

QUETTA VOICE

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PTI to stage protests against Mohsin Naqvi's appointment as Punjab caretaker CM



SBP increases policy rate to 17pc to 'anchor inflation'

Massive electricity breakdown across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, LAHORE, KARACHI, QUETTA. A massive electricity breakdown hit the country Monday morning disrupting life in all major cities including Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta.

Tarbela and Mangla dams were tripped, Sources

Sources said transmission lines of Tarbela and Mangla dams were tripped and all power plants in Guddu, Jamshoro, Muzaffargarh, Haveli Bahadur Shah and Balloki shut down. The NPC fuse was also switched off to save the system.

The power supply went off suddenly at 7:32 am with IESCO, LESCO, MEPCO, SEPCO, QESCO and K-Electric were the most affected.

A number of cities in Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Punjab were without power supply.

22 districts of Balochistan were without electricity

As many as 22 districts of Balochistan were without electricity and supply was suspended to 117 grid stations of IESCO.

According to QESCO officials, both electricity power transmission lines coming from Guddu to Quetta have been tripped impacting 22 districts including Quetta, Khuzdar, Sibbi and Dera Murad Jamali.

Karachi, the economic hub of the country, also knocked out of the grid because of the



NTDC system collapse

Sources said National Transmission & Dispatch Company (NTDC) and power distribution companies have launched efforts to restore the power supply which may take 27 hours.

In a couple of tweets, the Ministry of Power said the system frequency of the national grid went down at 7:34 this morning, causing a widespread breakdown in the power system. System maintenance work is progressing rapidly.

In another post, the ministry said the restoration of power supply from Warsak to grid stations has been started and in the last one hour limited number of grids of Islamabad Supply Company and Peshawar Supply Company have been restored.

Country has faced such power breakdowns several times

The country has faced such power breakdowns several times in the past and the recent one showed that the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC) had failed to put in place permanent remedial measures to overcome such incidents.

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) has

recently imposed a fine of Rs20 million on the NTDC because of breakdowns and collapsing of its towers.

A similar kind of power breakdown had plunged the whole of Pakistan into darkness on October 13, 2022 when a disruption occurred in two 500kV transmission lines in Karachi.

Before that a major power blackout was occurred on January 9, 2021 which had plunged much of Pakistan into darkness.

2015 an alleged militant attack

In 2015 an alleged militant attack on a key power supply line plunged around 80% of the country into darkness for more than nine hours.

In October of last year, Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Quetta, Multan, and Faisalabad were hit by a power outage.

Nearly 8,000 megawatts of power went offline, power minister

At that time, the power minister said that nearly 8,000 megawatts of power went offline.

Back then, Dastagir had said that the simultaneous faults in two power lines, which had triggered the breakdown, at the same time was concerning for the government. He had also announced that an in-depth inquiry was ordered and promised action. INP

Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman handed over to police for a three day remand

News Desk
The chief of the Gwadar Rights Movement (GRM) Maulana Hidayat Ur

clashes have broken out between the members of GRM and the police. Mobile services were also suspended for ten days which paralyzed life in



Rehman was handed over to the crime branch on a three-day physical remand by the anti-terrorism court. According to the details, Maulana along with other members of GRM was presented before the anti-terrorism court on Monday.

Maulana along with his three other colleagues was presented before Judge for identification on audio and video case in the court of Judicial Magistrate 10. Judge Abdul Sattar Bugti of judicial 10 adjourned the hearing of the case.

The GRM has been protesting for the last three months against illegal fishing, trawling, and unnecessary check posts. Violent

Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Abdul Quddoos Bizenjo took notice of the unwanted incidents that took place during the clashes between GRM and police.

The leader of GRM, Hussain Wadela was also arrested and was later granted bail by the court. "hundreds of activists and leaders of GRM have been arrested, and several children, old people, women, and men have been injured", a GRM activist stated while talking to the media. The leader of GRM, Hussain Wadela was also arrested and was later granted bail by the court.

Karachi ATC acquits Rao Anwar, others in Naqeebullah murder case

An anti-terrorism court in Karachi on Monday acquitted former Malir SSP Rao Anwar and 17 others in the Naqeebullah Mehsud murder case.

The brief verdict was announced by ATC XVI judge at the Karachi Central Prison, in which the court said that the prosecution had failed to submit sufficient evidence against Anwar and other accused persons.

In the detailed verdict released later, a copy of which is available with Dawn.com, the judge said: "I am of the considered view that the prosecution since has failed to bring home guilt of the accused beyond any reasonable doubt and for giving benefit of doubt to an accused it is not necessary that there should be many circumstances creating doubt. One single circumstance leading towards the real doubt is sufficient to acquit the accused."

The judge extended the benefit of doubt



to the accused and acquitted them in the case.

The court took five years to conclude the trial of the murder, which had triggered widespread condemnation and debates on social media about fake encounters in Karachi, particularly by Rao Anwar.

The killing of Mehsud, an aspiring model from South Waziristan residing in Karachi, stormed social media with public outcry and sparked countrywide protests by civil society against the state's failure to arrest the former SSP and his team.

Anwar, along with his around two dozen subordinates, were charged with the killing of Naqeeb and three others after allegedly dubbing them militants linked to the "Islamic State and Taliban" in a "fake encounter" on Jan 13, 2018.

In March 2019, the court had indicted Anwar and his 17 subordinates for the

killing four men on the outskirts of Karachi.

In November last year, the former SSP had recorded his statement, alleging that he had been framed in the case due to a "departmental rivalry", but had failed to name any officer in the police department.

During the trial, the court recorded the testimonies of 51 witnesses — including the medico-legal, forensic and ballistics experts, nine private witnesses and police officials produced by the prosecution.

During today's hearing, the ATC judge noted the prosecution had failed to prove that the victims were kidnapped and murdered in a fake encounter by Rao Anwar and his 14 subordinate officials.

"Geo-fencing reports and call records failed to prove the presence of Rao Anwar and others at the place of the fake shoot-out," he observed. Web Desk

45 PTI lawmakers withdraw resignations from National Assembly

Forty-five PTI lawmakers on Monday collectively withdrew their resignations from the National Assembly on orders of party chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan.

PTI leader Asad Umar, while announcing the development on Twitter, said that the lawmakers have sent emails in this regard to Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf.

The decision, he added, was taken after the speaker refused to accept all the resignations together. "The next step will be the nomination of the opposition leader," Umar tweeted.

The lawmakers who have decided to withdraw their resignations include Muhammad Riaz Khan, Muhammad Yaqoob Sheikh, Shaheen Niaz, Nasarullah Dareshar, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Nafessa Inayat Khan, Malik Anwar, Saleh Mohammad, Jai Parkash, Tahir Sadiq, Niaz Ahmed, Raza Nasarullah, Javed Iqbal, Munaza Hasan, Lal Chand Malhi, Sajida Zulfiqar, Sardar Muhammad Khan, Uzma Riaz, Tashteen Safadar, Jawad Hussain and Nausheen Hamid.

Meanwhile, PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry said that the decision was taken so that the party could take back the posts of the leader of the opposition and parliamentary party leader.

