

QUETTA VOICE

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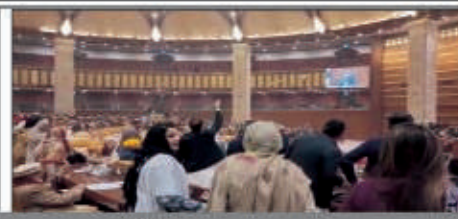
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ECP issues arrest warrants for Imran, other PTI leaders in contempt cases



Chaos grips Punjab Assembly yet again as lawmakers trade slogans

Delay in purchasing wheat main reason behind flour crisis in Balochistan

Syed Ali Shah

QUETTA: Delayed and less purchase of wheat was the underlying reason behind the prevailing wheat crisis in Balochistan. The provincial food department purchased only 290,000 bags of wheat from Balochistan's green belt Naseerabad in April last year. Although, the department had to purchase one million bags of 100kgs wheat as per the requirement of the province.

"There was a political crisis last year and the provincial government failed to give importance to the wheat purchase", a well-placed official of the food department said. He requested anonymity since he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Food department fails to purchase 1 million 100kgs bags from the Naseerabad division

The Balochistan food department purchases one million bags of 100kgs wheat at per annum from Naseerabad, Jaffarabad, Sohbat Pur and Jhal Magsi to meet its flour demand,



the official mentioned. Former Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan and others had announced to submission of a no-confidence

motion against CM Mir Qudus Bizenjo. "Purchasing wheat was secondary since the government was busy to count-

er the no-confidence motion", he said. The yearly requirement of Balochistan is 150,00,000 bags. The

Punjab government and PASCO also failed to provide timely wheat supply to the provincial government to overcome the flour crisis. PASCO has agreed to provide only 200,000 bags of wheat to Balochistan out of a total demand of 600,000 wheat bags to the province. Secretary Food Balochistan Ayaz Khan Mandokhail told a meeting on Tuesday.

Gichki chairs a meeting regarding flour crisis

The Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Imran Gichki chaired a high-level meeting to review the situation developed in the aftermath worsening flour crisis. The meeting thoroughly reviewed the flour crisis and made a number of decisions to overcome the flour crisis in Balochistan.

Flour prices skyrocketed recently as the 20-kilo-gram flour bag which was available at Rs.2000 was now being sold at Rs.3000 in the open market. This has further compounded the problems of the masses already affected by the worst inflation.

Third ship carrying Urea fertilizer reaches at Gwadar port

News Desk

The third ship named King Wink, carrying

private sector. Gwadar Port is doing all this in collaboration with Gwadar International Terminal



31,000 metric tons out of total 200,000 tons of urea fertilizer imports reached at Gwadar port on Tuesday, January 10. The first ship, carrying 32,000 tons, berthed on December 29 and the second ship, carrying 31,500 tons, reached on January first.

This is the first time that Gwadar port has provided handling, processing and administrative operations services to Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) which belongs to the public sector.

Earlier, all import consignments including import of wheat and import of fertilizer for various companies under Afghan Transit Trade Agreement were processed through Gwadar port and was transferred only to the

Limited (GITL) and National Logistics Cell (NLC).

Gwadar Port has developed its reputation in the private sector, TCP is importing 200,000 tons of urea in one case and 450,000 tons of wheat in a separate case from Gwadar port.

Gwadar Port is also officially handling and processing 45,000 metric tons of wheat imports because a formal agreement has been signed between Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) and Gwadar International Terminal Limited (GITL) with which a new chapter of logistics activities has started. According to the agreement, the official processing time frame will be between February 1, 2023 and March 31, 2023.

Blast outside a police station in Panjgur

From Our Correspondent

A blast rocked Balochistan's Panjgur district on Tuesday evening. Police sources said unknown miscreants lobbed a hand grenade that exploded near the Panjgur police station. The blast smashed the glasses of nearby buildings. However, there was no human loss as a result of the attack.

The attackers escaped unhurt from the spot. Police reached the spot as an investigation into the incident went underway. Police started an investigation into the incident.



Saudi Arabia mulls increasing deposit in SBP to \$5bn

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman has directed the Saudi Development Fund (SDF) to study increasing the deposit amount in the State of Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to \$5 billion, the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported on Tuesday.

"His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, has directed to study augmenting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's investments in the sisterly Islamic Republic of Pakistan which have previously been announced on August 25, 2022, to reach \$10 billion," it said.

"The crown prince also directed the Saudi Development Fund to study increasing the amount of the deposit provided by the



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in favour of the Central Bank of Pakistan which have previously been extended on December 2, 2022 to hit a \$5 billion ceiling," the report said.

The move, SPA stated, confirmed Saudi Arabia's position on supporting the economy of Pakistan and its "sisterly people".

The development was reached within the framework of the existing communication between Prince Salman and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, it added.

Today's announcement comes a day after Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir — who was on a week-long official visit to Saudi Arabia and UAE — held a meeting with Prince Salman in Madina and discussed ways to improve bilateral ties between the

two countries. In 2021, the SBP had signed an agreement with the SDF to receive \$3bn, which would be placed in the central bank's account with an aim to improve its foreign exchange reserves. Subsequently, in September last year, the SDF had confirmed the rollover of a \$3bn deposit for one more year. The deposit was set to mature on Dec 5, however, on Dec 2 Saudi Arabia had extended its term. In the last week of October 2021, Saudi Arabia had agreed to revive its financial support to Pakistan, including about \$3bn in safe deposits and \$1.2bn worth of oil supplies on deferred payments. The agreement was reached during the visit of former prime minister Imran Khan to the kingdom the same month Web Desk

Chaos grips Punjab Assembly yet again as lawmakers trade slogans

LAHORE: As Punjab's political temperature remains hot, the atmosphere inside the provincial assembly Tuesday once again took a chaotic turn as the session began with a three-hour-long delay.

At the start of the session, presided over by Punjab Assembly Speaker Sibtain Khan, 25 lawmakers of the government and 56 of the opposition were present inside the legislative.

A day earlier, opposition parties raised slogans in the house, demanding Chief Minister Parvez Elahi take a vote of confidence. The session had started with a delay of two hours and twenty minutes.

The opposition protested against the chief minister for not taking the vote of confidence. Slogans were also raised by the treasury members against Interior Minister Rana



Sanaullah and Special Assistant to Prime Minister Attaullah Tarar, who were present in the assembly on Monday as well.

Today, the assembly's proceedings turned into a ruckus as opposition members slammed copies of the agenda on the benches causing a commotion.

The situation turned rough when the opposition began raising slogans, and those on the ruling seats retorted at them.

"Opposition should respond to Hamza Shehbaz's corruption," Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawmaker Sardar Shahabuddin Khan Sehri said while shaming the Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) members.

Meanwhile, Mian Mehmood-ur-Rasheed of PTI also criticised the interior minister, who was seated in the lobby and later barred from entering the assembly.

"Our government is established and will [complete its tenure]," the PTI politician said, after which the speaker adjourned the session for 15 minutes. Later, when the session resumed, PTI leader Malik Zaheer Abbas Khokhar slammed the PML-N for resorting to "oppression and brutality" in Punjab. "[We] demand an account for the killing of innocent children," he said, seeking justice for the victims of the Model Town incident. Web Desk

PM apprises WB, ADB officials about rehabilitation of flood affectees

Geneva: The World Bank's Vice President for South Asia Region Martin Raiser and the Asian Development Bank's Vice President Operations for South Asia, Shixin Chen called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the sidelines of International Conference on Resilient Pakistan in Geneva.

