

QUETTA VOICE

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US says Pakistan 'has right to defend itself from terrorism'



Hopefully Punjab will provide 6 lakh bags of wheat: CM

ECNEC approves 5000 HEC scholarships for Balochistan and Ex-FATA

Syed Muhammad Yaseen

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) has approved 5,000 scholarships for Balochistan and Ex-FATA. Students of Balochistan and Ex-FATA can apply for scholarships by ECNEC in various fields like medicine, engineering, and law, etc.

Rs: 88B for flood rehabilitation and reconstruction:

2022 flash floods have drowned most of Balochistan leaving human and material loss on large scale. The ECNEC meeting also decided to provide Rupees 88 billion for the rehabilitation of refugees. This amount would also be used for the reconstruction of houses in the flood-affected areas of the province.

Ten Thousand Internships for Balochistan



The project also consists of 10,000 internships for the students of Balochistan. Students graduating from various fields can be part of this internship program.

Laptop Scheme also included in the project:

The recent project also includes a segment of providing 1 lac laptops to the committed and topper students of Balochistan and Ex-FATA. According to sources inside ECNEC, the students of Balochistan will get a share of 20,000 laptops.

These were the outstanding demands of students from Balochistan and FATA to come at par with students from the rest of the country. The Balochistan government has welcomed the decision made by the ECNEC and termed it a positive stride towards ending the sense of deprivation among the students of Balochistan.

Govt to take care of families of martyred police officials: Sana

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan has said that the incumbent Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is committed to take special care and facilitate the families of martyred police officials who laid down their



lives in line of the duty to save others.

The Interior Minister visited Central Police office Islamabad on Wednesday during which he met with family of the martyred ICT official Adeel Hussain of I-10/4 blast and presented a cheque of Rs10 billion to them under 'Shuhda Package'. He said that Rs12.5 million more grant will be provided to the family of the martyr for construction of house and his children will be facilitate till end.

Addressing a press conference along with IG Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan on the occasion, Rana Sanaullah paid tributes to Syed Adeel Hussain and said that the martyr save the federal capital of massive disaster by sacrificing his own life. He also lauded the injured of the blast.

thanks to Prime Minister and the PML-N government for taking keen interest and approving the imbursement of Rs1.22 billion pending amount of the martyred police officials. The interior minister appreciated IGP Dr Akbar



Nasir Khan for ensuring the appointments in the department and holding a well disciplined test of the country's history.

Rana Sanaullah said that during National Security Committee (NSC), the political and military leadership has vowed for not holding any dialogues with extremists and zero-tolerance for all terrorist organizations.

It Taliban are desirous of holding dialogues on the issues, they would have to lay down weapons first, he clarified. The minister said that to tackle terrorism in better way, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) would be strengthened and functionalized.

He informed that two terrorists of threatening to attack Parliament have been arrested who were identified as Daniyal alias Zulfikar INP.

Hopefully Punjab will provide 6 lakh bags of wheat: CM Balochistan

Manan Mandokhail

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Qudus Bizenjo expressed the hope that Punjab as an elder brother would provide 600,000 bags of wheat to the province to bring an end to the prevailing flour crisis. He expressed these views while talking to provincial ministers on Wednesday.

CM's comments have come after the flour prices skyrocketed and a 20 kg bag of flour is being sold at Rs2600 in the open market in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan. This has compounded the problems of the downtrodden, poor, and middle class of society.

We have approached the

Punjab government about the provision of what to the Balochistan government to overcome the flour crisis in the province, Mr. Bizenjo said. He said the federal government would play its role in addressing the financial issues of Balochistan and bringing an end to the wheat and flour crisis here.

CM asks Islamabad to provide one percent extra share in NFC on account of security to Balochistan

The Chief Minister demanded of the federal government to provide one percent of an extra



share in the national finance commission award to Balochistan on account of security. "We are maintaining the security of half of Pakistan", Mr. Bizenjo said. He stated that Balochistan was facing security and financial challenges and

expressed the hope that the federal government under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif would address all grievances of the province.

Bizenjo asks PPL to pay Rs.34 billion rupees

He informed that currently Balochistan's outstanding against Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) was more than 34 billion rupees. He asked the PPL to make sure of timely payment of the outstanding amount of Balochistan so that the province could overcome its prevailing financial crisis.

Mr. Bizenjo reiterated that his government has taken a number of initiatives to improve the living standard of the people of Balochistan and for this purpose, billions were allocated under the Public Sector development program. He directed the concerned departments to step up efforts to make sure timely and quality construction of all projects.

Firing in Sorab leaves 2 injured, blast rocks Bolan

Abdullah Lehri

Armed accused opened fire and injured two people in Balochistan's Sorab town on Wednesday morning. Levies sources said the armed accused opened fire and seriously wounded Mir Haris Sinhari and Altaf Hussain. The assailants sped away on their motorcycle after the attack.



The injured were rushed to Sorab hospital for medical treatment. Police and levies reached the spot and started an investigation into the incident. The motive behind the attack could not be ascertained immediately, levies sources said. No arrest was made in connection with the attack in Sorab till the filing of this report.

In Balochistan's Bolan mountains, an improvised explosive device (IED) went off on an under-construction road in the Bhag area. The blast partially damaged the road and there was no human loss as a result of the blast. Levies personnel reached the spot as an investigation into the incident went underway.

FIR registered against Naveed Kalmati and Maulana Hidayat in Gwadar

Behram Baloch

GWADAR: Police registered a first information report (FIR) against former Balochistan caretaker minister Mir Naveed Kalmati and Gwadar Rights Movement (GRM) Chief, Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman for inflicting damages to public properties and inciting violence in the port city.

FIR was registered at Sur Bandar against the former minister and the GRM Chief for what police said caused damages to public properties during protest demonstrations. Other leaders of GRM were also booked for inciting violence in the port city of the country. Mir Naveed Kalmati took to the social media network Twitter and strongly rejected the government's claim of causing damages to public properties.



"I am in Karachi and I have no involvement", Mr. Kalmati said

"I am in Karachi and I have no involvement", Mr. Kalmati said in a video shared on his Twitter account. He however said the "corrupt" elements cannot hide their ill practices by using force against the people of Gwadar. The FIR was registered on behalf of Ghulam Farooq, the Naib Tehsildar in Gwadar. In the FIR, the applicant said the accused had pelted stones at the vehicle of deputy commissioner Gwadar.

Normalcy returns to Gwadar

Normalcy returned to Gwadar as most

of the business centers, shops, petrol pumps, and offices were restored. Mobile service was also restored in the city. However, the internet service was yet to be restored. The people suffered difficulties because of the suspension of the internet in Gwadar and other areas.

Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman, the GRM Chief accused the provincial government of using force against the activists. He said a large number of GRM activists were behind bars during protest demonstrations. The Balochistan government has accused the GRM leaders of inciting violence and disrupting routine life in the port city of the country. Baton-wielding policemen have been deployed in the port city to maintain law and order situation. The government has also imposed section 144 and imposed a ban on all kinds of protest demonstrations and display of weapons in Gwadar district.

Child pornographer arrested in Lahore

News Desk

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) arrested a man involved in child pornography in Lahore on Wednesday morning. The accused was involved in multiple cases of child pornography, sources in the FIA said. During the investigation, the accused Qaisar Abbas made shocking revelations with regard to child pornography.

The accused confessed that he posted obnoxious and obscene pictures of a 12-year-old Lahore girl on an international porn website.

He also revealed during the interrogation that he received a hefty amount for uploading minor pictures wearing a scarf on the website.

FIA sources quoted that the FIA Cybercrime received the record of a 12-year-old girl from Interpol. Moreover, FIA has sent the accused's mobile phones to forensics.

