, Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), was of view that currently Pakistan's seasonal based forecast has an accuracy of 60-75%, which acts as a hurdle in designing Early Action Protocol for Forecast Based Financing. Therefore, he said, we need to invest in our weather forecasting systems. Moreover, systems should be in place for data sharing, risk assessment, particularly area-wise assessment for effective social protection response. Ms Shazia Maqsood Amjad, Executive Director, Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy, highlighted that the duplication of efforts during the response as social protection needs to be minimized. The various actors such as the government, NGOs, and other organizations should harmonize their response strategy. Working with local. INP

Men's apparel exports from Pakistan to China up 17% in Jan-Oct 2022

BEIJING: Pakistani men's apparel exports to China amounted to \$21.03 million, up more than 17% in the first 10 months of 2022 as compared with the same period in 2021, as per the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC), China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday. According to the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China, men's or boys' apparel (commodity code 61034200), increased by 15.29% worth \$11.85 million while last year in the same period it was \$10.28 million. Data further showed that men's or boys' trousers, and breeches, nes, of cotton (commodity code 62034290) up 16.42% and crossed \$6.49 million in the first 10 months of 2022, whereas in the same period last year it was \$5.58 million. The bilateral trade in textile sectors improved very fast. Women's garments exports from Pakistan to China crossed \$8.32 million while home textiles crossed \$6.74 million, witnessing an increase of 29% as compared with last year in the same period which was \$5.25 million. Asif Muhammad Sulehri CEO of Brisbane Group of Companies in Sialkot and textile exporter told China Economic Net that three major factors are behind the increasing export of Men's clothing to China. Pakistan is a major producer of cotton crops, and it is cheaper as compared to China so it has a benefit over them, he said, adding that Pakistan has cheap labor compared to China which is cost-effective for men's apparel exports to China. "In January 2020, Pakistan and China entered into the second phase of the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (CPFTA2), under which China has eliminated tariffs on 313 priority tariff lines of Pakistan's export and out of the 313 high-priority products that Pakistan can now export without duty payments to China. INP



KHANPUR: England spectator visiting Jaulian Buddhist Stupa after Pak-England test match.