During the meeting, the Prime Minister highlighted the measures taken by the government for relief and rehabilitation of flood affected people.

He thanked the officials of both banks for



contributing in the efforts for rehabilitation of the flood affected people.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan Bakhtiyor

Saidov, Britain's Minister of State for Development, Andrew Mitchell, and Deputy Administrator of USAID Isabel Coleman also separately called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the sidelines of International Conference on Resilient Pakistan.

During these meetings, the Prime Minister thanked their countries for their contribution in rehabilitation of flood affected people in Pakistan.

He said Pakistan and its people are grateful to friendly countries that stand by in difficult times. The Prime Minister also highlighted the steps taken by the government for rehabilitation of flood victims. INP

Pervez Elahi will have to obtain vote of trust at every cost: Rana Sana Ullah

LAHORE: Law minister Rana Sana Ullah has said Pervez Elahi is imposed on Punjab forcibly and he will have to obtain vote of trust at every cost.

"How the PTI, Pervez Elahi and his son have plundered Punjab in the last three months, has no precedence. The trust and aid announced by the world for Pakistan in Geneva Conference is slap on the face of those who are running the campaign about defaulting the country, he said this while talking to media men outside Punjab Assembly (PA) here Tuesday.

Pakistan was expecting 8 billion dollars assistance for flood affectees but Pakistan has received a huge amount of 11 billion dollars from all over the world, he remarked. This amount is not loan but it is grant, he added.



Berating Imran Khan he said this amount is meant for steering the national economy from the devastation caused by Imrani group. This amount will make dollar inexpensive and end the inflation.

Criticizing Imran Khan and other leaders of PTI he said the ire of people will go when these problems are resolved. The fake fame of Imran tola will meet its doom in next three months.

We will bring Pakistan to such level where it was making progress under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif. Imrani band devastated national economy.

The minority government of Chaudhry Pervez Elahi is imposed on Punjab at present, he underlined.

They tried to ban my entry into Punjab Assembly but security personnel refused to implement their illegal and unconstitutional steps.

Eversince they have come to know they have not desired number in the house they have started playing tactics against us. They fear that their theft will be caught. INP

ECP issues arrest warrants for Imran, other PTI leaders in contempt cases

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday issued bailable arrest warrants for PTI chairman Imran Khan and party leaders Fawad Chaudhry and Asad Umar in cases related to the contempt of the electoral body.

The order was passed by a four-member ECP bench headed by member Nisar Durrani.

The ECP had in August and September last year issued notices, in exercise of its powers of contempt,

to Imran, Umar, Chaudhry, Mian Shabbir Ismail and Danial Khalid Khokhar for allegedly



using intemperate language against Chief Election Commissioner Sikander Sultan Raja and the electoral watchdog.

Party leaders have repeatedly bashed the commission and Raja over what they claim is their partisanship and fre-

quently pillory the electoral body as a "subsidiary of the PML-N".

At the previous hearing, the ECP had given the PTI leaders a last chance to appear before the commission, warning that their absence before the commission at the

next hearing on January 17 would result in the issuance of arrest warrants.

During the hearing on Tuesday, the ECP rejected the pleas of PTI leaders seeking an exemption from appearing before the commission and issued arrest warrants for them against surety bonds worth Rs50,000 each. The bench, subsequently, adjourned the hearing till Jan 17.

Reacting to the development, PTI Leader Asad Umar tweeted that the ECP, instead of fulfilling its responsibilities, had indulged in such actions. INP

QUETTA VOICE

Editor Asim Khan

Destination of electables is PPP in Balochistan nowadays

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), which failed to win a single seat during the general elections of 2018 in Balochistan is finally back. Electables, commonly called the ever-green and influential politicians have been joining the party for last more than a month. The seismic political shift in Balochistan is nothing new. Switching of loyalties and changing political parties normally take a place before every general election in the province, which covers half of the country in terms of area.

Winds of change blowing in Balochistan, "Winds of change are blowing in Balochistan", is a commonly held notion in villages and cities of the province these days. Earlier this year, it was the Jamaat ul Ulema e Islam (F) with electables joining the religious party. However, PPP filled the vacuum.

Asif Zardari has no time to visit Balochistan because of crowds joining the party

PPP supremo Asif Ali Zardari has no time to visit Balochistan to announce the joining of the electables because of the rush. The electables/evergreen politicians thronged the Bilawal House in Karachi and started joining the PPP and the party leaders preferred to receive them there.

Former federal minister Sardar Fateh Muhammad Muhammad Hassani, his son Umair Muhammad Hassani, Nawabzada Jamal Raisani, the son of Nawabzada Siraj Raisani, former Balochistan Minister, Tahir Mehmood Khan, Mir Mohyuddin Baloch, the former central leader of the Baloch Students Organization (BSO), Mir Faeed Raisani and others joined the party in Karachi. Three former provincial ministers including Mir Zahoor Buledi, Saleem Khan Khoso and Arif Jan Muhammad Hassani have already joined the party.

Sardar Noor Ahmed Bangulzai also joined the PPP

Sardar Noor Ahmed Bangulzai who is likely to contest elections against former Chief Minister Nawab Muhammad Aslam Raisani in Mastung has also joined PPP.

As the ruling Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) nears its permanent collapse, its leaders and workers have started joining other political parties. The BAP, which emerged as the largest parliamentary party prior to the 2018 general elections has practically collapsed since its incumbent CM Mir Qudus Bizenjo, and president Jam Kamal Khan are in contact with other political parties for joining.

Despite ruling the province for five years, currently, none owns the party and gradually everyone parts ways with it.

The change constant

By Syed Mohibullah Shah

In 1997, in a meeting with the Pakistani prime minister, former Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad said that the constant change in governments in Pakistan would often turn everything - social, economic and investment policies and programmes - upside down.

He also expressed that there was no continuity of projects and that if government decisions were arbitrary, no genuine investor would come to Pakistan, paving the way for fly-by-night operators to exploit the country's weaknesses.

Did that advice from a successful Asian leader of make any difference to our style of governance? The answer lies in the fate of a concrete project - the largest foreign direct investment (FDI) - of Pakistan at the time. It fell victim to the very arbitrary and egoistic governance against which Dr Mahathir had warned us.

As Pakistan picks itself out of the current dire straits and pulls up the pace of development, it will again stumble on this stark realization. A bottleneck exists in the way of accelerating the industrialization of its economy and trade and investment momentum in the shape of expensive energy and the absence of deepwater ports for delivering the supplies to its main markets.

Pakistan's power rates are among the most expensive in the world, and its ports and harbours need a major upgrade. Both hinder any effort made to add value and create the related ecosystem without which Pakistan's dreams of development will not materialize.

Pakistan's two ports - Karachi and Qasim - are inadequate to meet the demands of an accelerated pace of development for a number of reasons. And its third port - Gwadar, which is a deepwater port and has geostrategic significance - is located far away from domestic markets, which are located around the main railway line running from Karachi to Peshawar. Gwadar is useful for our friend China and will be useful for Central Asian States as well, when it is connected to these markets by the rail and road network. However, this dream has remained unrealized for many

years because of the prevailing security conditions in Afghanistan.