Defence Minister, Air Chief discuss evolving geo-strategic environment, regional security

ISLAMABAD: Federal Defence Minister, Khawaja Muhammad Asif called on Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu during his visit to Air Headquarters, Islamabad on Wednesday and discussed with him matters pertaining to evolving geo-strategic environment and regional security situation. Speaking on the occasion, the Defence Minister lauded the matchless professionalism of PAF and stated that the government would utilize all its resources to modernize Pakistan Air Force to ensure an impenetrable defence of the country. He admired the



aftermath of recent floods in the country. The Air Chief briefed the visiting dignitary about various ongoing projects being carried out by Pakistan Air Force with special focus on modernization and development of indigenous capabilities. Chief of the Air Staff also briefed the Defence Minister about his vision of PAF's National Aerospace Science & Technology Park (NASTP) project and highlighted that the mega project was aimed at fostering collaborative research, development and innovation in the domains of aviation, space, IT, cyber & computing to ensure social, economic, technological and scientific benefits for Pakistan INP.

revamping of training by PAF to produce well-equipped and skillful work force to cope up with ever-changing challenges of aerial defence and national security. Khawaja Asif also lauded the exceptional response of Pakistan Air Force during the rescue and rehabilitation of flood victims in

US says Pakistan 'has right to defend itself from terrorism'

The United States has thrown its weight behind the counter-terrorism decisions taken by the National Security Committee (NSC) in its recent meeting, saying "Pakistan has a right to defend itself from terrorism."

The statement from US State Department Spokesperson Ned Price comes two days after the NSC — the highest civil-military forum for decisions on matters pertaining to national security — expressed firm resolve to crush terrorist groups operating against Pakistan. In the NSC meeting



that spanned for two days from Dec 31 to Jan 1, the forum had categorically asked Afghanistan's rulers — without directly naming them — to deny safe haven to Pakistani terrorist groups on its soil and end their patronage, while reiterating its intent

to be maintained on every inch of Pakistan's territory."

At a press briefing on Tuesday, the US State Department spokesperson said the US was aware of the NSC's recent statement. "The Pakistani people have suffered tremendously from terrorist attacks. Pakistan has a right to defend itself from terrorism," Price said in response to a question.

He said that the [Afghan] Taliban must uphold the very commitment they had made that their soil would never be used as a launchpad for international terrorist attacks. Web Desk

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.

Global order upended

Global order upended

Over the past several decades there have been a few years that really stand out for having an impact that resonates for many years to come. One such year was 2001 when Americans' view of threats faced by their country was fundamentally altered. The financial crisis of 2008-09 devastated the American and global economies for years to come.

This past year, 2022, will go down in history for shaking the established global security order to its core. What was believed to be the post-World War II era of stability and security is no more. It was broadly accepted that the age of major wars, particularly ones that sought to change national borders was in the past.

The relative security of the post-World War era had put countries, and particularly industrial economies of Europe, into a false sense of security. Despite repeated urgings by the US, wealthy European countries, particularly members of the

Nato alliance had little interest in spending two per cent of their GDP on defence, as stipulated by the treaty. While the US continued to overinvest in defence, Europeans were happy to spend on their welfare state - providing for education, infrastructure, and healthcare, beyond what the US has been willing to do.

This relative calm came crashing as the Russian military marched into Ukraine in February. While Russia had been nibbling away at sovereign Ukrainian territory since 2014, it had been largely neglected by the West, treating them as minor incursions. It is no longer possible to ignore Russian actions.

While the US has approved large sums in military aid to Ukraine, Olaf Scholz, the chancellor of Germany, has announced additional 100 billion euros in German defence spending. In fact, no major country in the world can ignore any

more the risks from potential adversaries. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has also rapidly altered global alliances. The US has led the charge to heavily sanction the Russian economy, with the hopes of crippling it. But much to the West's disappointment, too many countries in the world including in Europe have been dependent on Russian oil and gas, and grains and fertilizer from Ukraine.

The war has also impacted the fortunes of countries near and far. While Europe has suffered greatly from spike in energy prices, others in the Middle East and elsewhere have been at the receiving end of capital fleeing Russia. India has openly flouted US-led sanctions of Russian energy benefiting from importing deeply discounted Russian oil.

The world is seeing the limitations of sanctions on a country whose products are in demand. Even as the world was reeling from the

effects of the Russian invasion, the US was dealing with internal threats to its own democracy. A former president was refusing to accept the results of the elections he lost two years ago. Results of the US midterm elections held in November this year brought a little relief to the worst fears of the public. Most of the candidates with extremist, antidemocratic views lost. It appears Trump's political influence is also diminished.

Among the many factors influencing US election results was a decision by the Supreme Court to reverse five-decades-old decisions affirming a woman's constitutional right to an abortion, at least in the early weeks of pregnancy. Regardless of how one feels about the right to an abortion, the Supreme Court's willingness to reverse what was considered 'settled law' has created deep anxiety among many sectors of American society. There is fear as to

what rights this activist court may go after next.

Beyond politics, the financial markets in the US had one of their worst years ever. Trillions were wiped out in financial wealth. High-flying technology stocks such as Amazon, Facebook and Tesla lost more than 50 per cent of their value. The aura of tech billionaires lost much of their shine as many of them were exposed to be not necessarily so bright. Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg has learnt that 'Metaverse' may not be a winning bet yet. Tesla owner Elon Musk bought Twitter for \$44 billion and quickly learned managing a global social media company may be more complicated than firing rockets into space.

Similarly, the collapse of a major Crypto exchange has brought reality to that speculative venture.

As the world moves into 2023, the effects of the crises spawned in 2022 may stay with us perhaps for years to come.

Climate challenge

By Dr Ameena Tanvir

Long denied and then ignored, climate change is now taking a toll in Pakistan as the country sits at high risk of being run out of water and braces for intense and unprecedented weather patterns.

Pakistan is breaking its own records of being one of the worst-hit countries by climate change, almost every year. According to the Global Climate Risk Index, Pakistan ranked eighth most vulnerable country in the world. In May, the UN enlisted Pakistan among the top 23 countries facing drought emergencies over the past two years. Between 1998 and 2018, the country is estimated to have lost nearly 10,000 lives to climate-related disasters and suffered losses amounting to about \$4 billion from 152 extreme weather events.

Analysts have estimated Pakistan's climate migrants over the past decade at around 30 million people. Severe weather patterns coupled with lack of readiness are not only endangering lives of millions of residents but also leading to food insecurity and dwindling economic outlook.

Although heatwaves had started impacting the country for the last many years, this year's premature heatwave has made ripples, forcing millions to readjust or reduce their daily workload or life pattern. The unprecedented and

intense heatwave that began in as early as April also sent shockwaves to the country's economic outlook, especially to Punjab. The province produces more than 50 per cent of the total wheat of the country, but the premature heat resulted in early harvesting that led to missing production targets.

Punjab witnessed an unprecedented and premature rise in temperature varying from 41 degrees C to 47 degrees C in different parts, shaving off the spring season completely this year. It is not that 47 degrees C in the country is an abnormal temperature; the problem is that wheat and other crops need certain temperatures at a certain time for their growth. The extreme heat episode in March and April led to a significant reduction in the per acre yield from over 40 mounds to 28 mounds. In May, the federal government decided to import three million tons of wheat from the international market to meet domestic needs.

This year's intense and blistering heatwave didn't spare mango production either, as the country faced nearly a 50 per cent drop in mango production. Punjab alone, which produces 70 per cent of the total mangoes, faced a 60 per cent drop in mango production during the 2022 season. The ideal temperature for good flowering of

mango must be 13 degrees C to 30 degrees C, but this year the temperatures in those days hovered around 40 degrees C.

Year-on-year temperature increases have brought plague after plague in rural and urban areas. In 2020, Punjab faced the most devastating locust infestation in nearly 30 years, which affected 15 per cent of the area of the province. Experts believe that the rising temperature of the Indian Ocean is one of the main reasons for the invasion of locusts in the South Asian region.