He added that the aim of the move was to get rid of



the "fake" NA opposition leader and prevent "turncoats" from voting for Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in the vote of confidence.

It is pertinent to mention here that the initial number of resignations withdrawn was 44, however, it was later updated. After Umar's announcement, PTI lawmakers staged a sit-in outside the NA speaker's house, demanding that their requests should be immediately accepted. Web Desk

SBP increases policy rate to 17pc to 'anchor inflation'

State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Jameel Ahmad announced on Monday that the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) had decided to increase the interest rate by one per cent to 17pc.

He made the announcement in a press conference following the MPC's meeting. The increase was largely in line with market expectations.

Separately, a press release issued by the central bank stated, "The committee noted that inflationary pressures are persisting and continue to be broad-based. If these



remain unchecked, they could feed into higher inflation expectations over a longer-than-anticipated period. The MPC stressed that it is critical to anchor inflation expectations and achieve the objective of price stability to support sustainable

growth in the future." The MPC noted three major economic developments since its last meeting in November — inflation continued to remain elevated, with core inflation showing an upward trend over the last 10 months, near-term chal-

lenges for the external sector have increased despite the policy-induced contraction in the current account deficit and there has been a continuous drawdown in foreign exchange reserves, and global economic and financial conditions broadly remain uncertain in the near-to-short term, leading to mixed implications for Pakistan's economy.

"On balance, the committee reiterated its November 2022 assessment that the short-term costs of bringing down inflation are lower than the long-term costs of allowing. Web Desk

PTI to stage protests against Mohsin Naqvi's appointment as Punjab caretaker CM

PTI chief Imran Khan announced on Monday that the party would stage protests throughout the country against Mohsin Naqvi's appointment as caretaker chief minister of Punjab.

"We will stage a protest in Lahore tomorrow, then Rawalpindi the next day," he said in a video address, adding that demonstrations would also be held in Faisalabad and Multan.

The announcement comes a day after the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) appointed Naqvi, a senior journalist and owner of some private TV channels, the caretaker chief minister for a 90-day interim period.

The PTI and its key ally PML-Q had vehemently rejected the appointment and unanimously stated that they would knock on the doors of the court and take to the streets against the electoral watchdog's decision.

During today's address, Imran urged the nation to come out onto the streets and prove that they "are not cattle." "We can't accept a person who is following an agenda and has conspired against me in the past."

Imran claimed that during his time in power, he received reports from the Intelligence Bureau regarding Naqvi's attempts to topple his govern-



ment. "Mohsin Naqvi was the most mentioned player in the regime change operation."

He further said that former president Asif Ali Zardari "considered Naqvi a son." "You can now imagine what kind of a person he (Naqvi) is that Zardari — known for corruption worldwide — thinks of him as a son."

He further said, "In 2018, Naqvi returned Rs3.5 million to the National Accountability Bureau and accepted that he had stolen money."

Imran added that Naqvi did not possess morals or a non-partisan character. He predicted that Naqvi would appoint police officials and bureaucrats who opposed the PTI and would attempt to back the party into a corner.

"They are scared of PTI's popularity because we can't be defeated in elections," Imran said. He alleged that Naqvi would not allow provincial elections to take place until the electoral staff was replaced so that the former opposition's win was guaranteed.

Imran said that the aim of the caretaker government was to be a neutral umpire, adding that the nominees provided by the PTI and the PML-Q were "credible and honest." Web Desk

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 Jamiat 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 Fared 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 and 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.

Giving e-bikes a boost

By Syed Akhtar Ali

The government has announced a financing package to promote the sale of e-bikes. These environmentally friendly bikes have the potential to contribute towards achieving environmental objectives, industrial growth and reduction of petrol imports and consumption.

E-bike manufacturing is a volume business, and the Pakistan market has the required potential volume. There are 26 million petrol bikes on the road, and around two million new bikes are sold every year. Also, it is relatively cheap to own and operate an e-bike than a conventional motorcycle. While the upfront purchase cost is higher than that of conventional motorcycles – at least 30-50 per cent, the fuel cost is lower.

In this regard, an affordable financing scheme with some interest rate subsidy may be beneficial. It is also a good omen that there is continuity of policy in this respect, irrespective of political changes.

E-bikes have a large market share in the developing and poor countries of Africa, South America and Asia-Pacific. It appears that the EV car market is small and possibly not feasible either for imports or for progressive manufacturing. The story of progressive manufacturing of automobiles is

not a successful one. Small volumes have been a major constraint in building a viable automotive industry.

There has been some success in small cars where the price and volume factors are dominant. There have been quite a few successes in the area of agricultural tractors, which are being manufactured and even exported. The price and volume factors are visible in this case also although there is an added factor of the peculiarity of the tractor market. Cheap credit financing has also promoted the tractor market and its local manufacturing. The tractor industry has also benefitted from a lack of dominance and oligopolistic market, something that has been seen in the case of cars.

The import promoting policies of the last two-three decades under the WTO regime and the IMF-World Bank ideology and the entry of cheaper Chinese goods has not only slowed down local manufacturing initiatives but also damaged the timely emergence and strengthening of the industrial base. The result and consequence is obvious in the prevailing economic circumstances focusing around current account deficit – imports of \$80 billion vs exports of \$36 billion. High energy imports are one of the

leading causes of this problem.

EV expansion may help alleviate these problems to some degree. EV initiatives ought to be associated with the localization of energy sources as well. The fast-track solar PV programme may help achieve some targets to a great extent. Progress in solar PV has been slow in the last few years partly due to the over-capacity issue, which is a common problem in electricity generation due to the lumpy nature of supplies involving 1000-1300MW capacity power plants in the fossil fuel sector. E-bikes have an especially attractive aspect, and can boost and encourage roof-top solar which would be much more economical for e-bike users. One or two panels without an inverter might be a good package for DC systems. A subsidized electricity tariff for e-bikers in off-peak periods may also be considered.

Another market for EVs are trucks and buses. These vehicles consume high volumes of diesel. These are expensive items, operating in a tough and competitive market. These would also require a well-spread charging network. Recently, the Sindh government bought a fleet of EV buses for Karachi's public transport network. Authorities have installed

charging infrastructure in bus garages. For a government, upfront costs which may be as high as \$300,000 may not be as big an issue as it may be for the private sector.

International subsidized financing lines can be found for financing EVs. The conversion of diesel buses can be a viable approach since diesel engines are to be replaced every five years. At this replacement juncture, the conversion of diesel buses to the EV system may be a feasible approach. Only institutional operators may be able to own and operate EV buses due to the issue of expensive charging infrastructure.

If one starts with an initial production rate of 175,000 units per year with a growth rate of 10 per cent per annum, one would get the annual sales of 341,000 units. It is much lower than the required sales of 2 million per year by FY 2030 (50 per cent market share of e-bikes). One would have to start with an initial production of 400,000 units per year with an annual production growth of 25 per cent per annum to be able to get the required production rate of 2 million units per year. More aggressive policies may have to be designed in the mid term to achieve these targets.