This leaves us with the two inadequate ports of Karachi and Qasim. If we have submitted to keeping Pakistan a poor country - crawling at a growth rate of three to four per cent - unaffordable energy and two inadequate ports will keep it underdeveloped for an even longer period. But if we are serious about building a better future for our country and becoming a rapidly advancing economy, our development priorities should be cheap energy and a deepwater port close to our markets.

It was the recognition of this strategic bottleneck that led me, as head of the Board of Investment, to have technical and commercial data collected from home and abroad to address both issues. A survey of Pakistan's coast indicated eight locations suitable for ports - four on the coast of Balochistan and four on the coast of Sindh. The further evaluation of these sites was carried out under the following six criteria: potential to handle ships of up to 200,000dwt; availability of basic infrastructure for port construction; easy connectivity with rail, road or waterways for transporting cargo; proximity to main markets; and providing Pakistan a deepwater port at the lowest cost and in the shortest possible time. When these criteria were applied to all eight locations, the one that stood out was Keti Bandar.

Accordingly, an investment project of the Keti Bandar deepwater port along with coal-based power plants was prepared and marketed with other investment projects to investors in Europe, the US, Australia and Asia through investment conferences and business meetings with potential investors and chamber leaders. (The reality is that despite climate conferences, over 50 per cent of power plants added last year were coal-based, and after the Ukraine war, are expected to rise further.) We finally reached an agreement in 1996 on the largest FDI project in Pakistan whose initial investment was \$1.8 billion. This was all direct foreign investment with no financial burden upon Pakistan. The power generated (5200MW) by these power plants was affordable - at Rs2.4 per unit.

Balochistan floods: The tale of pain and destruction

QUETTA: (APP): By Abdul Shakoor Khan



Technical staff engaged in clearing of the highway in Bolan Balochistan: Photo taken from social media

Balochistan faced the brunt of floods

Balochistan province, having the title of almost half of Pakistan had badly



suffered from the eight monsoon spells, overwhelming in magnitude and severity. It swept away the kith and kin of the survivors, their cattle, houses and crops. "It was unprecedented. We had never even



thought of such a disaster," said 70 years old Abdul Ali, a resident of the Pashtoonabad area in Quetta. "I spent my life here. We came across many calamities. But, it was disastrous." He appealed to the fed-

eral and provincial governments for early relief as hundreds of thousands of people were forced to stay under the open sky direly needing food and shelter. Director General Provincial Disaster Management Authority

Naseer Ahmed Nasar stated that non-stop heavy downpours, uncontrolled waves of water and gushing hill torrents had so far claimed around 250 lives with thousands injured and displaced.

Agriculture sector destroyed

The catastrophe left some 61718 houses damaged, 145936 livestock dead and about 190 thousand acres of agriculture land badly affected. "The loss only incurred to the agriculture sector

of Balochistan is estimated at Rs 98 billion," said Director General Agricultural Balochistan Abdul Wahab Kakar. "The flood has damaged crops, orchards, 15800 tube wells, ponds and solar systems on an area of 190,000 acres."

Lasbella, Bolan, Naseerabad, Jaffarabad, Sohatpur, Kachi, Jhal Magsi, Kohlu, Dera Bugti, Sibi, Quetta, Pishin, Qila Abdullah, Qilla Saifullah, Loralai, Harmai, Zhob were some of the worst affected districts.

Hundreds of families of Naseerabad division have taken refuge along the highways as their houses are still submerged in the flood water receding very slowly.

Meanwhile, the federal and provincial governments, jawans of Armed Forces, NDMA, Frontier Constabulary and civil society organizations have accelerated the relief operation, during the challenging situation due to collapse of road infrastructure, connecting highways and bridges.

Balochistan disconnected from rest of the country for more than a week

Balochistan is almost cut off from Punjab, KP and Sindh provinces due to the collapse of bridges on Quetta-Zhob-Dana Sar-Dera Ismail Khan road; Quetta-Loralai-Dera Ghazi Khan; Quetta-Khuzdar-Karachi; and Quetta-Sibi-Jacobabad roads.

Although, the authorities have partially restored the Quetta-Karachi highway, yet the people have been advised to avoid unnecessary traveling.

"My family is stuck in Dera Murad Jamli area of Naseerabad and I am helpless to reach there and bring them along," Abdul

Razaq, a government official in Quetta said.

It is yet another dilemma that most parts of the province are without gas, electricity, internet and

cellular services. Rain and floods have damaged two out of the total three fiber optical cables, 24-inch wide gas main pipeline and 132 KV Quetta-Sibi and 220 Dadu-Khuzdar electricity towers rendering people helpless.

Bizenjo says floods incurred losses of Rs.200bbs

"Heavy downpour and floods have incurred losses of over Rs 200 billion to the province," Chief Minister Balochistan Abdul Qudus Bizenjo said. "The volume of calamity is colossal and we do not have enough resources to fight it, compensate the affected population and restore the damaged infrastructure."

"It may take years for the provincial government to repair and rehabilitate the damaged infrastructure," he told media recently.

"We are in dire need of help to relieve our people from this calamity," he said urging international financial institutions, donors and humanitarian organizations to lend a hand with the federal and provincial governments in relief operations for the calamity-stricken people.

Bizenjo acclaimed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's personal endeavors for speedy relief, as well as the announcement of compensation for the affected families as the Prime Minister and Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa personally, visited the affected areas to share the grief of affected people.

"The compensation and relief announced for the Balochistan people are welcoming. It will mitigate the suffering of the people and help carry on relief operation," he said.

Though the monsoon spells are over, the misery and plight are not yet. Calamity-stricken people need immediate relief and rehabilitation of infrastructure thereon to bring normalcy to their lives. Let us all join hands in this hour of need.

Property rights

By Azwar Muhammad Aslam

Land is the most important asset in an economy, and in most cases is combined with capital. The basis for considering land as an asset rests on the system of land titles whereby an efficient land title system ensures prompt and secure transfer of property rights and reduces overall transaction costs.

Conceptualizing the importance of land in an economy is important from the perspective of investment generation since economic activities are to be carried out on land - commercial, residential and agricultural. Countless reports cite the importance of well-defined property rights in investment generation.

Unfortunately, this efficient mechanism underpinning land as an asset to generate economic

activity is absent in Pakistan, primarily due to the absence of secure land titles. Insecurity leads to uncertainty in the utilization of land-based assets, and this uncertainty further increases the risk and repels investment in land.

Thus, the contemporary system of land titles in Pakistan slows the redistribution of wealth, increases unnecessary litigation, creates a hostile environment for investment and affects economic growth.

The title of property is only valid if there is clear proof of devolution and clear description of the property and possession of the land in question. In Pakistan, verification of the title is carried out by the buyer on its own, with no assurance from the state. Grievance redressal forums - courts - come in action only in case of dispute.

Hence, concealment of information at the time of conveyance is possible by the party with more information owing to various departments for record keeping, ultimately using it for self-advantage and giving rise to the problem of information asymmetry.

In the case of dispute in the title of land, verification of the property through the proof of devolution in the courts remains a difficult task. This is due to the use of the traditional paper-based record system, which lies with various government departments. Therefore, matters related to land are often prolonged, creating backlog, affecting the efficiency of the courts and imposing an opportunity cost both on the judicial system in terms of time and on land as in most cases it stays idle, constraining

investments and growth in the process. This complex nature of the land title system adds costs in the shape of information and time costs, and above all, the need to verify the record from various departments leaves room for third party intrusion. In most cases, due to the lack of integration among departments, the records are outdated. All of the above-mentioned issues arise due to the deed registration system. At present, instruments like transfer deeds, mutation, etc. are to be registered instead of the transition of title to land in absolute terms. All these problems can be eliminated if government-backed security through transparency in the land title system is provided. Title security means a person or individual cannot be stripped off his/her

How Pakistan wasted Guterres and Geneva

By Mosharruf Zaidi

Yesterday, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, along with the United Nations, co-hosted a conference on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country's flood affected areas.