Also, increasing temperature is one of several reasons for deadly air pollution in the country. According to experts, rising temperature is intricately linked with the climate crisis because warmer temperatures create an environment for smog formation and can lead the air to stagnate - preventing dirty air from leaving an area. Air pollution thus exacerbates existing inequalities and paves the way for human rights violations.

Deteriorating air pollution is also leading to indirect costs such as lower labour supply and productivity, migration of skilled labour, and volatility in the financial sector.

Rising temperatures are not an exclusive or sole reason for low yield of several crops in Pakistan, but prolonged droughts and below-normal rains have their part

to play as well. Despite having one of the world's largest irrigation systems, water channels across Pakistan confronted acute water shortages due to less or below-normal rainfall from February through June of this year. Water reservoirs remained unfilled or partially filled leading to hampering economic activities.

Before the recent rains brought relief for the residents of Cholistan, Thal and other desert areas of the country, life was upturned, forcing hundreds and thousands of people to migrate with their cattle to greener pastures and urban centres in desperate search for water. Although all provinces confronted acute water shortages as of late June, Sindh faced the worst of it with a record 40 per cent shortage.

The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) expected a 22 per cent water shortage for the Kharif season, but it turned out even worse with a water shortage of 38 per cent.

Prolonged drought eventually ended with the beginning of the monsoon season in July, but heavy rains made things look even worse. Flash floods caused by abnormally heavy monsoon rains have killed over 550 people so far, with Balochistan among the hardest hit.

According to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), July turned

out to be the wettest month since 1961, with 181 per cent more rain than average. Balochistan received 450 per cent and Sindh 308 per cent more rain than the annual average, the disaster agency said.

Unusual and torrential rainfall in Karachi caused havoc, forcing residents to stay at home during weekdays. The provincial government also announced a day off to cope with the heavy rainfall challenge. During the second spell of monsoon rains, the city received more than an entire summer's worth of rain in one day. Over 50 casualties have been reported in Sindh.

Successive governments, on their part, avowed to mitigate climate challenges and keep the issue as one of the top priorities. But little has been done in this regard due to lack of funding, attention and will power.

This year's devastating floods have inflicted immense damage to the infrastructure of Balochistan and Sindh. It will take the government years to rebuild resilient infrastructure since it is barely surviving a default-like situation currently. Lack of awareness among people and the absence of sustainable policies are some other factors that will keep Pakistan's fight against the looming climate change challenge unaddressed at least in the foreseeable future.

Road to progress

By Atta-ur-Rahman

Pakistan today faces the gravest crisis in its history after its dismemberment in 1971. Its foreign reserves are down to \$5.8 billion, which include deposits worth \$5 billion from Saudi Arabia and China with specific conditions of use.

Pakistan needs to repay loans amounting to around \$8 billion by March 2023. Rumour has it that the IMF has refused to negotiate with the present government because of its past unfulfilled commitments. Other aid agencies are also averse to helping the country further. So, what is the way forward?

First, it is a pity that despite the acute shortage of foreign exchange, we continue to import items like milk, cheese, corn flakes, chocolates, tobacco for cigarettes, and even cat food from abroad. Luxury vehicles, cosmetics and other luxury items also continue to be imported. As a result, our local industry has been badly affected. We must ban all non-essential imports immediately (or if this violates international/WTO laws, then impose a significantly high tax rate on these products) and change our policies to stimulate local industrial development and export of value-added products.

Second, we need to stop relying on foreign loans and reform our policies so that our expenditure is less than our earnings. This can help us reduce our for-

ign debt. In the short term, we should let the Pakistani rupee slide to about Rs260 or Rs300 to a dollar since this will lead to enhanced exports and reduced imports. One consequence of this policy will be a hike in the prices of fuel, electricity and imported edible oil, affecting the poor adversely. To offset this, Rs500 billion should be set aside to help the poor by providing monetary support through welfare programmes. This will partly help relieve the pain imposed by these policies.

Third, there are only 3.4 million taxpayers in a country of 220 million. We need to impose a substantial agricultural income tax based on per-acre land under cultivation, and not on declared income. This will generate a significant amount of revenue. Property tax is also based on substantially lower assessments than actual property values. They need to be reassessed based on market prices. This step alone will result in a three-fold increase in property taxes. All shops across the country must be taxed based on a flat tax according to their size and location. There are about two million retail stores in Pakistan. A mandatory retail tax of an average of Rs4,000 per month per shop can lead to an additional Rs100 billion annually.

Pakistan should also follow in the footsteps of India and ban all Rs5,000 and Rs1,000 notes in the country with no warning, and then allow people to

deposit any cash money in their bank accounts within four weeks. This would lead to a significant increase in the size of the white economy and taxation. Similarly, to preserve valuable foreign exchange, all letters of credit should be opened only against the production of foreign currency through local purchase or foreign transfer by importers. Export vouchers could be given to preferred industrial high-tech exports to compensate them for the high cost of electricity, etc.

The use of IT can provide a huge boost to national tax collection by bringing in transparency in the whole process. One important step in this connection would be to make it mandatory by law that all sales and purchases of property, shares, cars or any other assets must be placed with full details on a government website before the legal transaction is allowed. Any complaints by citizens against undervalued transactions should be independently examined, and if found to be correct, 30 per cent of the additional tax/penalties should be imposed. The amount so collected could go as a reward to the complainant. This will curb any black money transactions.

One illustration of how IT can bring transparency in tax collection is found by a project undertaken by the Knowledge Economy Task Force that worked closely with NADRA and the FBR to widen the tax net and increase.

Facing future floods safely

Dr Afreen Siddiqi

Pakistan's floods of 2022 were the latest, and most damaging yet, addition to the long history of floods in the country. As the muddy waters slowly recede, the need for speeding up action to face future floods stands clear.

Floods have been the most frequent natural disaster in Pakistan. Yet, decisions for land-use and habitation do not reflect this reality. The rising intensity of floods has been concurrent with an increasing population in the flood plains of the Indus river. It is this confluence of water and people in floodplains that creates the tragedy of lost lives and property. The flood of 2022 has led to reported losses of over 1700 lives, affected 33 million people, and incurred damages of over \$40 billion (amounting to 11.5% of the 2021 national GDP). The flood of 2010 led to a loss of over 1200 lives, loss of homes for over 14 million people, and damages of over \$43 billion. The flood of 1992 led to a loss of 2000 lives, affected more than 9.3 million people and incurred damages of over 1 billion dollars. This list continues on. Each was declared the worst flood in Pakistan's history. Each was unprecedented at its time of occurrence. There is precedent for unprecedented

floods in the country. It is time to focus on setting a different kind of precedent - one with a clear focus on elevating the safety of people in rural, flood-prone areas, and elevating the well-being of farmers who bear the most losses.

The prevailing mindset of flood management has to change. In the past, money has been poured in building levees and flood protection infrastructure, and then again on re-building higher and reinforcing more the structures to "fight" the next flood after each cycle of levee breaches, infrastructure failure, and devastation of lives and properties. Gilbert White, a prominent 20th century geographer, noted this adverse cycle, and advocated for including the role of humans in damages resulting from natural disasters. He warned about the trap of building levees, followed by eventual breaching and flooding, and then rebuilding again, with increasing level of damages in each flooding episode. The so-called "levee effect", empirically observed in several river basins around the world, points to the paradox where building higher levees has led to increasing levels of flood damages. This is due to flood protection infrastructure creating a perception of

flood security, leading to relaxation of rules for land-use and construction over time, and increasing density of habitation. This results in greater exposure to floods. It is time to see and stop this cycle. This can be done if policymakers and people recognise the role of human decisions in contributing to the disaster. When we recognise responsibility for our actions, we gain agency for change.