It may not be feasible to achieve the 2030 target of a market share of 50 per cent in new e-bike sales. It may be worthwhile to explore other policy options as well, such as conversion of the existing motorcycles to e-bikes; it costs Rs50,000 for one such conversion. These rates may go down if the market expands. Many countries, including Indonesia, have made conversion a part of their policy programme. In India, conversion is being pursued in the bus sector; one conversion costs INR6 million. There are plans in Karnataka to convert 30,000 diesel buses to e-buses by 2030.

India has 200 million plus motorcycles. In FY2022, 231,338 units of e-bikes were sold. In India and Indonesia – two countries with a large e-bike market – there are 10-12 e-bike manufacturers. Contrary to this, in Pakistan, with a much smaller market, licences have been issued to 23 companies for e-bike manufacturing. It would certainly reduce the individual market shares of manufacturers to an uneconomical capacity. While companies may be making profits, the goal of 90-100 per cent local manufacture will remain elusive if this trend continues. Hopefully, some licence holders may not turn up.

Resilient Pakistan

By Zile Huma

Pakistan has successfully conducted the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan with the support of the UN in Geneva to garner international support for the rehabilitation of flood victims. The outcomes of the conference have had many positive impacts, which is a huge achievement for Pakistan.

First, the international community has announced an enormous amount of funds for Pakistan's flood victims. The country highlighted the suffering of flood victims during the conference and presented its framework based on the 4R strategy – recover, resilience, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The prime minister of Pakistan highlighted that "nine million children are among those flood survivors who were desperately waiting for help."

Pakistan has secured around \$10 billion in funding through this conference. Islamic Development Bank

has announced the support of \$4.2 billion. Asian Development Bank \$2 billion, the European Union 0.5 billion euros, USAID \$100 million, Japan \$77 million, Germany 84 million euros, France \$345 million, Saudi Arabia \$1 billion, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank \$1 billion and China \$100 million. The aid will be spent to rehabilitate flood victims and recover some of the loss of \$30 billion caused by the floods. The funding will be also utilized to acquire knowledge and technical support to make Pakistan climate-resilient in the future.

Second, the successful conduct of the conference is a huge diplomatic success for Pakistan. The participation of heads of state, diplomats, high-level official delegations, international donors, and media persons is a testimony that Pakistan successfully achieved its target of effectively communicating to the world the suffering of flood victims and the emergency steps required to rehabili-

tate the flood victims. Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr expressed his support for Pakistan at the conference and said, "despite the help of Norway and other state's immediate response, the needs remain enormous." The funding announced proves that the international community has also felt the pain and realized the magnitude of the disaster faced by Pakistan in the form of the floods.

Third, the conference has helped sensitizing the world to the fact that climate change is a real threat. It requires efforts at all levels to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Today, Pakistan has become a victim of climate change; next time, it could be any other country. Switzerland's president also mentioned in his speech that his country stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Pakistan and that while Pakistan needed the world's help at the moment, tomorrow it could be his country. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said that "the climate-resilient

rebuilding of all regions at risk of injury will prevent new suffering."

The conference has also reminded the world that Pakistan is at the top of the list of countries most affected by climate change despite having minimum carbon emissions. The UN secretary general during the conference called the recent floods in Pakistan "a climate disaster of monumental scale." Moreover, this conference has also reiterated that developed nations are responsible for socio-economic losses caused by climate-led catastrophes, being faced by Pakistan and other developing countries, which they need to compensate. It will further pave the path to convince nations to achieve the targets of the Paris agreement and take practical steps for its implementation.

Fourth, the funding received through this conference will also help stabilize the economy of Pakistan, which is in a deteriorating situation, so it can gain some strength. Recently, after paying back debt, the foreign

reserves of Pakistan dwindled. So this funding will support the recovery of the economy as well. The optimistic environment to recover the economy will boost businesses and reduce inflation.

Fifth, the conference has proved to be a ray of hope for flood victims to normalize their lives. The flood victims, who are in dire need of food, medicines, and shelter in the harsh winter, will be helped on an immediate basis. They will be able to restart their lives and acquire economic opportunities to earn their living and support their families.

The conference is a great victory for Pakistan to gather international funding to rehabilitate the flood victims and apprise the world about the threats of climate change. Now, the government of Pakistan should implement the 4R framework in the best and most transparent manner to maintain the trust of the international community, which has stood with Pakistan in this difficult moment.

Rivals and revivals

By Michelle Fatima Syed

The recent local government elections in Karachi are a testament to one undeniable fact: the city has had a change of heart and the Pakistan Peoples Party has emerged victorious.

Why, after ten years of an elected, democratic government of the PPP, does its victory seem indigestible and unfathomable for the esteemed political analysts of the country, is a question one might feel like asking. If the first tertiary cardiac care institute in South Asia (NICVD), an amount of Rs1,043,46.57 million spent on the construction and improvement of 5220 km of road network benefitting approximately 47,886,051 people living in the districts of Hyderabad, Tando Muhammad Khan, Matiari, Tando Allahyar, Thatta, Sujawal, Badin, Mirpurkhas, Umerkot, Tharparkar, Sanghar, Shaheed Benazirabad, Dadu, Jamshoro, Karachi, Sukkur, Ghotki, Khairpur, Kambar Shahdadkot, Larkana, Jacobabad, Kashmore, Kandhkot, Nausharo Feroze, Shikarpur and a plethora of other projects are not enough, surely the restoration of the 1973 constitution and the 18th Amendment are purely expository pieces of irrefutable triumphs listed under the phoenix's

resurgence.

A psychological phenomenon that often shrouds the minds of humans is denial. Gerard Hendrik Hofstede was a psychologist and researcher hailing from the Netherlands, who introduced the concept of cross-cultural dimensions. According to Hofstede's Insights, Pakistan has an estimated score of 70 on the Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI). What this essentially means is that we have a high tendency to avoid ambiguity, uncertain situations and we may even resist innovation. Why, despite such caution having been woven into the very fabric of our conduct as a society, do we still find ourselves entangled in the arms of vagueness and doubt? Why do we tend to prefer roaming the corridors of misinterpreted rules and partial verdicts, when we could opt for dialogue and mutual agreement?

The Jamaat-e-Islami and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf have both accused the Election Commission of Pakistan and the PPP of rigging the elections in collusion with each other. While this does not come as a shock, it does lead one to wonder why the idea of sportsmanship seems to take a backseat every time our country is at the crossroads of progress. According to the election commission-

er of Sindh, the city of Karachi is home to 1230 constituencies and 4990 polling stations, with 246 union committees further branching into five categories. It is expected of seasoned political parties that have been contesting elections for decades to realize that ensuring a smooth electoral process is the responsibility of the ECP, which it fulfils in the administrative milieu of its capacity.

To protest is to exercise one's constitutional right, which the 'rivals' can opt for if they feel wronged. However, to accuse without applying rational thought is as redundant of an act as overlooking the work that goes behind the preparation of Forms 11 and 12, only remembering to criticize the new delimitations when it is convenient and demanding immediate elections without taking into account one's own lack of preparation and shortcomings.