The superfloods of 2022 were historic in nature and the blame for the kind of climate change that caused these floods lies largely with the high-emissions economies that have grown at the expense of the planet's more vulnerable places: Pakistan is and will remain one of those places for the rest of your life.

Climate vulnerability is not going to go away, no matter how many conferences Pakistan hosts. Perhaps, therefore ironically, Pakistan's 2022 super-floods Geneva conference was in fact not a conference about climate change but rather a conversation between Pakistan and the supposed donors that will contribute to the effort to rehabilitate, rebuild and reconstruct flood damaged infrastructure in the country.

Any international conference that focuses squarely on Pakistan should be seen as a good thing, but it would be disingenuous to line up overly saccharine congratulatory messages for the Pakistani government for co-hosting the Geneva conference. The fact that this conference took place is largely down to the deep respect and compassion for the Pakistani people of one

individual. That individual is the former head of Socialist International, the former prime minister of Portugal, the former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the current UN secretary general, Antonio Guterres.

Why does Guterres have this unique and rare relationship with the Pakistani people? For a decade, between 2005 and 2015, Guterres's work as the UNHCR boss brought him to Pakistan numerous times. The Pakistani experience of hosting Afghan refugees (despite the efforts of mindless civilian and military bureaucrats to undermine it through collective punishment for Afghans whenever Islamabad and Kabul disagree) is a global standout for its depth, its duration and its consistency. It also happens to be the case that Guterres is deeply personally committed to climate change. The Pakistani super-floods of 2022 offered him an opportunity to showcase the intense suffering that climate change is capable of causing.

Combined with his socialist background, Guterres's personal sense of compassion for Pakistan is what has driven the continued global spotlight - as dim as it has been - on Pakistani suffering caused by the 2022 super-floods. As luck would have it, Pakistan also held the chairpersonship of the G-77 during COP27. As the Global South's premier

spokesperson, and amidst what could be interpreted by some as an effort by the international community to offer Pakistan international visibility concurrent to India's chairing of the G20 this year, Pakistan treaded a rare diplomatic opportunity through the last several months.

The combination of the 2022 super-floods, Pakistan's chairing of the G77 and Antonio Guterres's intense lobbying for Pakistanis, offered the government of Pakistan the rare opportunity to engage with the international community on an issue that is, for the most part, independent of the Afghanistan-centric questions of regional and global stability. This is an important footnote to the events of the last several months, as far as Pakistan's international standing is concerned - because Pakistani strategists in and outside government (including this one) have spent at least four decades lamenting the cruelty of the geopolitical burden of being a neighbour to the triple threat of Afghanistan, Iran and India.

he lament has always been: why can't the international community engage with Pakistan on something other than Afghanistan, other than terrorism, other than counter-insurgency? Why can't the rest of the world engage with Pakistan on something that matters for Pakistanis?

So where were Pakistani strategists in late 2022 and

2023 as Guterres + super-floods + G77 all converged to shine the spotlight on something that matters for Pakistanis?

Since most Pakistani strategists are former military officials, most were busy trying to hide whilst their institution and leadership was being skewered in the carefully curated ecosystem of pro-Imran Khan television talks shows, WhatsApp groups and Twitter spaces. Remember: before the deluge of August 2022, there was the tsunami of the flood of tears in Insafi Pakistan - a wondrous place where, prior to the vote of no-confidence, most of the available Pakistani strategic carbohydrates were being consumed to prop up the notion of Imran Khan as the ultimate saviour for Pakistan.

Whatever remains of Pakistani strategicidom beyond Insafi guardrails is an epic mess. Those with even a remote sense of economic cycles and policy know that the Ishaq Dar subsidy now rivals the Tarin subsidy - but most are either personally too aggrieved by the Insafi hordes to say so clearly, or with no clear alternatives, are too conscious of undermining an already very weak and vulnerable coalition.

Those with democratic and federalist values writhe agonisingly at the constant attempts by this coalition government to continue to run Pakistan like its predecessor PTI government: a

unitary republic where Islamabad plus Rawalpindi plus Aabpara have the agency, legitimacy and capability to run the country (they do not). In all this, the 2022 super-floods have been relegated to Division Three status: neither super, nor floods - barely an asterisk, even for those invested in the environment and climate beat.

To top off the lack of coherence and focus across the strategic community, the government must also suffer many self-inflicted wounds, chief among them being a dissonant and disparate cabinet in which one federal minister operates entirely independently of the other and the other operates entirely independently of the next.

The prime minister - desperately lacking the support of even his own brother and niece - started his term hamstrung by the counterintuitive effort of the Sharifs in London to try to out-Imran Khan, Imran Khan. This desperation continues, as the PML-N London believes it can effectively tackle the hydrogen bomb of inflation that has been detonated upon Pakistan's 234 million people, first in the spring of 2022, then again in the summer of 2022, and coming soon, before the end of winter 2022-2023. The instrument it wields in trying to tackle inflation is the late 90s bombast of older-than-they-look dinosaurs roaring valiantly at the IMF and anyone else that dares to point out the unsustainability.

Public display of chutzpah

Imran Jan

Growing up in Charsadda, as a young student we liked to play a joke every time we came across any man with a beard who would either drive his car carelessly or indulge in some ridiculous act. The joke was just four Pashto words but the story and history behind those words was common knowledge and so people understood the context everytime we uttered those words, which are Shaikh pa ghalata de. It translates literally as "the bearded one is in the wrong."

Attallah Tarar sports a beard and shaves his mustache. Muslim men do this keeping in line with the seriousness and depth of their faith. However, he has indulged in uncouth and irreligious behaviour. Fathers who may have asked their sons and daughters to keep watching and reading news so as to prepare for the CSS exam must have felt very uncomfortable watching this public display of an act, which is usually the stuff of adult entertainment.

There is another Charsadda joke. Whenever any bearded man indulges in some irreligious or immoral behaviour, the oft-repeated joke is that he is exempt from any repercussions because he holds the licence for being ridiculous and immoral, which is an indirect refer-

ence to his beard. It was a double-edged sword. One, anything the labeled pious did was right by default. Two, don't dare criticise the bearded ones as their self-righteous mindset is unstoppable and dangerous. Perhaps this second joke is more relevant here. Because we have kind of forgotten that the same Atta Tarar some weeks ago openly threatened anyone who may dare call him a lout.

Public display of disrespect or profanity toward any faith or God is regarded as blasphemous. The people who adhere to the faith that is targeted by the blasphemy feel humiliated and resentful. One could argue that faith is a sacred as well as a private matter because it is one human's connection and contract with his Creator. We can disagree with an act of blasphemy but we are not to judge someone's actions or validity of their faith because that work is reserved for our Creator.

An elected or a government official takes oath of office to protect a document where the rights of the people are enshrined. That is a contract between the official and the state as well as the people. Disgracing the Holy Book is wrong and immoral but that is for the Creator to punish not us because that is a violation of the relationship between man and his Creator. Disgracing the sacred document called the Constitution is

a violation of the contract made with the people. Even the Holy Book emphasises on the rights of the people more than on the rights our Creator has over us. It is called Hugo-qul-ibaad i.e. the rights of the people.