What are the changes needed? First, a conception of flood security as the emergent outcome arising from interactions of people with their environment. These interactions are governed by physical laws of nature and institutions (policies, rules and norms) devised by humans. There is a need to structure these interactions in particular ways in order to be able to steer emergent level of flood security towards a desirable state.

Second, a systems approach for addressing the complex challenge is needed. Establishing a 'goal-seeking' system structure to attain desired targets of flood safety is important. It entails setting clear and shared goals, having sensors for measuring the state of flood security, having accurate and timely communication of that information to relevant

actors, having a process that assesses the situation (condition) based on the information, and having decision-makers with necessary authority that take corrective action. If all of these elements are linked appropriately, to produce a feedback structure at district, provincial and federal levels and function with necessary speed and resources, then level of flood security can rise.

Presently, agencies and organisations exist that monitor and forecast weather, forecast floods, conduct disaster risk management and aid in disaster response. However, shared goals of flood safety are absent. Additionally, components that produce information at local levels at required times are absent or inadequate. Additionally, components that have the authority and resources to take corrective action are lacking. These deficiencies can be addressed.

Goals and targets for flood safety can be instituted and adopted from federal to district levels. Necessary links that connect existing agencies can be established. Sensing and monitoring, such as through periodically updated flood-risk maps, can be generated at tehsil and building lot-level. These can be shared with the public (to inform property

owners and residents of their flood risks) as well as to inform public officials in land-use planning. Local evacuation plans for people and moveable assets (such as livestock) in rural areas can be put in place, and early warning systems can be installed. Community education programmes that raise awareness about safety and evacuation procedures can be conducted. Actions for efficient drainage and storm water passage can be taken. Flood resilient designs and construction, and aid for households to live in lower risk areas can be provided. Financial solutions, such as funds in which land owners contribute towards flood loss compensation when needed, can be created. Such literal 'rainy-day funds' can be drawn up at time of need. Overall, regular processes for short-term and long-term flood risk assessment and corrective actions can affect flood security in positive ways. These actions are not as costly as some may think. High resolution, frequently updated, land imagery from earth-observing satellites has been available for free for more than a decade. National agencies and universities within Pakistan have capacity for geospatial data analysis and flood risk mapping.

Inequality and hunger

By Chuck Collins

Beginning on May 24, the World Economic Forum is gathering in Davos, Switzerland for an in-person meeting, discussing the global tax system and financial inclusion. Thanks to protests and new research, however, participants will not be able to avoid the elephant in the room: the surging inequality of wealth during the pandemic.

As the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) and Inequality.org have documented over the last two years of a global pandemic, billionaire assets have surged while millions lost their lives and livelihoods.

A new report from Oxfam dramatizes how hundreds of millions of people around the world have slid further into poverty during this time period. In a detailed examination of the food and agriculture industry, Oxfam found that billionaires in that industry saw their wealth increase by \$382 billion during the pandemic. An emergency windfall tax on their wealth increase alone (to say nothing of their pre-pandemic billions) could end world hunger and double the incomes of 545 million small-scale farmers.

In January, an analysis by the Fight Inequality Alliance, Institute for Policy Studies, Oxfam, and the Patriotic Millionaires found that an annual wealth tax starting at just 2 percent for those

with more than \$5 million, 3 percent for those with over \$50 million, and up to 5 percent for billionaires could generate upwards of \$2.52 trillion a year. That's enough to lift 2.3 billion people out of poverty, fund vaccines for everyone in the world, and deliver universal healthcare and social protections for all the citizens of low- and lower-middle-income countries.

A group of over 150 millionaires released a strong statement calling on Davos attendees to face the dangers of runaway wealth inequality and speak out in favor of national efforts to levy progressive income and wealth taxes on the ultra-wealthy. "The truth is that 'Davos' doesn't deserve the world's trust right now," the statement reads. "For all the countless hours spent talking about making the world a better place, the conference has produced little tangible value amidst a torrent of self-congratulations."

"Until participants acknowledge the simple, effective solution staring them in the face - taxing the rich - the people of the world will continue to see their so-called dedication to fixing the world's problems as little more than a performance."

The letter is signed by actor and activist Mark Ruffalo, as well as supporters of the In Tax We Trust movement including Abigail Disney, Morris Pearl, and Nick Hanauer. These millionaires delivered the In Tax We Trust

letter directly to the World Economic Forum offices in New York and Geneva, and attended pro-taxation demonstrations at the outskirts of the elite compound in Davos itself.

As the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) and Inequality.org have documented over the last two years of a global pandemic, billionaire assets have surged while millions lost their lives and livelihoods.

A new report from Oxfam dramatizes how hundreds of millions of people around the world have slid further into poverty during this time period. In a detailed examination of the food and agriculture industry, Oxfam found that billionaires in that industry saw their wealth increase by \$382 billion during the pandemic. An emergency windfall tax on their wealth increase alone (to say nothing of their pre-pandemic billions) could end world hunger and double the incomes of 545 million small-scale farmers.

In January, an analysis by the Fight Inequality Alliance, Institute for Policy Studies, Oxfam, and the Patriotic Millionaires found that an annual wealth tax starting at just 2 percent for those with more than \$5 million, 3 percent for those with over \$50 million, and up to 5 percent for billionaires could generate upwards of \$2.52 trillion a year. That's enough to lift 2.3 billion people out of poverty, fund vaccines for everyone in the world.

Zardari felicitates supporters on ZAB's birth anniversary

ISLAMABAD: President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPP) Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday felicitated the supporters of the Party on the birth anniversary of the founding chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Quaid-e-Awam was still ruling over the hearts of millions of people even after 43 years of his judicial killing, he said in his message issued by his office. President Zardari said the graves of the murderers of the people's leader, Zulfikar Ali

Bhutto and those who were involved in his assassination conspiracy were desecrated. President Zardari said Quaid-e-Awam was a gift bestowed upon the people that had been oppressed and exploited for a long time and added that Quaid-e-Awam taught the people how to think, speak and live with dignity. He said the Quaid-e-Awam clashed with the powerful forces of the world for Pakistan's nuclear capability. Asif Ali Zardari said that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto gave right to have

a passport to every citizen, so they could make their country proud in any corner of the world. President Zardari said the graves of the murderers of the people's leader, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and those who were involved in his assassination conspiracy were desecrated. President Zardari said Quaid-e-Awam was a gift bestowed upon the people that had been oppressed and exploited for a long time and added that Quaid-e-Awam taught the people how to think, speak and live with dignity. INP



QUETTA: Miner girls push wheelbarrow loaded with drinking water cans going toward home.

Govt's energy conservation plan commendable: Dr. Shahid Rasheed

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt has lauded the federal government for approving the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Plan to save energy. In a statement issued on Wednesday, he said that the decision will help reduce the oil import bill, slow the accumulation of circular debt which is almost Rs2.5 trillion and result in an overall saving of almost two billion dollars which will help stabilize the economy. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that the plan should be implemented with full force without compromise as it will reduce losses in the bleeding energy sector.