While it is human nature to make predictions and go into elections or any other contest with certain expectations, it is just as imperative to realize that the probability of winning a competition is equal for all. It is rather amusing to see our community of analysts get carried away when it comes to just how passionately they seem to consider deviations from their expectations.

The technocratic takeover

The whispers for the new technocratic setup have decreased a little but it is an idea that needs to be strongly debunked as it raises its ugly head every few years.

Why are such short-term and stop-gap desperate measures such as installing a technocratic setup bad? This has to do with accountability. Given the fact that Pakistan has all kinds of rent-seeking and corrupt elite, it is only democracy that ensures some form of accountability of the political class through elections every five years. The non-political technocratic elite is not accountable to anyone.

Democracy has a 'feedback loop' built in the system. The political class has to take into account the public aspirations since it has to seek votes to come to and remain in power. Any technocratic setup has no such compulsions. Therefore, a government without accountability is a non-starter.

The poor in the country are hugely disempowered. The bureaucratic, legal, judicial, socio-political, and economic system works against them and is mostly allied to them. The poor only have the power to vote that they can leverage to get a pittance of favourable terms for themselves. Endorsing any idea for technocratic setup is equivalent to snatching the last vista of empowerment of the poor from them.

The much-condemned political patronage sys-

tem is sometimes the only refuge the poor have to negotiate their way with state institutions. Social science literature has shown time and again that the poor use their power of vote and politics of patronage to deal with 'thana/kaichehry' and other government institutions. Any technocratic setup cannot deliver for the poor the way democracy does.

It is true that though democracy largely delivers for the people, it should not be so populist that it becomes the slave of anti-rational socio-political and economic policies – an example being the government's inability to tax traders as political parties are afraid of the power of the trader class and are unwilling to bear the political cost of antagonizing them in elections. As a result, politicians do not tax them, and this is bad for the country's economy. However, such short-sighted policies are not limited to democratic governments; traders have never been taxed by authoritarian regimes in Pakistan as well. It shows the problem is not democracy that can be fixed by the mirage of any technocratic setup; the malaise is deeper than that and it needs structural overhaul.

When democracy was given some breathing space between 2008 and 2016, some evidence showed the emergence of across-the-board public service delivery in the Punjab education sector, despite it co-existing with

the culture of selective patronage/sifarish in high-powered politics. It is important to highlight this trend. There are not enough public funds to please all the voters through the politics of patronage. If regime change only occurs through performance-based competitive elections, democracy will surely and slowly move towards universal public service delivery despite having some selected pockets of patronage. It will largely propel the system to deliver for the people.

The only thing derailing the system is political instability and this entrenched game of musical chairs that does not let any civilian regime to continue. Both Mujibur Rahman and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto were not financially corrupt, then why were they not allowed to remain in power? One can only imagine how Pakistan would have taken a different trajectory had Mujib/Bhutto ruled the country for extended periods. One can look at Bangladesh to have an idea as it has been transformed into an emerging economic power since Sheikh Hasina took power in 2009. Pakistan might have prospered like this too, but Mujib/Bhutto were not allowed to remain in power for long. Post-1988, all political governments have been facing political instability as a built-in feature in the system. How can we expect democracy to deliver when it is being

systematically undermined all the time and when some present a technocratic setup as a panacea?

The Pakistani elite has largely survived in the last 70 plus years by earning geostrategic rents from external powers and coercive rents from inside the country. Now that geostrategic rents have dried up and the ability of the internal system to pay coercive rents has diminished due to adverse economic conditions, the squabbling over the limited resources has started. Some voices call for the reversal of the 18th Amendment and the 7th NFC Award. Some argue that the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) should be stopped – things we heard before the 2018 general elections. Now, recently, an oped called for ending public education in the country and replacing it with a private voucher scheme or insurance.

It is true that the private education system is largely more efficient than the public education system, and we have written about it in these pages in the past. It is also true that the private education system does not have its presence in cities only; it is also prevalent in rural areas. However, not all provinces have private schools. Rural Sindh and Balochistan and former tribal areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa do not have a strong private-school system as Punjab does. Education comes third in terms of government

By Foqia Sadiq Khan

expenditure – after debt-servicing and defence. Hence, the call to undo it has entered a new phase of fight over public resources. Public education has to (and must) continue, and the sector must have better accountability. We have evidence that with technologies such as geo-tagging, public-sector employees' absenteeism can be better monitored. Why can't our authorities reform the public education system that delivers even in the far-fetched areas of the country instead of replacing it with a private voucher scheme? Politicians should at least spare education in this new quest for more financial resources.

Similarly, the provinces must generate their revenues and also need to better spend the provincial resources that they are given and devolve the financial and administrative resources to the district and sub-district levels.

Recent media reports show how the present PTI-PLQ government in Punjab is spending all the provincial resources in the hometown district of the present chief minister and over-extending patronage spending in a way that is not good for the public welfare. Such counter-productive patronage spending will be effectively dealt with if there is an autonomous system that distributes provincial resources to the lowest tier of the government just as the 7th NFC Award gives it to provinces.

Inequality and hunger

By Chuck Collins

Beginning on May 24, the World Economic Forum is gathering in Davos, Switzerland for an in-person summit, 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.

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Supreme Court fumes at reinstatement of cop-dacoits

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court Monday expressed indignation over the reinstating of the dismissed policemen involved in a dacoity at an ambassador's house and sought a report from the Islamabad inspector general of police (IGP) within three weeks.

A three-member SC bench, headed by the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP), conducted the hearing.

"Why was a time-expired appeal filed against the decision to reinstate the dismissed policemen?" the Supreme Court said.

"Three employees of Islamabad police were

involved in theft and robbery. They had carried out a dacoity, at a diplomat's house," the chief justice said during the hearing of the case.

"A diplomat enjoys immunity. The looted valuables from the diplomat's house had been recovered from the police employees," he added.

"The three employees were dismissed without regular enquiry. When they were reinstated by the tribunal, a time-expired appeal was filed," he remarked.

"Why didn't the IGP conduct a regular inquiry against the accused?" he questioned.

"The IGP should be

answerable on this matter," Justice Athar Minallah.

"The three police employees are now posted in the police lines," Deputy Attorney General Malik Javed Vance told the court.

"Everyone is in a connivance with each other in the department. The time-expired appeal was the result of that connivance," Justice Ayesha Malik remarked.

It is to be noted here that three employees of Islamabad police including Asif Ali, Lal Shabbaz and Tariq Mehmood had been dismissed in 2017 for robbery at a diplomat's house. INP



HYDERABAD: A mechanic busy in repairing customer electric generator due to country-wide power breakdown.

Turkey's Erdogan announces elections on May 14

ANKARA: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has announced that Turkey's elections will be held on May 14 - a month earlier than scheduled - as the opposition still searches for a unified candidate to stand against him.

This could prove to be the most challenging election in Erdogan's two-decade rule, which has seen economic booms, giant development projects as well as disputes with neighbours, wars and a failed coup.