The bearded spokesperson of the Punjab government has openly displayed filthy profanity for the very document, which enshrines the rights the people have over him as a government official. It is not the violation of a specific right but rather the wholesale mockery of whatever rights the people may think they have.

Perhaps, this public display of chutzpah is coming from a greater belief of impunity. This middle finger is not only a mockery of the supposedly sacred document but also an indication of massive support from those who are usually in the business of raising the finger as a third umpire. Speaking of which, there was a lot of noise when Imran Khan some years ago had said that the third umpire had raised his finger. Somehow, there is not much noise at this finger raising as if it is some sort of a halal finger.

The violation of the Constitution used to be benignly labeled as "Doctrine of Necessity". That is obsolete now because now our politicians just middle finger the Constitution. Ah, those good ol' days!

PUGC & PITB sign MoU to promote entrepreneurship, establish Regional Plan9 Centre

LAHORE: Punjab University Gujranwala Campus and Punjab Information Technology Board on Tuesday signed an agreement to promote entrepreneurship and establish Regional Plan9 Centre at Gujranwala Campus.

In this regard, the Memorandum of Understanding signing ceremony was held in the committee room of the Vice-Chancellor's office. On this occasion, PU VC Prof Dr Asghar Zaidi, DG

Gujranwala Campus Prof Dr Naveed Ahmed, Director External Linkages Dr Soabia Khurram and others were present.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Zaidi said that with this agreement, the students of Punjab University and the youth of the area would get an opportunity to start their own business. He said that Plan9 team and PU students would work on innovations and make this project successful.

He said that the establishment of Regional Plan9 Incubation Center at Gujranwala Campus would also solve the employment problems of the youth.

Dr. Zaidi lauded PITB's Regional Plan9 project and said that PU would play its role to realize the motives behind the project. He also directed the officials concerned to prepare curriculum for promotion of entrepreneurship culture under Plan9.INP

Pakistan business forum terms Geneva conference as big success for country

Karachi: President of Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) Mian Usman Zulfikar on Tuesday lauded the government efforts and expressed gratitude to countries and aid agencies for making the international conference in Geneva, Switzerland, on Pakistan's post-flood challenges a success.

As Pakistan secured around 10 billion dollars in pledges from international financial institutions, donor agencies and development partners for the rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction of flood-affected areas, during the International Conference on Climate Resilience.

"A big thank you to heads of states and governments, the European Union (EU), our development partners and the United Nations (UN) for making Resilient Pakistan Conference a resounding success."

Also thanked the global and national media for effectively highlighting the cause of humanity and climate change.

PBF President also stressed the need for taking serious measures, as the current economic situation, forced commercial banks to be selective in opening LCs even for

sectors such as health-care, as it has been unable to open Letters of Credit (LCs) as per its usual banking cycle.

It's time to have a consensus on 'Charter of economy' of 20 years and it should be a consensus document consists of all stakeholders, political and military.

"Signing a charter of economy to achieve that should be one of the top priorities of all political parties. They should put their rivalry and bickering aside to come on the same page for the nation's economic and social well-being. For without that, no sustainable development was possible."

He lamented that the economists foresee an imminent humanitarian and healthcare crisis in Pakistan unless prompt actions are taken by the State Bank of Pakistan, Ministry of Finance and other institutions to avert the disaster.

He said that the rupee still continues to witness volatile trend in the process of trading against dollar and other major currencies. He observed that having a clear policy to curb the volatility in exchange market, the central bank should be fully geared to act and

monitor the movements more vigilantly and should be ahead of the curve as they have more information than an average market player.

"PBF President said that the economic activities in the country have already been severely affected. Major industries, including car manufacturing companies, have temporarily closed their plants due to import restrictions which needs to be look after by the government."

He said that Pak Suzuki Motor Company Ltd has extended plant shutdown from Jan 9-13 due to a continued shortage of imported parts. Due to the continued shortage of inventory level, the management of the company has decided to extend the shutdown of the automobile plant from January 9, 2023.

Earlier, the company suspended production activities from Jan 2-6. The firm stated that its supply chain is affecting due to restrictions of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The export consignments are affecting due to the conditional permission, said the company, adding that the restriction damaged the inventory. Previously.INP



KARACHI: A man carrying flour bag going toward home after buying Government subsidized flour from delivery truck.

China pledges additional aid of \$100 million for flood victims in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: China is pledging an additional \$100 million to continue supporting Pakistan's recovery efforts from the devastating 2022 floods, announced Luo Zhaohui, chairman of the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), while attending the International Conference on Climate-Resilient Pakistan held in Geneva, according to China Economic Net (CEN).

Officials from some 40 countries as well as private donors and international financial institutions are gathering for a meeting in Geneva on January 9 as Islamabad seeks help covering around half of a total recovery bill of \$16.3 billion.

This funding reinforces China's commitment to the

Pakistani people and will help address the climate crisis.

When coupled with the nearly \$200 million in flood relief provided before from the Chinese government, this brings the total China commitment to date to nearly \$300 million.

Also, China will help Pakistan train 1,000 technicians and officials in disaster prevention and reduction from 2023 to 2025, Luo added.

Luo noted that China can really empathize with Pakistan, which is suffering from floods

unseen in several decades. China has embarked on post-disaster reconstruction projects such as smart hydrology, shelter and mobile medical vehicles. China will continue to provide real-time weather and disaster

early warning services and share post-disaster reconstruction experience with Pakistan, he pinpointed.

Responding to this, Pakistani Prime Minister noted in his Twitter account that the world has witnessed how nations can come together in a show of solidarity to create a model of a "win-win partnership" to lift suffering humanity out of tragedy.

"I was deeply moved by the compassion on display at Geneva Conference. Together we will rebuild lives and hopes," he added. Pakistan said that donors had committed to giving more than \$8 billion to help it recover from last year's devastating floods in what is seen as a major test for those who pay for climate disasters.INP

WAPDA awards Rs 11.922 bln contract for Mangla Refurbishment Project

ISLAMABAD: Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) has awarded Rs 11.922 billion contract for Package XI of Mangla Refurbishment Project for Units 9 and 10 to G.E Hydro France.

The contract includes manufacturing, supply, installation and commissioning of the two units, says a press release issued here on Tuesday.

General Manager (Hydel) Development, WAPDA, Ihsan Ullah and representative of G.E Hydro France Abubakar signed the agreement in that regard, the press release added.

WAPDA Chairman Lt Gen. (Retd) Sajjad Ghani, Member

(Power) WAPDA Jamil Akhtar, project director of Mangla Refurbishment Project, senior officers, representatives of the consultants, and the contractors were also present on the occasion.

"WAPDA is implementing Mangla Refurbishment Project with an approved PC-1 cost of Rs 52.224 billion. The project is being carried out in various phases, wherein the generating units are to be refurbished by closing down one tunnel (two generating units) at a time," it said. "The refurbishment works have been divided into 11 different packages. Prior to signing of Package XI, as many as nine

other packages have already been awarded, while works on four packages have been completed. Refurbishment of the first two units was completed in 2022, while refurbishment of all 10 generating units is likely to be accomplished by year 2026-27," it said.