According to the decision, the timings of wedding halls and markets across the country will be limited to 10 pm and 8:30 pm respectively. The business leader also lauded the decision to halt the production of inefficient fans using 120-130 watts of electricity and introduce efficient fans which use less power. Similarly, the manufacturing of inefficient bulbs would be stopped and additional taxes will be imposed on the ones that were imported which will also save billions. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that all government buildings and officers will consume efficient energy under the plan while efficient geysers will be made mandatory. The government had decided to use streetlights alternatively and promote electric motorcycles. The formation of a work-from-home policy is also on cards and a building code for the construction sector will be introduced. The former ICCI President said that various trade organizations have rejected the decision and said it would not comply with the new timings which should be dealt with according to the law as it is a matter of survival of the country. INP

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PBF demands a consensus Charter of Economy, terms it vital for country

LAHORE: Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) has demanded a charter of economy of 20 years and said it should be a consensus document comprising all stakeholders including political and military. Chairing a meeting of the Provincial Executive Committee here on Wednesday, Chairman PBF Punjab Muhammad Naseer Malik said that the forum announced its support to the government's decision of early markets and restaurants closure but astonished on the behaviours of Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) governments as they have refused to comply with the federal government's conservation plan to save energy and reduce its consumption nationwide. He said that Pakistan could save \$300 million annually through energy conservation policy. Naseer Malik said political polarization in Pakistan was one of the major reasons for the country's economic downfall. When politicians and dictators came into power, they

focused more on perpetuating their political careers rather than promoting national interests. The country's initial economic models lacked consistency and continue to do so. "We have to think for out of box solutions and say good bye to IMF after completion of the ongoing program. The political parties of Pakistan have now huge responsibility on their shoulders," he added. Chairman PBF Punjab said, "There is a need for a proper and sustainable economic model. Stakeholders should come together and make a proper economic model which should be there for at least 10 to 20 years and should not be changed even if the regime changes. To bring economic stability, an effective fiscal and monetary policy is needed. There is a requirement for the two following mechanisms for economic prosperity; stability in politics with good governance, and reforms in the present economic structure." Naseer Malik further said federal gov-

ernment was working on a mini-budget including some tough measures like imposing a "flood levy" and increasing duty on petroleum products. He said that it was decided to slap "flood levy" in the range of 1 to 3% through the promulgation of a presidential ordinance and firm up a proposal for unveiling the mini-budget. The proposal was expected to be finalised within the ongoing week. Now the government was all set to slap a flood levy in the range of 1 to 3% to curtail imports and fetch Rs60 billion into the second half (Jan-June) period of the current fiscal year. Naseer Malik viewed the government is in a catch-22 situation, as it is quite hard for the policymakers to impose additional taxes at a time when the country is facing stagflation. However the CPI-based inflation stood at over 25%, while the real GDP growth was projected to come down from 5% to less than 2% for the current fiscal year, he added. INP

Inadequate wheat supply from Punjab inflates flour prices in Federal Capital: Cheema

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Tariq Bashir Cheema on Wednesday said that a strategy was being devised for stabilizing flour prices to ensure provision of flour at affordable rates to the residents of Federal Capital. Addressing a press conference, the minister said the reason for flour price hike in the markets of Islamabad was the inadequate supply of wheat from Punjab. "Per day flour consumption of Islamabad is 38,000 bags containing 20 kg flour. The Punjab government is only providing 21,700 bags per day, resulting in a shortfall of about 1,700 bags per day",

Cheema added. "The shortfall is being fulfilled by purchasing the commodity from open market, due to which we faced price fluctuation", he said adding "the government has also established about 38 sale points to provide wheat flour to the lower income groups." He said that smooth supply of wheat and flour at affordable price was the responsibility of provincial governments, adding that the needs of federal capital were also fulfilled by the supply of wheat from Punjab. The government was also inspecting the grinding capacity of flour mills in order to operate them on their optimal

capacity to produce sufficient quantity of flour to meet local needs, he added. Tariq made it clear that there was no shortage of wheat in the country, and sufficient reserves were available to meet domestic consumption. "Strategic reserves are also being maintained to cope with any emergency situation." He said that to fulfill the requirements of Islamabad, a proposal was submitted for approval to allocate wheat quota to the federal capital in Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Supplies Corporation (PASSCO) and it was expected to get approved within the next few days. INP

31 professional beggars held in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Police, in its crackdowns on professional beggars, to discourage the menace of begging and avoid risk of road accidents due to jaywalking of tramps arrested 31 beggars.

On the directives of CPO Syed Shahzad Nadeem, the in-charge Beggars Squads, along with their respective teams, launched crackdowns against the professional beggars in different localities including business centres, traffic signals and public places in Rawalpindi.

During separate actions, 31 professional beggars were rounded up who were being investigated after registering separate cases against them at concerned police stations.

CPO Syed Shehzad Nadeem said the special beggar squad was working hard to overcome the increasing number of professional beggars. INP

Bilawal's photo shoot with barefoot children becomes topic of debate

KARACHI: Photo shoot of Foreign Minister and Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari with barefoot children during visit to Sindh becomes topic of debate.

On social media, some people appreciated Bilawal for his solidarity with poor children while others criticized him over condition of the children of his province.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ali Haider Zaidi commented: "Those who constructed worst classrooms than the pinfields will use this photo shoot to beg for international funds. But these funds will be neither reach to these schools nor to the students getting education there."

In response to Zaidi's comments, Sindh Minister for Local Government Nasir Shah wrote: "Those who call relatives for condolence on death of family members can neither feel the love and devotion of public. You see barefoot of children and we see their gleaming faces." INP

Rulers must be cognizant of worsening economic, security situation: Siraj

LAHORE: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Sirajul Haq has said that the rulers must be cognizant of the country's worsening economic and security situation.

Addressing a training workshop of JI workers at Mansoorah on Wednesday, he said that nuclear Pakistan had remained a target of enemies of the country since it achieved the capability, and they have been continuously hatching plans to disable it. INP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman meeting with Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF), Secretariat Team and Members Executive Committee.

PO among 17 outlaws held, arms, narcotics recovered

RAWALPINDI: The police arrested 17 outlaws including proclaimed offender, gamblers, drug pusher, street criminals and recovered arms, narcotics and state money during separate actions in different areas of Rawalpindi on Wednesday. The Rawalpindi's Westridge Police during a crackdown in its jurisdiction arrested three gamblers identified as Tariq, Nafees and Nasir besides recovering Rs8500 stake money, two cell phones and gambling tools from their possession. A proclaimed offender Zohaib Saeed who along with his accomplices had killed a citizen Nasir over personal grudge was arrested during a raid in Sadiqabad. The police during

crackdowns against drug pushers in jurisdiction of New Town, Sadiqabad, Gujjar Khan, Gunj Mandi, Bani and Race Course police stations arrested nine drug peddlers including Haris, Musa Fiaz, Usman, Arshad, Zafar Iqbal, Dawood, Fiaza, Nasir and Hairson besides recovering over two kilogram hashish and 45 litres liquor from their possession. Four culprits Yousaf, Zohaib, Imran and Ahsan were arrested during separate actions in Nasirabad, RA Bazaar, Sadder Bairooni and Kahuta areas besides recovery of four 30 bore unlicensed pistols and ammunition from their possession. The police confiscated recovered weapons, drugs and other recovered items and after registering separate cases

against detainees at concerned police stations started investigations. The Rawalpindi's Westridge Police during a crackdown in its jurisdiction arrested three gamblers identified as Tariq, Nafees and Nasir besides recovering Rs8500 stake money, two cell phones and gambling tools from their possession. A proclaimed offender Zohaib Saeed who along with his accomplices had killed a citizen Nasir over personal grudge was arrested during a raid in Sadiqabad. The police during crackdowns against drug pushers in jurisdiction of New Town, Sadiqabad, Gujjar Khan, Gunj Mandi, Bani and Race Course police stations arrested nine drug peddlers including Hans. INP

Kaira urges UN to ensure true implementation of self-determination resolution for Kashmiris

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira has urged the United Nations on the occasion of Kashmir Right to Self-Determination Day to ensure the implementation of its resolutions passed for the right of self-determination of Kashmiris.

Thousands of Kashmiris have sacrificed their lives for the great cause, said a press release. He said that today, apart from implementing the resolutions of the United Nations, India is flouting human rights in the occupied valley and not a day passes in Occupied Kashmir when innocent Kashmiri youths are not martyred.