"I will use my authority... (to) bring the election date forward to May 14," Erdogan said in a video from his meeting with young people in northwestern city of Bursa this weekend.

Turkey's next general election was officially due on June 18.

"This is not an early election but bringing it forward," Erdogan said during the video

broadcast shared by his office.

The Turkish leader said that they had agreed on an adjustment to the timetable with its junior right-wing coalition partner to avoid disrupting the school exam schedules.

Time ticking: The election campaign is due to start on March 10, which would give the Turkish opposition even less time to prepare. They have been trying for months to agree on a single candidate to challenge Erdogan at the polls. While Turkey's high inflation and weakening currency could help their cause, internal disagreements play to Erdogan's advantage. He has been using the government's dominance in the media to control the nation's political debate. An opposition party source told this week that their joint candidate would be announced in February.

Istanbul's popular opposition mayor Ekrem Imamoglu is a favourite in opinion polls, which suggest he could beat Erdogan in a head-to-head race. It was he who put an end to the domination of Erdogan's ruling party in the 2019 local elections.

An Istanbul court last month banned the 52-year-old from politics, but he has appealed and can technically run for president.

Imamoglu's legal battle has turned the main opposition CHP party's leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu into the most likely candidate to stand against Erdogan.

Bookish and less telegenic than the mayor, Kilicdaroglu has struggled to secure the support of the other opposition leaders. Canada to pay Indigenous abuse survivors more than \$2bn

PSX taking initiatives to raise financial literacy among investors

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) is launching new initiatives to improve financial literacy of investors.

"PSX is promoting financial literacy and raising awareness of the significance of international acquisitions as strategic investors have a chance to invest in these acquisitions. Financial literacy is important since it supports the expansion of capital market," said Abbas Ali Raza, chief executive officer of Ahsam Securities Private Limited, during an exclusive interview with WealthPK.

What initiatives is PSX taking to raise financial literacy and attract investors?

Abbas Ali Raza: The PSX commenced the World Investor Week with a gong ceremony held at the exchange's Trading Hall in Karachi. The weeklong events were designed to raise investor education and protection while also highlighting the value of financial literacy, promoting financial inclusion and providing investors with learning opportunities.

WealthPK: Do you think that lack of financial literacy is a challenge for Pakistan?

Abbas Ali Raza: Pakistan's financial penetration and diversification present a challenge and limit the country's prospects for saving and investing due to lack of financial literacy and investor education. In Pakistan, the need for investor education is obvious, but it has to be targeted and strengthened through public sector policies and private sector activities.

WealthPK: What are the factors holding back the development of the capital market?

Abbas Ali Raza: The lack of financial education and knowledge in Pakistan is a major cause of concern. Lack of understanding of long-term investments, choice of adequate and diverse products, investment possibilities, and stock market attitudes are all preventing the development of the capital market.

WealthPK: What is the biggest acquisition that has taken place in the PSX?

Abbas Ali Raza: Acquisition of Cloudways by Digital Ocean was the biggest acquisition by value of a Pakistani software firm by an international entity.

WealthPK: Does this acquisition represent a

business opportunity for investors?

Abbas Ali Raza: This acquisition by Digital Ocean of Cloudways is a testament to the fact that Pakistani tech companies present a compelling business opportunity for strategic and portfolio investors.

Performance of Ahsam Securities Private Limited in 2021

During the calendar year 2021, the company generated zero brokerage and commission due to some managerial issues compared to brokerage and commission of Rs2.2 million in 2020.

In CY21, the company generated an operating profit of Rs6.5 million compared to an operating profit of Rs2.7 million in CY20, showing a growth of 133% year-on-year.

In CY21, the company generated Rs6.5 million in profit before taxation compared to Rs2.7 million in CY20, showing an increase of 134%.

Similarly, in CY21, the company's after-tax profit stood at Rs6 million compared to Rs2.3 million in CY20, showing an increase of 158%.

Ahsam Securities Private Limited was incorporated on September 24, 2012, under INP

Azam Swati becomes additional secretary general of PTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has been appointed senior political and Senator Azam Khan Swati as additional secretary general of the party.

PTI Secretary General Asad Umar has issued a notification, stating: "It is hereby notified that Mr. Muhammad Azam Khan Swati is appointed as Additional Secretary General Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) with immediate effect."

Azam Khan Swati, who resigned from the Senate as member of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-F) in 2011 to join the PTI, facing multiple cases for his controversial remarks against state institution.

Earlier this month, he was granted bail by the Islamabad High Court (IHC) in the controversial tweets case after he remained in custody of Balochistan and Sindh police in the identical cases. INP

Two injured in firing at Karachi City Court

KARACHI: At least two people were injured during a firing incident at Karachi City Court on Monday.

According to the police, the incident occurred on the premises of the court where an unidentified man started indiscriminate firing. As a result, two people sustained bullet injuries.

Following this, the suspect has been arrested by the police.

As per the initial report, the firing was based on personal enmity, however, further investigation is underway. INP

Two killed as speeding car crashes into wall

NANKANA SAHIB: Two persons were killed and two others were injured in a road accident near Balochi (Shahkot) on GT Road on Monday.

Rescue officials said the accident took place when a speeding car got out of the driver's control and crashed into a wall. Two of the car occupants died on spot while the other two were injured.

The deceased and the injured were shifted to the THQ hospital, added the officials. INP



PESHAWAR: Labours busy in placing pipe during ongoing work progress at Afridi Ghadi Gulbahar no 4.

Two children among 11 burned to death in Thai van crash

BANGKOK: Eleven people, including two children, burned to death in a passenger van crash in central Thailand over the Lunar New Year holiday, police said Monday.

Traffic accidents are common in the kingdom, which has a notorious road safety record, particularly during busy public holidays.

The van carrying 12 people was travelling from northeastern Amnat Charoen province to Bangkok when it veered off the highway in central Nakhon Ratchasima province Saturday night, said Police Colonel Yingyos Poldej.

Yingyos told reporters that one man

had been able to climb out a window, but the other passengers were trapped and died in the blaze.

The survivor, Thanachit Kingkaew, a 20-year-old student, said he was asleep when he was jolted awake after hearing someone scream.

"I woke up and the next thing I know, the van was upside down. I didn't see what happened," he said.

"After the crash, the fire started engulfing the whole van starting from the back."

"I started kicking the windows and managed to crawl through a small hole," he said.

"Soon after that, the van exploded."

Nikhom Sean, a volunteer with a local rescue team, said the van exploded just seconds after it was engulfed in flames.

"It took less than 30 seconds for the fire to consume the whole van," he said.

"I couldn't do anything with the fire extinguisher I had. The van then exploded three to four times."

Yingyos, the police colonel, said the van used both fuel and compressed gas but initial reports found the gas tank had not leaked.

"We think that the fire was caused by the fuel," he said, adding they were still investigating what caused the vehicle to veer off the road. INP

FIA starts probe against wife of famous political personality

LAHORE: The FIA has started money laundering investigation against the alleged third wife of a renowned political personality of Punjab on Monday.