Mangla Refurbishment Project, on its completion, will enhance generation capacity of the existing Mangla Hydel Power Station from 1000 megawatts (MW) to 1310 MW, thus adding 310 MW additional power with an average 1,610 million units of additional energy per annum to the National Grid.INP

Karachi weather update: cold winds to grip city from January 12

KARACHI: Another cold spell is expected to hit Karachi from January 12, citing weather department.

According to Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), cold weather is likely to grip Karachi and other parts of the province between January 12 and 17.

The temperature in Sindh can drop to as low as 3°C during this period after a westerly system entered the province via Balochistan, said PMD. According to the met department, temperatures in Karachi, Hyderabad, Thatta and Tando Muhammad Khan are likely to reach below 5°C whereas in Shaheed Benazirabad, Noshero Feroz, Khairpur, Sukkur, Ghotki, and Sanghar the temperature will touch 3°C during the said period.

The mercury levels in the northern Sindh districts of Larkana, Kashmore, Jacobabad, Qambar Shahdaddot, and the southeastern district of Tharparkar, will remain between 2-4°C, the weather department said.INP

PTA generated Rs694b revenue in FY-2021-22: Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) through its outstanding progress has generated record-high revenue of 694 billion rupees in FY 2021-22.

According to the PTA's Annual Report 2022, the sector attracted an investment of US\$ 2,073 million and contributed Rs. 325.2 billion to the national exchequer of which Rs. 222.7 billion were in the form of taxes and the remaining Rs. 102.5 billion were proceeds from Next Generation Mobile Services (NGMS) auction and license renewals.

The PTAs report released on Tuesday highlighted encouraging telecom statistics and expanding usage of telecom services across Pakistan due to a progressive and enabling regulatory environment despite a challenging year marked by rising inflationary pressures and profitability concerns. Pakistan has over 197 million telecom subscribers (fixed and mobile), with tele-density touching 90%. Moreover, biometrically verified SIMs/subscribers increased to 194 million, whereas, broadband subscription grew to 124 million with 56% penetration and annual mobile data usage touching 8,970 petabytes (6.8 GB per subscriber, per month), showing annual growth of 31%.INP



QUETTA: A man buying warm items from roadside vendor.

Sardar Attique visits APHC-AJK office in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan, the newly elected president of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, has said that his party will not compromise on Kashmir issue and will strongly resist imposition of any solution in contravention to the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan expressed these views on the occasion of his visit to the office of All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Kashmir chapter in Islamabad. He was received by APHC-AJK leaders including its Convener Mahmood Ahmed Saghar.

Sardar Attique said that the freedom movement based on the Kashmiris'

right to self-determination has entered a critical and decisive phase. He said the leadership of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference is taking keen interest in the solution of the Kashmir dispute and assured the APHC leadership of his party's full support.

Sardar Attique expressed the hope that the newly elected APHC-AJK officials will work tirelessly for the cause of Kashmir and will take all possible steps on the political and diplomatic fronts to highlight the Kashmiris' struggle for securing their right to self-determination.

APHC-AJK Convener Mahmood Ahmad Saghar congratulated Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan on becoming the party presi-

dent and thanked him for visiting the Hurriyat office. He said the Kashmir freedom movement is going through a critical phase as India is making preparations to hold the G20 meeting in occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

He said occupied Kashmir is an internationally-recognized disputed territory and holding any such meeting there would be a violation of the United Nations resolutions. On this occasion, the APHC leaders Muhammad Farooq Rehmani, Ghulam Muhammad Safi, Syed Faiz Naqshbani, Syed Yousuf Naseem, and Muhammad Rafiq Dar, Sheikh Abdul Mateen, Hassan Abul Datoon, Dawood Yousafzai.INP



ISLAMABAD: Leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Dr Tarid Fazal Chudhary addressing a press conference at National Press Club in Federal Capital.

ISLAMABAD: Faisal Karim Kundi, Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety addressing a press conference.

PO among 10 outlaws held, 2 bikes, arms & narcotics recovered

GUJRAT: The police arrested 10 outlaws including a proclaimed offender, recovered two motorcycles, arms and narcotics during separate actions in different areas of Gujrat on Tuesday.

According to details, under supervision of DPO Gujranwala Syed Ghazanfar Ali Shah, SHO of various police stations of the district conducted operations against outlaws in jurisdiction of concerned police stations.

During an operation headed by SHO Karriawanwala Gujrat, Inspector Liaqat Hussain along with police team conducted operation in jurisdiction of his police station during which accused of robbery identified as Tehzeeb s/o Ashraf was arrested with

two motorcycles and Rs10,000 cash.

SHO police station Industrial Area Phase-II along with team arrested two drug pushers Sajid Hussain s/o Muhammad Nawaz and Muhammad Rafi s/o Hashim Ali besides recovering hashish, 24 bottles liquor and other narcotics.

During an operation in Gulliana police station jurisdiction, drug peddler Ahsan Elahi s/o Muhammad Akbar was arrested with hashish. Proclaimed offender (PO) Tanveer Ahmed s/o Muhammad Akbar was held during a raid in Mangwal police station jurisdiction.

In Dinga police station jurisdiction, during raid of SHO along with his team, the police arrested Imtiaz Hussain s/o Fazal

Hussain hailing from Saman Rawalpindi after recovery of unlicensed Kalashnikov. The B-Division police arrested Nabeel Ahmed s/o Shakeel hailing from Gujrat with a 30 bore pistol.

Three outlaws Nafees Fazal s/o Fazal Ahmed, Saddam Hussain s/o Bashir and Safer Hussain s/o Muhammad Akram were arrested with a 30 bore pistol, hashish and liquor during operations in Rehmania police station jurisdiction. The police confiscated the recovered weapons, narcotics and other seized items and after registering separate cases against the detainees at concerned police stations started investigations.INP

China can provide strategic insights to Pakistan on food security: Experts

BEIJING: China's food security strategy has become a hallmark for many countries to emulate and Chinese food security strategy can provide forward guidance to Pakistan policymakers, said Shan Saeed, Chief Economist at Juwai IQI.

Shan told Gwadar Pro that China is leading from the front in terms of storage capacity, supply chain, quality of staple food, and above all timely connecting the farmers and sellers through the use of technology.

"Grains storage capacity runs over 650 million tonnes for the country.

All credit goes to the leadership of the Chinese government and policymakers.

China has got 150 million people out of poverty since 2013 and 900 million people out of poverty since 1986," he added.

He further said that the technology-driven food security has provided peace of mind to the masses and rising income for hard-working farmers.

Masood Chaudhary, economic expert and businessman, shared with Gwadar Pro his thought that lack of awareness is the biggest issue in

Pakistan, as farmers don't have proper education, and policymakers need to improve policies according to international standards.

"Adoption of successful business models of multinational companies like Chinese companies could help Pakistani enterprises learn their methods and techniques which could help boosting their business through joint ventures."

He further said that China is very good in AI, Big Data, IOT. These kinds of technologies are necessary to enhance business, whereas strict

checks and follow-up mechanisms should be launched where they can analyze their progress and weakness on a monthly basis.

"I hope more Chinese companies would invest in the agriculture sector here and teach us all kinds of methods to improve this sector, particularly in technologies," he said.

Masood mentioned that Pakistan needs to improve the technical skills of their labor and China may help establish vocational training through MOUs with prestigious educational insti-

tutes in different fields, where China can provide solutions.

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Int'l organisations, countries' over \$10 bln pledges for 4RF implementation commendable: Sherry Rehman

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator, Sherry Rehman on Tuesday said the pledges announced by the international organisations and countries of over 10 billion dollars for assisting the implementation of Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Framework (4RF) implementation to steer flood rehabilitation activities was commendable.