Qamar Zaman Kaira said that India is pursuing Israeli-style policies in Occupied Kashmir and is changing the demography of Occupied Kashmir under the illegal and unilateral measures of August 5, 2019 to reduce the proportion of Muslim population in Occupied Kashmir. He said that India is trying to achieve its nefarious goals through extrajudicial killings and genocide of Kashmiris. INP

Birth anniversary of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto observed; rich tributes paid to PPP leader

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Peshawar chapter on Wednesday observed 95th birth anniversary of the Party's founder chairman and former Prime Minister of Pakistan Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto with great zeal and enthusiasm and recalled his services, struggle, ideology and sacrifices for the people and the country.

On this occasion, collective prayers were offered for the departed souls of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and other Party leaders and workers.

Speaking on the occasion, former President PPP Peshawar Muhammad Humayun Khan said that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's struggle, theory and sacrifices were unparalleled and eternal.

He was the leader of the people, who laid the foundation for making Pakistan's politics, economy and state friendly for the first time, he said and added that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a great benefactor of Pakistan, a hero of the Islamic world and a world leader. INP



SOHBATPUR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visiting newly-developed computer lab at Govt boys Secondary School Gulam Rasool Jia Khan, Sohbatpur, Balochistan.

Ruling coalition gave nothing but inflation, unemployment to masses: Dr. Murtaza

LAHORE: President Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) Dr. Murtaza Mughal has said that the ruling coalition has given nothing but inflation and unemployment to the countrymen.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, he said that instead of the welfare of the people, the government's focus was on fulfilling the demands of the allies and silencing the opposition.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that this style of governance was undermining the economy while millions of people were falling below the poverty line.

The economy was in ICU but the burden on it was being continuously increased, he said adding that economy was being neglected, and political issues were being given full attention.

Except for the elite, the whole country is worried, but the government is not listening to anyone and keeping itself busy in fruitless meetings, useless briefings, and flowery press conferences, the business leader added.

He said that country was already suffering from various crises and now a flour crisis has spread across the country which can turn into famine at any time, but the government seems indifferent to the situation and it is relying on encouraging statements.

Dr. Mughal said that the country's treasury is empty, and no institution or country is willing to give loans because they have no hope of return, while a large number of people are thinking that the experience of forming a government by combining all the major parties of the country has failed.

It seems that country's economic growth will be negative by the end of the current fiscal year if the situation was not improved. He said industries were shutting down while large-scale manufacturing, agriculture, exports, and remittances were all in the negative zone. INP

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Request for Proposal for selection of Consultancy service invited on Electronic Public Procurement System (EPPS) from well required firms/Consulting Service provided meeting. **Tender Fee Rs. 5000/- (in shape of green challan form deposited in head of account C-02716) Earnest Money 2% in shape of call deposit**

S.No.	Name of Work	E/Coat
1.	Consultancy Service for Detail Design and Detail supervision for Construction of Black Top Road Nag To Washuk (Phase-I) PSDP NO:1267 (22022.3133). TSE22301212174	27,259,792/-

The Procurement shall be carried out in accordance with Balochistan Public Procurement Regulatory Authority Rules, 2014. **Basic Eligibility:** Valid registration 2023 with PEC in relevant Category and codes, 2 assignments of similar nature and complexity completed in last Five years, Turn over of at least 3 subsequent previous year, with the text authority that is (NTN, BRA & Sales Text department. The bidding firm must not be currently black listed by any procuring agency of Pakistan (Certificate on stamp paper of Rs.100) attested by oath commissioner, Non litigation (Certificate on stamp paper of Rs.100) attested by oath commissioner, with any Government or Semi Government authority in Pakistan. **Method of Procurement:** Single Stage, Two Envelope Procedure. **Bidding / Tender Documents Issuance:** The Firms having register with PEC in aforementioned required category or above displaced can obtain the bidding documents from the address mentioned below on the production green Challan (non-refundable) form deposited in the head of account C-02716 through government treasury NBP Bidding Document can be downloaded from BPPRA from the date of Publication. **Financial Proposal:** The financial Proposals shall be opened of those consultants whose technical proposal is considered and approved. The Selection of Consultants shall be made as per Evaluation Criteria method as mentioned in the Date Sheet of this Request of Proposal documents. The incomplete request for proposal or received after due date mentioned above will not be considered. The RFP Documents can be downloaded from BPPRA website. **Dead Line of Submission:** The Tenders must be submitted latest 19th January 2023 till 2:00 PM. **Opening:** The tender document will be opened on same day at the office of the committee Room CWPP&H Department Block No.7 Civil Secretariat Quetta at 3:00 PM. **Terms And Conditions:** The terms and condition are incorporated with detail in bidding documents

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Cooperation of INGOs vital to build climate resilient Pakistan: Sherry Rehman

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman said that collaboration of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) holds key importance to build climate resilient Pakistan as the country was gearing up to support rehabilitation and recovery, amid funding constraints of 33 million affected population devastated by unprecedented floods of the history. She was speaking during a meeting with the delegation of country directors of INGOs on the panel of Pakistan Humanitarian Forum

(PHF) as part of consultations for the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan, scheduled to be held in Geneva on January 9, 2023, said a news release received here on Wednesday. Talking to the delegation, Sherry Rehman said, "This high-level Conference in Geneva aims to marshal international support for the people and Government of Pakistan to move forward on recovery as soon as possible after the country went through the world's worst climate event in living memory." "The plan to rehabilitate, recover and rebuild with

resilience is urgent, but we faced a huge funding gap even for first order recovery needs, given that we are servicing rehabilitation and relief for 33 million people. This is too large a number for any country to rehabilitate on our own," she added. The minister underlined that the government's costing of \$16 billion for reconstruction of damaged infrastructure in a flood-resilient mode was not enough to cover full climate resilience, adding, "but we cannot wait, as another season of extreme weather could well hit us before we

even begin rebuilding." To this end, she said the government of Pakistan was co-hosting an international climate resilient Pakistan conference where its objective would be to present the Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Framework (4RF), comprising of plans and arrangements for the post-floods' recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction and forging long-term partnerships for building Pakistan's climate resilience and adaptation." The conference will be co-chaired by the Prime Minister of

Pakistan, Mian Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif and Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres. We are grateful to the support of our international partners and we are looking forward to exploring concrete ways and means to build Pakistan's long-term climate resilience and adaptation including the articulation of provincial perspectives. The federal minister commended the humanitarian relief efforts done by the INGOs in Pakistan, especially in the aftermath of the catastrophic floods that impacted. INP

US supports Pakistan's stance for cross-border attacks in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON: The United States has supported Pakistan's plan to launch cross-border attacks in Afghanistan, saying the country has the right to defend itself against terrorism.

Addressing a news briefing in Washington on Tuesday, State Department spokesman Ned Price has maintained that Pakistan has the right to defend itself from terrorism as the country has suffered tremendously from terrorist attacks.

He said "We're aware of the recent statement by the Pakistani National Security Committee. The Pakistani people have suffered tremendously from terrorist attacks. Pakistan has a right to defend itself from terrorism."

The statement from the US comes a day after Islamabad threatened to target the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants in Afghanistan if Kabul does not take action to dismantle them.

The National Security Committee (NSC), under the chair of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, had asked the government in Kabul not to provide safe havens to Pakistani terrorist groups on its soil.

Pakistan has witnessed a sharp rise in terror incidents, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, and a suicide blast in Islamabad during the past couple of months after the TTP declared an end to the ceasefire with Pakistan.