The Federal Investigation Agency has sought details of properties and list of vehicles registered in the name of Saira Anwar.

The probing agency also sought dates on which the properties were transferred in her name and what kind of properties were transferred, whether they were inherited, bought or received as gifts.

The FIA has sent a letter to the director general of excise asking him to provide record of Saira Anwar's properties and cars.

The FIA warned that if details were not sent on time, then an action would be taken.

It accused the blue-eyed Excise official of the previous Punjab government, DG Dr Asif Tufail of making a deliberate delay in providing details about Saira Anwar's assets. INP

Customs foils Saudi currency smuggling bid at Karachi airport

KARACHI: Customs officials have foiled the bid to smuggle Saudi currency at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport on Monday.

As per Customs Collector Karachi Airport, Nadeem Memon, a passenger named Gul Hassan was traveling to Saudi Arabia with 100,000 Saudi Riyals.

The currency was concealed in the bag he was carrying.

In April, last year, Customs officials had foiled a foreign currency smuggling bid at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport.

They said 65,000 US dollars, approximately around Rs12 million, were recovered from the baggage of a woman passenger who was travelling to Doha.

The officials said the currency was seized and the passenger was allowed to board the flight. INP



KARACHI: Health worker administering polio drop to child during anti polio campaign in provincial capital.

Punjab learning from Chinese experience to control air pollution: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Fast urbanisation, an increasing number of vehicles and enhanced industrial activities have increased air pollution in the major cities of Punjab province, particularly in the capital city of Lahore.

Realising the problems faced by the people on account of air pollution in major cities, including Lahore, Sheikhupura, Faisalabad and Gujranwala, the provincial government of

Punjab has come forward with a smart and innovative move of installing smog-free towers for air purification.

Smog-free towers have been designed with Chinese collaboration like "vacuum-cleaners," which operate to suck smog and dust particles from the air and provide 70% fresh and clean air with purification of air pollutants. During the last 15 years, Lahore's land covered by forests has

reduced significantly, and now only 3% of green area remains due to increased industrial, transport and construction activities. Gardens and trees of Lahore are being shelved to make space for asphalt roads and concrete buildings.

With depleting green belts and chopping of trees, a new phenomenon in the form of smog has made the lives of city dwellers difficult during winter season. INP

Govt yet to tap sleeping deposits of Cinnabar: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Cinnabar - a bright scarlet to brick-red form of toxic mercury sulfide - is an important industrial mineral found in sizeable quantities in Pakistan awaiting proper mining and processing, says Yaqoob Shah, former general manager of the Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation (PMDC) while talking to INP-WealthPK.

Yaqoob, who is also the principal geologist at the Global Mining Company Limited, Islamabad, said mercury sulfide was the main ore of mercury in combina-

tion with sulphur.

"It is called red mercury sulfide, vermilion, Zhu Sha, and is commonly found with stibnite, pyrite, and marcasite or in hot spring deposits or in veins near the recent volcanic rocks. It can be decomposed into elemental mercury and sulfur."

Yaqoob Shah emphasized proper exploration and quantification of cinnabar traces in Pakistan. Recalling his memories, he said the Government of Pakistan conducted a mineral exploration program from 1992 through 2001 in collaboration with the Australian government to

know about all mineral sources found in Gilgit-Baltistan (G.B.), especially in Chitral.

"During this exploration program, traces of cinnabar were clearly detected in many samples, but it was never quantified separately. This is the main reason that the true potential of this important mineral could never be defined, but G.B. and Chitral are its targeted areas. If formal exploration on scientific lines is carried out, it is expected that Pakistan can find another precious mineral in the form of cinnabar to extract important industrial ele-

ments," said Yaqoob, who is also an active member of the National Council for Marble & Granite and minerals.

Talking to WealthPK, geologist and miner Imran Babar said, "Cinnabar is the most common ore to get elemental mercury, and sulfur. It was also considered an ancient source of scarlet pigment 'vermilion.' Though no large-scale mining is carried out at the government level, it is mined to some extent at the private level. It has a hardness between 2.0 and 2.5 with a specific gravity of app 8.1. Mostly, it is found in vol-

canic cracks. Cinnabar available in Pakistan is enough in both quality and quantity not only to fulfill the local industrial needs but to cut short the import bill as well."

Long before the common era, vermilion (deep brilliant red shade) was extracted from sulfur and mercury-rich cinnabar.

Vermilion was considered the holy color or the color of life/blood and was used as a printing paste for personal seals to paint the temples, royal carriages, and imperial calligraphic ink. Romans used this vivid reddish-orange vermilion as a pigment in lipsticks. INP

TENDER NOTICE		
The EXECUTIVE ENGINEER URBAN PLANNING & DEV: DEPARTMENT QUETTA DIVISION QUETTA invites bids from Eligible Bidders for the execution of the following works for the Year 2023 based on Composite schedule rates 2016 on Percentage Rates.		
Tender Fee Rs.3000/- and Bid Security 3% for each work		
S.NO	NAME OF WORK/S	E/COST
1	CONSTRUCTION OF HOSTEL MOTHER TREASURY FOR POOR AND NEEDY PEOPLE FOR CHRISTIAN MINORITY AT QUETTA TSE-222301227443	29,700,000/-
2	REHABILITATION AND ADDITIONAL WORKS AT SHADE BANDHRAKIRSHANA MADDIR SHAH WAKSHA ROAD QUETTA TSE-222301227453	14,850,000/-
3	B/WALL AND ADDITIONAL/DEV WORK AT JOSIAH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH EASSANAGRI QUETTA TSE-222301227473	39,900,000/-
4	IMPROVEMENT OF GOSPEL OF CHRIST MINORITIES QUETTA TSE-222301227483	19,800,000/-
Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: Presence in Active Tax Payer List. The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required. PEC Registration in the Relevant category and Relevant Code. Other Documents Mentioned in the Bidding document Procedure of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee, Deposit at Call of 3% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the undersigned upon payment (non-refundable) bidding documents fee mentioned above through green challan deposited in the head of account C-03870 through Govt. Treasury / National Bank of Pakistan and bidding documents can also be downloaded from www.bppra.gov.pk under TSE No. given above against each scheme Issuance of tender Documents: From the date of publication of NIT to 10 February, 2023 during office hours on working days Last Date of bid submission: The Tenders must be submitted latest by 10 February, 2023 till 12:00 PM. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under-signed at 01:00 PM Address: New Zarghoon Road Phone no: 0819211904 Fax no: 0819211904 Email: engr.inam2011@gmail.com		
PRQ No.2042/23-01-2023		
www.dpr.gov.pk @dpr_gob dprgob f@dprbalochistan		