The Minister in a series of tweets expressed her gratitude to the world community, donor agencies and development organisations for giving an overwhelming response to the International Climate Resilient Pakistan Conference in Geneva that was aimed to garner cooperation for burden sharing of climate catastrophes triggered in the region due to heightened greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs).

Senator Rehman said the international partners had reiterated full support at the forum with the government of Pakistan and the United Nations at the Geneva conference.

She said the finances pledged would be used for the complete rehabilitation and reconstruction of the flood victims.

"The world has acknowledged the ravages of floods and climate change in Pakistan. Pakistan needed

resources to rehabilitate flood victims and rebuild infrastructure and this is a great achievement of Pakistan", Senator Sherry Rehman said.

The Minister underscored that in this entire process, the continuous efforts of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres were appreciable.

"After the floods, he emerged as the voice of vulnerable and affected people in Pakistan at the global level," Sherry Rehman said.

She added that the first priority of the government was to give back their homes and livelihoods to the flood victims.

"We are constantly struggling in this regard and will not rest until the complete success of this mission", Sherry Rehman said.

The Minister also lambasted the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership. "On the other hand, one party (PTI) in the country is constantly busy creating chaos and uncertainty. The world is seeing how different our priorities are from that of this party," Sherry Rehman said.



GENEVA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing Pakistani delegation and officer of Pakistani Mission in Geneva.

Samina Alvi for collective efforts to empower differently-abled persons

KARACHI: First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi Tuesday stressed the need of promoting the inclusiveness of differently-abled persons in all spheres of society and collective efforts were required to empower them socially and financially.

The inclusiveness of persons with disabilities (PWDs) was vital for the country's sustainable development of the country, she said, adding as over 12 percent of the population of Pakistan was facing disability in different forms or manifestations their participation must be ensured in all social, economic and political activities.

Begum Samina Alvi was addressing a certificate distribution ceremony for successful students of NAVTTC and SSC Inclusive Group organised by the Deaf Education and Welfare Association (DEWA) Trust here at DEWA Institute of Special and Inclusive Education.

She also called for an inclusive education system that "supports the learning of differently-abled children along with other children in general schools so that they can learn coping with difficulties of life". The teachers should be trained and the curriculum be improved to cater to inclusive education for children with disabilities, she added.

Samina Alvi said the first and foremost challenge that needed to be addressed was the public mindset

and common behaviour of society toward PWDs which obstructed their growth and prospects of career building. She urged people to not disrespect or ridicule such persons but encourage and support their participation in educational, social, and economic activities.

She said reservation of 3 percent seats in general educational institutions for ensuring admission of differently-abled children following directives of the higher courts would promote inclusiveness in the education sector. Though a special quota in government jobs was reserved for the PWDs but measures were required for its implementation in toto, she added.

"We need to focus on equipping the special children with market-oriented technical and vocational skills, and professional training so that they instead of relying on others could be able to earn their livelihood and become a productive part of society and play a due role in development and prosperity of the country," she maintained.

She observed that there was a dearth of facilities and plenty of problems for persons with disabilities that hindered their career development even their social life. There was a need of providing ramps in buildings, public places, and transport facilities to promote the mobility of the PWDs, she added.

LPG prices increased by Rs5 per kg

ISLAMABAD: The prices of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) on Tuesday increased by Rs5 per kg without a notification from the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA).

In a statement, Chairman LPG Distribution Association (LDAP) Irfan Khokhar said that the price now jumped to Rs260 per kg from Rs255 after an increase of Rs5.

Meanwhile, the prices of domestic and commercial cylinders increased by Rs6 and Rs230, respectively.

Irfan Khokhar said that the gas was available at Rs270 in Muree, while its price exceeded Rs300 per kg in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Skardu.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) announced a reduction in the price of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) by Rs11.59 per kg for January 2023.

According to the notification released by OGRA, stated that Rs11.59 per kg cuts down price of LPG for January 2023, furthermore, the domestic cylinder of LPG has been made cheaper by Rs136.86 and its new price has been fixed at Rs2,411.43 INP.

PML-N MPs decide mounting pressure for Punjab CM's vote of confidence

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) have decided to mount pressure on the Punjab government for taking the vote of confidence for CM Pervaiz Elahi.

The decision was taken in the PML-N's parliamentary party meeting on Tuesday which was attended by 152 MPAs. During the meeting, a resolution was presented by Malik Nadeem Kamran, Ifthikhar Hussain, Uzma Bukhari and others for expressing their lack of confidence in Punjab CM Pervaiz Elahi.

The PML-N MPAs announced to support the order issued by the Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman for conducting the vote of confidence in the Punjab Assembly. The resolution stated that the role of the speaker and the deputy speaker became dis-

puted and they demanded the organisation of vote of confidence for the Punjab CM by an impartial lawmaker.

Sources told ARY News that PML-N leadership directed the MPAs to stay in the assembly hall and asked all lawmakers to ensure their presence. Moreover, the political party also formed groups comprising 15 MPAs each which will be led by its head.

The lawmakers have been instructed to take aggressive steps by raising slogans in the PA for demanding the Punjab CM's vote of confidence and interrupting the proceedings.

In a relevant development, Governor Balighur Rehman said in a statement the Punjab CM had raised objections on the prescribed date and time of the trust vote which led him and his cabinet identified.

CRBC's \$100,000 donation in place for Pakistani flood victims

BEIJING: China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), a longstanding partner of Pakistan in transport and infrastructure network development, donated a total of USD 100,000 to the flood-hit families in Pakistan, China Economic Net (CEN) reported it on Tuesday.

In October, 2022, Wang Lijun, Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee and General Manager of the company, attended the donation ceremony at the Pakistani Embassy in China.

According to the company, the donation will be divided into two parts, RMB 100,000 will be donated to the Pakistani Embassy in China and PKR 20.08 million will go to Pakistani Prime Minister's Flood Relief Fund.

Wang expressed sincere sympathy to the families of the victims and those injured in the flood. He believed that with the joint efforts of the Pakistani government and people, they would overcome the difficulties and life and work would go back to normal at an early date.

Wang talked with Pakistani Ambassador to China Moin ul Haque about the company's key project progress in Pakistan, and expressed his heartfelt thanks to the Embassy for its long-term guidance and help.

Speaking at the occasion, Ambassador Moin ul Haque paid tribute to CRBC's contribution towards Pakistan-China friendship and its role for successful completion of many vital infrastructure projects in Pakistan including Kahunjerab-Raikot section of Karakorum Highway and KKH realignment projects at Attatab Lake and Havelian-Thakot sections.

Vote of confidence: PTI accuses PDM of 'horse-trading' in Punjab

LAHORE: Former information minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry has accused Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) of 'horse-trading' ahead of the Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Pervaiz Elahi's vote of confidence.

Talking to journalists in Lahore, the former federal minister said that Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) offered Rs1.20 billion to five MPAs to switch loyalties ahead of the Pervaiz Elahi's vote of confidence.

Fawad Chaudhry claimed rumours are circulating that PTI MPA Momina Waheed has received Rs50 million to vote against Punjab CM Pervaiz Elahi.

Speaking of the numbers game, Fawad said that they have 188 lawmakers in Punjab Assembly today. "A day earlier, the bills in

the provincial assembly were passed with majority," he maintained.

Terming party chairman Imran Khan an 'asset of the country', Fawad said that those who want to minus the former premier were weakening the country. "There is no future of Pakistani politics without Imran Khan," he claimed.

Referring to Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the former information minister said that the officials serving in the electoral watchdog have no knowledge of the law. "The ECP should resign if they cannot hold elections" he added. He reiterated that his party wants to build a working relationship with institutions. "We are trying our best to go towards the elections," he said, adding that political stability was only possible through immediate elections.

NA body passes 'Imports, Exports (Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2022'

ISLAMABAD: The Standing Committee on Commerce on Tuesday unanimously passed the Imports and Exports (Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2022.

"The Imports and Exports (Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2022 (Government Bill) as introduced in the National Assembly may be passed," the committee unanimously recommended.

The committee met on Tuesday afternoon in the Parliament House, Islamabad under the Chairmanship of MNA Khurshid Ahmed Junejo to discuss the performance of the Ministry of Commerce and its attached departments.

The committee, while discussing the performance of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), directed that M/o Commerce may introduce an appraisal system for commercial attaches and bound them to

achieve the targets set by the government so that Pakistani exports could advance in a prompt way.

The committee directed that M/o Commerce may launch a proper print and electronic media campaign to give access to Pakistani traders in international markets so that they could sell their products in international markets to grab maximum revenue for the country.

The committee, therefore, decided to invite Secretary Finance and Secretary Industries & Production so that concrete measures could be adopted to expand the network of Pakistani exports worldwide.

Earlier, Special Secretary M/o Commerce and Secretary TDAP briefly apprised the committee about the efforts made to enhance Pakistani exports and the problems faced by them in this regard.

Saudi Arabia revives Pakistan's pre-pandemic Hajj quota

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia has revived Pakistan's pre-pandemic Hajj quota of 179,210 pilgrims with the draft of annual Hajj agreement removing the upper age limit of 65 years.

Spokesperson of Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony's, Muhammad Umar Butt informed media that Minister Mufti Abdul Shakoor had requested the Saudi authorities to further reduce the mandatory Hajj expenses as it would help lessen the maximum burden on the Pakistani pilgrims who wanted to perform Hajj. The Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah Dr. Tawfiq Fawzan Al Rabiah had given a positive indicator into the matter, he added.

The spokesperson said the minister who is on an official visit to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia these days to attend the four-day Hajj Expo 2023 - a major exhibition and conference - met Osama Samkari, chairman of a bus transport company Nicaba Sayarat and discussed provision of better travel facilities to the pilgrims in Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifah.

Umar Butt said Hajj applications would likely be called by the end of February and the religious affairs minister would announce the final Hajj Policy 2023 after the cabinet's approval.

Pakistan achieves historic success by receiving pledges of over \$9.7b: Kundi

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Faisal Karim Kundi Tuesday said that Pakistan had achieved historic success in the Geneva Conference by receiving pledges worth 9.7 billion dollars.

"This was the result of effective diplomatic efforts of the Foreign Minister, Bilawal Bhutto who in a very short span of time visited various countries and sensitized the international community about the post flood situation being faced by Pakistan", he said during a presser.

Flanked by Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Media Coordinator, Nazir Dhoki during the news conference, the SAPM said the total pledges of 9.7 billion dollars included 9.04 billion dollars, 570.50

million Euros and 36 million pounds which is approximately PKR 2204 billion.

Faisal Kundi said that the funds acquired through pledges would be spent on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the flood affected areas and people across the country.

The way Bilawal Bhutto fought the case of Pakistan at international forums by visiting different countries and inviting United Nation Secretary General to Pakistan for creating awareness and sense of sympathy about the flood damages which reflected his diplomatic wisdom, he said. He said that still water had not receded from many of the flood affected parts of the country including Sindh, Balochistan, South Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and South Punjab.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Imran Khan addressing via video link during a National Seminar on Terrorism 2.0 organized by PTI KPK at local hotel.

Large number of Chinese tourists expected to visit Pakistan in 2023

ISLAMABAD: After three gloomy years of cross-border tourism between Pakistan and China due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the year 2023, the Pakistan-China Year of Tourism Exchanges, is expected to witness a boom in the tourism sector in both countries.

"Exchanges have already started online. We are also working with Chinese tourism associations to develop business linkages. Soon we'll finalize a calendar of events and activities", Aftab ur Rehman Rana, Managing Director of Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) told China Economic Net (CEN).

He believes that China, one of the biggest players in the tourism economy at the global level, will find a lot to explore in Pakistan, where a lot of business opportunities are coming up for individual investments in the tourism and hospitality sector.

"Many Chinese people working

under CPEC returned to China during the pandemic, now it's time for them to come back with their families for a good visit. I expect that a number of Chinese tourists will visit Pakistan if we have better facilitation of border crossing, economical air ticket packages, and inter-city transportation between major cities like Beijing, Urumqi, Islamabad, Lahore..." he said.

The traffic will be two-way. He told CEN reporter that in China, the silk route is a very popular travel route that has also attracted many tourists from Europe. In Pakistan, the rich history, culture, festivity, and music will offer a unique travel experience.

In this regard, PTDC has already developed a detailed guidebook on Pakistan in Chinese. Video films on Pakistan will also be developed with subtitles in Chinese to help Chinese tourists know more about Pakistan.

Sanjrani along with parliamentary delegation reach Iraq on 4-day visit

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, along with a parliamentary delegation reached Iraq on Tuesday on four-day official visit.

Upon arrival at airport, the Chairman Senate and the delegation was received by the senior chairman of the Iraqi Foreign Relations Committee, Aamer H. Al-fa'ez.

Sadiq Sanjrani and the delegation expressed their happiness on the warm welcome and congratulated on the beginning of a new era of reconstruction and development in Iraq.

The Chairman Senate also invited Speaker of Iraqi Parliament to participate in the upcoming Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Senate of Pakistan.

Sadiq Sanjrani along with the parliamentary delegation also visited the shrine of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani in Baghdad during which they offered prayers for peace and stability of Pakistan.



KARACHI: Begum Samina Arif Alvi in a group photo during her visiting the SCINOSA Day home (Society for Children in Need of Special Attention).

PML-N MPs force their way inside Punjab Assembly

LAHORE: PML-N lawmakers forced their way inside the Punjab Assembly on Tuesday after Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah accused Chief Minister Parvez Elahi and provincial Speaker Sibtan Khan of instructing the police to not let opposition members enter the premises.

The doors of the assembly were closed and security guards remained on high alert after yesterday's session saw ruckus as the opposition challenged CM Elahi to prove he had the requisite numbers to secure a vote of confidence.

Footage outside the assembly on Tuesday showed PML-N MPA from Sheikhupura Peer Muhammad Ashraf Rasool and Mian Abdul Rauf clashing with police. Rasool can be seen pushing a policeman away and

cursing at them as he forces his way inside the main gate. "Move back. Stop this nonsense," an infuriated Rasool can be heard saying.

After the clash, other opposition members including Khalif Tahir Sindhu and Zeeshan Rafiq opened the PA gate and entered the premises. Meanwhile, Rangers personnel accompanied Special Assistant to Prime Minister Attaullah Tarar inside the assembly.

"Today it was said that federal ministers will not be able to enter the PA and their entry is banned," he told reporters outside the house. "I told them that even their fathers can't even stop me from entering [the assembly]. Earlier, Sanaullah had made similar claims, saying that Elahi had banned the entry of opposition lawmakers into the house."