Ned Price said the US called on the Taliban to uphold the very commitment they have made to see to it that Afghan soil is never again used as a launch-pad for international terrorist attacks. "These are among the very commitments that the Taliban have been unable or unwilling to fulfill to date," he said. The spokesman said that it has been repeatedly said that there will be a response from the United States. "The Taliban have made commitments to the international community. But more importantly, they have made commitments to the Afghan people. Those are the commitments we care most about. Among the commitments, the Taliban have made but have repeatedly broken when it comes to their own people is an emphasis on human rights," he stressed. The State Department's spokesman continued, "As long as the Taliban are not able to fulfill these commitments, we will respond in a way that registers our strong condemnation while continuing to support the Afghan people. And we're going to be very careful not to do anything that could further imperil the humanitarian well-being of the Afghan people." Here are the excerpts of Ned Price's new briefing about Pakistan and Afghanistan: QUESTION: As you mentioned, unfortunately we didn't celebrate New Year because of Afghan girl and Afghan women in Afghanistan. They are crying. Even if you watch the TV - now we are living in globalization, immediately we get news. Any update to bring or influence, as of course you guys have influences to Taliban? Any change? INP



SOHBATPUR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif offering du'a after inauguration new building of Govt boys secondary school Ghulam Rasool Jia Khan, Sohbatpur, Balochistan.

Crackdown against dairy farmers, milk sellers for overcharging, 13 held

QUETTA: At least 13 dairy farmers and milk sellers were held for overcharging on milk and yogurt here on Wednesday.

On directives of Deputy Commissioner Quetta, crackdown was launched against dairy farmers and milk sellers receiving high prices on milk and yogurt against the official rates.

DC said that the official rate of milk in Quetta is Rs135 per kilogram and yogurt is Rs145 per kilogram but the milk is being sold for Rs 150 to Rs160 per kg and yogurt was being sold for Rs180 to Rs200 per kg.

He warned that overcharging will not be allowed and those involved in overcharging on milk and yogurt would have to face the consequences. INP

PPP's CEC moot to discuss way out of political imbroglio

KARACHI: Amid political uncertainty emerged after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) "final plan" announcement to dissolve Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assemblies aimed to force ruling PDM to announce snap elections across the country, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has called party's Central Executive Committee (CEC) meeting tomorrow (January 5).

The meeting of the party's top guns will be jointly presided over by Former President Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal in Karachi to discuss MQM-P demands on delimitations and local government elections in Karachi. While the expected dissolution of two provincial assemblies will also take center stage.

"The party leadership had planned this CEC meeting during the gathering of party leaders in Garhi Khuda Bukhsh on the occasion of the 15th death anniversary of slain Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto," said PPP Secretary General Nayyar Bokhari.

However, he clarified that it would not be just a ceremonial meeting, as this time they would be discussing a host of national issues.

The PPP leader while terming the meeting "important" said it would discuss crucial issues, including the next general elections and the current situation in the largest province in the wake of the PTI's announcement regarding the dissolution of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly. INP

Sultan seeks world's role to resolve Kashmir dispute

MIRPUR: President, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry has said that the Kashmiri people have been making immense sacrifices for freedom and the right to self-determination for the past 7 decades.

He expressed these views in his special message released on the occasion of Self-Determination Day, Wednesday.

Reminding the world community of its global obligations towards the settlement of the lingering dispute, he said, "United Nations and the civilized world should play their role to find a just settlement of the Kashmir issue".

He said that the people of Kashmir have been sacrificing their lives to achieve their birthright and to free their motherland from the clutches of Indian imperialism.

Lauding the supreme sacrifices rendered by the people of Kashmir, he expressed optimism that the day was not far when Kashmiris would achieve their cherished goal of freedom. INP

Two killed, 16 injured in Chiniot road mishaps

CHINIOT: At least two people were killed and 16 others injured in separate road accidents in different localities of Chiniot on Wednesday, police said.

According to details, an over speeding car crushed to death a pedestrian at Sargodha road.

Another person was killed after being hit a reckless driven car in suburbs of Chiniot city.

Meanwhile, five women among 16 people were injured in various road mishaps in different localities.

The injured were shifted to different hospitals where condition of nine wounded people was stated to be critical. INP

Govt approves 300MW coal-fired power plant for Gwadar

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives on Tuesday approved a project to construct a 300 megawatt coal-fired power plant to cater to the energy needs of Gwadar.

According to Gwadar Pro, the approval was granted in a follow-up meeting under the chairmanship of Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Jawwad Akhtar Khokhar, Advisor Maritime Affairs at the Planning Commission of Pakistan, told Gwadar Pro.

The coal-fired power plant will cater to the base load of the port city, which has central importance in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative. The plant will provide low-cost energy with no capacity charges, while the construction costs will be afforded by China, Khokhar said.

Physical works on the power plant will start within six months and the project will be completed in 30 months, the Advisor said.

Khokhar added that the project

will provide 100MWs of electricity to Gwadar from the national grid. "Therefore, we sought the exact demand for electricity for the city as well as the Gwadar Free Zone.

China Overseas Ports Holding Co. (COPHC) in the meeting projected a demand of 800MWs in 5 years, after which the project was approved," he said.

Khokhar further said that the transmission line to connect Gwadar with the national grid will be a dual carriage line which will be able to evacuate excess energy from Gwadar to the national grid in the future.

He said that there were also other projects to generate energy from alternative sources including solar and wind in the pipeline for Gwadar. The Advisor said that the Gwadar coal-fired power plant will procure cost-effective coal either from the international market or Thar, or any other sources, to ensure the generation of low-cost energy. INP

FO rejects remarks of Indian Minister of External Affairs targeting Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has rejected the baseless and frivolous accusations made by the Indian Minister of External Affairs targeting Pakistan.

Responding to media queries, the Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said the Indian External Affairs Minister's latest tirade is a reflection of growing frustration over India's failure to malign and isolate Pakistan.

She pointed out that for last several years India has been engaged in a malicious campaign to mislead the international community through a fictitious narrative of victimhood and vile anti-Pakistan propaganda. She said this practice must stop.

The Spokesperson said India's continued anti-Pakistan diatribe cannot hide its brazen involvement in fomenting terrorism on Pakistan's soil, nor can it conceal

the reality of state-sponsored terrorism in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said instead of pointing fingers at others, India should itself end its involvement in terrorism, subversion and espionage against Pakistan. She said that from the death of over 40 Pakistani nationals on Indian soil in the 2007 Samjhota Express tragedy to the arrest of Kulbhushan Jadhav, a serving Commander of Indian Navy, from within Pakistan in 2016, the evidence of Indian involvement in terrorism and sabotage is irrefutable and spans over decades and geographies. Only a few weeks ago, a dossier was released containing irrefutable evidence that substantiated India's involvement in the 2021 terrorist attack in a peaceful Lahore neighbourhood, she added. INP

China to work with Pakistan in new year for shared destiny: Spokesperson

BEIJING: "In the new year, China is ready to work with Pakistan, follow through on the important common understandings reached between the two leaders, make solid progress in comprehensive and high-level strategic cooperation, stay committed to building an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era. And make even greater contribution to the two peoples' wellbeing and peace and development of the region and the wider world."

This was stated by a spokesperson of Chinese Foreign Ministry Mao Ning at a regular news briefing here on Wednesday while replying to a question regarding the recently held meeting between Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto and Ambassador Nong Rong.

The spokesperson said at outset that China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners and iron-clad friends. Over

the past year, our two countries have rendered each other mutual understanding and mutual support, addressed challenges together and marched forward shoulder-to-shoulder.

"We have strengthened high-level guidance, consolidated strategic consensus, jointly promoted the sound development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and expanded friendly exchanges and cooperation in various areas, sustaining high-quality development of bilateral relations." A reporter had sought her comments on a report that Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto and Ambassador Nong Rong during a meeting held on January 2 reviewed the achievements of Pakistan-China relations in the past year and also agreed to maintain the momentum in the year 2023 through high-quality development of CPEC and enhancing INP

Economy in shambles, people drowning in mire of poverty: Mian Zahid

KARACHI: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on the economy is under rumors and has become weak due to various problems while the people are drowning in the mire of poverty.