US dollar crosses Rs230 barrier in interbank trading

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani rupee continued to suffer drubbing at the hands of US dollar as the greenback on Monday crossed the Rs230 barrier in the interbank trading. As the trade started in the money market today, the US currency kept its dominance on the local unit. The USD quickly gained 43 paisas in its value and was traded at Rs230.10. This is the 24th straight fall of the Pakistani rupee in the interbank business. On Friday, the last trading day of the previous week, the value of the US dollar was appreciated by 52 paisas against the Pakistani rupee making the greenback to conclude the day at Rs229.67 in interbank trading. The currency experts believe that the rate of dollar is soaring due to mounting demand for import payments. Besides this, falling inflows under exports and remittances and political uncertainty also resulted in devaluation of the rupee. Pakistan's economic banes along with its imminent threat of default will not go away unless the IMF agrees to resume its ninth review for the extended loan facility. The government has requested the IMF (International Monetary Fund) mission to come soon and conclude the pending 9th review. There is certain set of economic steps that are required by authorities to take for the IMF mission to come to Islamabad to finalize the all-important service level agreement. As per the report, the government finally has made up its mind to come up with a mini-budget and address other concerns of the IMF that are set to further stoke up inflation. The State Bank is scheduled to issue a monetary policy announcement today as the market is expecting another

hike of 100 basis points to bring the benchmark rate to 17 per cent. The increase in policy rate is expected due to elevated inflation in December 2022 as Consumer Price Index (CPI) clocked in at 24.5 per cent against 23.8 per cent in November 2022. The Pakistani rupee continued to suffer drubbing at the hands of US dollar as the greenback on Monday crossed the Rs230 barrier in the interbank trading. As the trade started in the money market today, the US currency kept its dominance on the local unit. The USD quickly gained 43 paisas in its value and was traded at Rs230.10. This is the 24th straight fall of the Pakistani rupee in the interbank business. On Friday, the last trading day of the previous week, the value of the US dollar was appreciated by 52 paisas against the Pakistani rupee making the greenback to conclude the day at Rs229.67 in interbank trading. The currency experts believe that the rate of dollar is soaring due to mounting demand for import payments. Besides this, falling inflows under exports and remittances and political uncertainty also resulted in devaluation of the rupee. Pakistan's economic banes along with its imminent threat of default will not go away unless the IMF agrees to resume its ninth review for the extended loan facility. The government has requested the IMF (International Monetary Fund) mission to come soon and conclude the pending 9th review. There is certain set of economic steps that are required by authorities to take for the IMF mission to come to Islamabad to finalize the all-important service level agreement. INP



LAHORE: A boy is busy is washing eggs in water for selling purpose at Sakhiyan road.

President Alvi condemns 'immoral incident' of desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday strongly condemned the heinous act of desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden. He termed the act as senseless, provocative and Islamophobic which has hurt the religious sensitivities of Muslims around the world. The president said this immoral incident was an act of needless incitement and a serious provocation to the feelings of Muslims in the world. He said it was against the internationally accepted norms and principles of legitimate expression of the right to freedom of expression or opinion, which obliged everyone to not resort to hate speech and incite people to violence. Dr Arif Alvi said that Islam preached respect and reverence for all religions of the world whereas this heinous act has hurt Muslims by insulting their sacred values, and reflects the alarming levels of Islamophobia. The President urged the international community to show a common resolve against Islamophobia. He underlined the need for international efforts to consolidate the values of tolerance and coexistence and criminalize all acts that promote the ideology of hatred. INP

COMMANDER U.S. AIR FORCES CENTRAL COMMAND CALLS ON AIR CHIEF

Lieutenant General Alexis Grynkewich, Commander of Ninth Air Force (U.S. Air Forces Central Command), called on Air Chief Marshal Ziaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force in his office today. During the meeting, matters pertaining to regional security situation, enhanced bilateral and defence cooperation were discussed. The visiting dignitary lauded the professionalism of PAF personnel and the exceptional progress made by Pakistan Air Force over the years, especially through indigenization. He also appreciated Pakistan's efforts in promoting regional peace and vowed to enhance cooperation in various fields. The AFCENT Commander offered heartfelt condolences to the people of Pakistan over the loss of life amidst devastation caused by floods and appreciated the efforts put in by Pakistan Air Force for relief and rehabilitation of the flood victims. The Air Chief highlighted that both the countries enjoy cordial relations and reiterated his resolve to further enhance the existing bilateral cooperation between the two strategic partners. Chief of the Air Staff also shared his vision of modernizing PAF to meet the evolving security and geo-political challenges. The Air Chief further said, "Pakistan values its strong diplomatic, economic and defence relations with United States of America which are based on convergence on all important issues relating to regional peace, security and stability". Both sides agreed to further optimize military to military ties particularly in training and operational domains.

Little girl burnt alive in Lahore house fire

LAHORE: A two-year-old girl burnt alive in a fire that broke out in a house in Falcon Complex Society near Kalma Chowk of Lahore on Monday. According to the rescue sources, another child sustained critical injuries in the fire and was shifted to hospital. On information, Rescue 1122 reached the spot and brought the fire under control. The deceased girl was identified as Iman and the injured as Abdul Rahman. INP

Power generation units are temporarily switched off in winter at night as an economic measure to save fuel, Khurram Dastagir

ISLAMABAD: Energy Minister Khurram Dastagir Khan Monday shared that a power breakdown across the country, caused by a "variation in frequency" in the country's South, may take 12 hours to restore completely. While sharing details about the fault, Dastagir told reporters that the power generation units are temporarily switched off in winter at night as an economic measure to save fuel. "When the units were turned on at 7:30am this morning one by one, frequency variation was reported in the southern part of the country between Jamshoro and Dadu. There was a fluctuation in voltage and the power generation units were shut one by one due to cascading impact. This is not a major crisis," Dastagir insisted. He said that the restoration efforts are underway and claimed that the supply to some grid stations had already been restored while complete restoration will likely take 12 hours. "Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) and some grids of Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) have already been restored," claimed the minister. Talking about the breakdown in Karachi, the minister said that the matter in the port city is complicated as it has a complete electric supply system of its own. "We provide K-Electric about 1,000-1,100 megawatts routinely, however, it will be restored within a few hours. It is not certain how long will it take to sort this issue. However, my target is to restore electricity in the country in the next 12 hours," said the minister. INP

PM Shehbaz felicitates Mohsin Naqvi on becoming caretaker Punjab CM

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Monday congratulated Mohsin Naqvi, the chief executive officer (CEO) of City News Network (CNN), on becoming the caretaker Chief Minister of Punjab. The prime minister extended good wishes to Mohsin Naqvi and said that the election commission decided to appoint the caretaker chief minister as per the Constitution and law. "We welcome the decision of the election commission. It is hoped that all the requirements of transparent, free and impartial elections will be fulfilled," he expressed optimism. "It is hoped that Mohsin Naqvi will be successful in this responsibility according to the requirements of the Constitution," he added. "I pray that he will be successful in this constitutional and public duty. I welcome your appointment as the President of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)," he said. Meanwhile, Salman Shehbaz, son of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, also welcomed the appointment of Mohsin Naqvi as the caretaker Punjab chief minister. "Mohsin Naqvi has been appointed as the caretaker Punjab chief minister. What do you think about him?" a journalist put a question to Salman Shehbaz. INP

Poverty drives Lahori man to attempt suicide along with 3 kids

LAHORE: An inflation-hit poor man on Monday tried to end his and his three children's lives after swallowing the poisonous pills in Raiwind area of Lahore. Rescue 1122 shifted the man and his three children to a hospital in critical condition. Police said that the citizen was under lot of financial and mental stress due to rising inflation. He was unable to provide for himself and his family keeping in view the galloping prices of daily use items. Police said that the children who were administered poisonous pills by their father were aged between 8 and 15 years old. According to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) on Friday, weekly inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Index (SPI), posted an increase of 31.83 per cent for the combined income group on a year-on-year basis ending Jan 19 due to a massive surge in prices of both food and non-food items. Former finance minister Miftah Ismail said on Sunday that more than 80 million people in Pakistan are living below the poverty line. As many as 60% of Pakistanis earn below Rs35,000. The World Economic Forum in its global crisis risk report last week identified debt crisis, sustained and/or rapid inflation, state collapse, failure of cyber security measures, and concentration of digital power as top five risks faced by Pakistan. INP



LAHORE: Traders are shouting slogans during protest in favor of their demands outside press club in Provincial Capital.

Research, funding to help alter Pakistan's agri landscape: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Framing policies to boost the economy without transforming the agriculture sector is of no benefit. Pakistan's agricultural landscape will change as a result of research, technology, and innovation, enabling farmers to become more knowledgeable and competitive. Talking to WealthPK, Muhammad Azeem Tariq, an expert at the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC), said, "In rural areas, approximately 68% of the population depends on agriculture for food and livelihood. Currently, our economy is fragile. The country needs to get out of this situation to where agriculture is the major contributor to economic growth. Therefore, Pakistan must tailor its economic policies according to the current situation and world order." "Pakistan has abundant resources and a fertile soil. A large portion of our population is directly or indirectly involved in agriculture. Agriculture is the backbone of our economy and is an important contributor to food security. It accounts for approximately 60% of Pakistan's foreign exchange income and contributes approximately 22% to the nation's GDP," said the NARC expert. Azeem said several issues, including a lack of research, lack of adequate technology, high input costs, lack of water, reduction in the amount of land for farming, long-hour load shedding, insufficient advising services as well as use of cultivable insecticides, adulterated and expired pesticides, indirect links between farmers and the main market, as well as traditional agricultural methods, have plagued the agriculture sector. "Therefore, enhancing the agricultural output necessitates the implementation of novel strategies. It can play a crucial role in promoting economic growth because of its strong forward and backward links with the secondary (industrial) and tertiary (services) sectors," he continued. "For agricultural productivity, it is necessary that the government strengthen our research organizations and provide them with funds. Private companies should also be involved so that the output could be increased," Azeem said. "Macro and micro-level structural changes may help revitalize our agriculture sector. Undoubtedly, lack of agricultural research facilities has wide-ranging effects such as poor implementation of long-term objectives, misallocation, and mismanagement of resources with many economic and environmental externalities," he added. "To increase agricultural productivity, the government must create more research institutes or provide funding to those that already exist so that they have the resources to carry out new research," he said. INP

Ishaq Dar off to Qatar with 'offer to sell two LNG power plants'

ISLAMABAD: Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Monday left on a two-day visit of Qatar for talks aimed at Pakistan's economic situation and enhancing cooperation in energy sector. Ishaq Dar will host a string of meetings with Qatari officials in Doha and, according to sources, will invite them to invest in Pakistan. The sources further said that the minister will offer to sell two Pakistani LNG power plants to the Qatari officials. The government is expected to raise \$1.5 billion from the sale of these two LNG power plants, the sources added. Qatar has also shown interest for investment in aviation sector of Pakistan, the sources said. INP

Mohsin Naqvi's appointment constitutional, to ensure fair elections: Marriyum

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Monday that the appointment of caretaker chief minister Punjab was made according to the constitution and law and now there would be elections and not the selection in the province. Imran Khan was worried over Mohsin Naqvi's appointment as caretaker chief minister because this was not done by "witchcraft" but according to the constitution and law, she said in a tweet on Monday. She termed Imran a "foreign agent" who used \$3 million funds of Shaukat Khanum hospital for business purpose. She also criticized Tehreek-e-Insaf's Chairman for "imposing" Usman Buzdar on the people of Punjab. The minister rejecting the PTI's criticism over caretaker chief minister's appointment said now there would be elections in Punjab and no longer selection as done in 2018. INP

PTI decides to withdraw resignations of its remaining 44 MNAs

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf has decided to withdraw the resignations of its remaining 44 Members of National Assembly whose resignations are yet to be accepted by the speaker. PTI leader Asad Umar said on Monday that the party had emailed National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf informing him about the resignation withdrawal decision. The party wants to withdraw resignations of its 44 MNAs whose resignations have not been accepted so far, he added. The PTI leader said the party's next step would be to get its member appointed as the Opposition Leader in the National Assembly. On Friday, National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf accepted another 35 resignations of the



LAHORE: Labourers are carrying sand on their tractor trolleys after the dry Ravi River in provincial Capital.

Controversial person's appointment as caretaker CM a question mark on ECP's integrity: Sh Rashid

LONDON: Pakistan Awami Muslim League (AML) chief and former federal interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Monday said the nomination of a controversial person as the Punjab's caretaker chief minister was not only a question mark on the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), but also a nail in the coffin of the country's elections. In his video message on Twitter, the former minister said the appointment of a controversial person at the top slot was a question mark on the integrity of the [ECP]. He said the 13-party's attempt to suppress the decision of the people of Pakistan would be unjust with the country. Rashid said at time Pakistan was going through a serious economic and political instability the appointment of an undesirable person as the caretaker chief minister of the province having 60 per cent population of the country would be tantamount to defame the citizens and humiliating the democracy. "The steps you are taking to block Imran Khan's path will fall on you. The people, Pakistan and Islam will be victorious. You will be destroyed and your all intentions will fail as the nation will defeat you," the seasoned politician further said in his tweet. INP

Russia says no date set for talks with US on nuclear arms treaty

MOSCOW: Russia said on Monday that no new date had been set for talks with the United States on the New START nuclear arms treaty, accusing the US of ramping up tensions between the two sides. Talks between Moscow and Washington on resuming inspections under the New START nuclear arms reduction treaty were due to take place in November in Egypt, but Russia postponed them and neither side has set a new date for a meeting. Sergei Ryabkov, the deputy foreign minister, said the conditions were not right for new talks on the treaty, which caps the number of each side's strategic nuclear warheads. "The situation does not, frankly speaking, allow for setting a new date, ... taking into account this escalation trend in both rhetoric and actions by the United States," Ryabkov was quoted by Interfax as saying. Already poor US-Russia ties became even more strained last year when Russia invaded Ukraine, prompting Washington and its allies to respond with a barrage of sanctions against Russia's economy. While there have been occasional diplomatic successes, including prisoner swaps involving US Marine veteran Trevor Reed and basketball star Brittney Griner, direct high-level contact has been scarce. Moscow said in November that it had "no other choice" but to cancel talks with the United States over inspections under the New START treaty, which is set to expire in February 2026. INP