Talking to businessmen on Wednesday, he said that the economists have failed to manage the situation therefore difficult decisions were being postponed, while the public was overwhelmed by inflation, which requires targeted subsidies urgently.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that political compulsions should not be prioritized over the economy and serious efforts should be made to revive the economy otherwise the situation will go out of control.

Going to IMF was the only option that was being delayed which was tantamount to destroying the country's economy, he said adding that some politicians were claiming on a daily basis that the solution to all the problems was the election but they were not ready to give a plan beyond the election, which was an attempt to throw dust in the eyes of the people.

The business leader was of the view that in the past too, they had claimed to make Pakistan a paradise with the help of two hundred economists, but after getting power, they ruined the economy.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that political instability

and inflation are increasing rapidly, which has increased the anxiety and restlessness of the people and the foundation of the economy is shaking.

The burden of the government structure is increasing while various institutions are suffering from degradation. Rising deficits and debt payments have perplexed experts, he noted.

There has been a huge flour crisis in the country and its price has reached Rs145 per kg. Currently, there is a shortage of dollars in the country, its value and demand are constantly increasing due to artificial measures, leaving the value of the dollar to the market can overcome the shortage of dollars, he observed.

The business leader said that the electricity and gas bills have kept the public and the business community puzzled and no one not getting any relief. Apart from this, millions of flood victims are waiting for relief under the open sky in this cold weather.

In these circumstances, the ruling coalition will have to give priority to improving economic affairs, ensuring national security, ending terrorism, improving relations with important countries and reducing its expenses, and reducing the focus on the opposition. Mian Zahid welcomed the recent decisions of the National Security Council and said it will give the necessary confidence to the government to take tough measures. INP

Govt chalks out outsourcing plan for Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore airports

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has prepared the outsourcing plan for Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi airports, sources said on Wednesday.

The Civil Aviation Authority has finalized the framework on the instructions of the prime minister, sources said.

"A tender will be published in international journals for outsourcing of the airports," sources said.

According to sources, the government has decided for outsourcing of Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore airports. "The government has planned to prefer friendly countries for airports' outsourcing," according to sources. "The firms from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, China and Turkey will be invited on preferential grounds," sources said.

Sources citing the Planning Division have said that the country will earn 250 to 300 US million dollars in a year from outsourcing of airports.

The civil aviation will keep the airport security and air traffic control with it. The CAA earns Rs 30 bln per annum from three largest airports of the country, sources added.

Pakistan reports two covid-19 deaths in 24 hours

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday recorded two Covid-19 related deaths and 22 fresh Covid-19 cases during the last 24 hours, the National Institute of Health (NIH) said.

According to the statistics issued by NIH, a total of 5,126 Covid-19 diagnostic tests were conducted, of which 22 samples came back positive.

The number of confirmed positive cases has surged to 1,575,855 while the nationwide tally of fatalities stands at 30,638.

The COVID positivity ratio was recorded at 0.43 per cent.

Karachi reports new Covid variant cases.

The Sindh Health Department Tuesday confirmed the presence of XBB and XBB-1 sub-variants of the Omicron variant in Karachi.

Karachi has detected six cases of the new Covid-19 variant, XBB and XBB-1, the health department said in a statement. INP

Chicken meat prices go beyond people's reach

LAHORE: The chicken meat prices have been continuing to rise in abnormal way in different parts of the country for the last few days, exposing the administrative check of the provincial and district governments over prices of eatables.

Citizens were seen returning empty handed from the chicken shops specially in Lahore as sellers complained short supply of chicken from the retailers and poultry farms. The crisis came to light and prices of broiler chicken meat shot up after chicken feed and soybean feed disappeared from the markets.

The Pakistan Poultry Association has already announced countrywide protest against continuous increase in prices of broiler chicken on Jan 5.

The association's spokesperson said

their members would assemble at Thokar Niaz Baig and stage protest for the acceptance of their demands. He said the poultry feed had almost vanished from the local markets because of unannounced restriction on the import of soybean and other raw material.

According to the spokesperson, raw material-led ships had been paying \$400,000 daily penalty for the last two and half months.

Meanwhile, the per kg price of broiler chicken meat reached Rs524 after an increase of Rs5 per kg in Lahore and other parts of Punjab.

Chicken meat is being sold at more than Rs550 per kg in Lahore.

The chicken meat prices have also gone up in Karachi, Multan and other cities in the country. INP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Defense Khawaja Muhammad Asif calling on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force at Air Headquarter.

SC dismisses Customs appeal against release of impounded vehicle

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has dismissed the Customs Department appeal challenging the lower courts' decision to hand over a vehicle to a citizen while imposing Rs50,000 fine on the department for bringing frivolous petition to the court.

SC Justice Qazi Faez Isa and Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar heard the case pertaining to release of a non-custom paid vehicle to a citizen on Wednesday. Customs Intelligence DG Faiz Hameed appeared before the court. During hearing, Justice Isa told off the Customs DG saying if he was above the law. The judge asked him why he was not handing over the vehicle to the citizen when three courts had ordered him to do so. "You have impounded the vehicle and it has been sitting in the warehouse for the last five years, rotting there. Who will make up for the loss," the judge asked the Customs DG.

The DG replied it's a unique case. Justice Mazhar chipped in saying "What's unique in this case! The collector has logged that the owner of the vehicle has paid all taxes and duties."

Justice Isa inquired what would be the price of that 1997 model car. The DG replied it would be worth around Rs2000,000 to Rs2500,000.

Justice Isa observed that the citizen has spent more than the worth of the car in terms of litigation fees and time.

He wondered why in the first place, the Customs Department did not secure borders to stop the arrival of non-custom paid vehicles in Pakistan.

With this, the court dismissed the Customs Department appeal against the release of the confiscated vehicle.

The court also imposed Rs50,000 fine on the Customs Department for filing unnecessary petitions in the higher courts, thus wasting their time. INP

Pakistani exhibits shine at Int'l Cultural Industry Fair in China

BEIJING: Pakistani exhibits shined at International Cultural Industry Fair at the 7th Sanya International Cultural Industry Fair (SICIF) held in the coastal city of Sanya, Hainan, China.

"Our expectation from this Fair is to get wholesale buyers who can do business with us in the future," said Abdul Basit Khan, CEO of Pak Link Enterprises, while showcasing the high-end Pakistani onyx handicrafts at the fair, according to Gwadar Pro on Wednesday.

Scheduled from December 30, 2022 to January 2, 2023, SICIF brought together global "culture+" industry resources and tourism products, highlighting their role in trading and creating an important platform for more cultural exports.

In the Pakistan National Pavilion, products with Pakistani characteristics like wood crafts, onyx, cashmere, handmade rugs and shawls shined and attracted a large amount of Chinese visitors.

Consul General of Pakistan in Guangzhou, China, Dr. Diyar Khan represented Pakistan in the Fair and introduced Pakistani handicrafts and cultural items at Pakistani stalls and Pakistan's relations with China, particularly the province of Hainan.

"Every year Hainan sees millions of people's visit, so we hope that through this window we can display Pakistani products and get good results," Abdul Basit Khan told the reporter, adding that their main goal for the Fair is not just the four days because they can continue to do business with customers they met here. The 7th SICIF attracted more than 260 cultural and tourism enterprises from 32 countries and regions - including Pakistan, Nepal, Iran, Yemen, Afghanistan - to participate in the exhibition, displaying more than 40,000 trendy cultural goods and services.

On the occasion, 13 cooperation contracts on cultural and tourism industry were inked with a worth more than RMB 2.7 billion. INP



CANBERRA: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf speaks at the inaugural session of 26th conference of Speakers and presiding officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC).