

QUETTA VOICE

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Thursday 26
January, 2023

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Iran ready to provide gas facility to Pakistan: Iranian Consul General



After Fawad's arrest, Imran calls on judiciary to 'protect PTI's fundamental rights'

Gas leakage incidents claim 16 lives in a week in Quetta

Manan Mandokhail, Syed Ali Shah

In Quetta, gas leakage incidents have claimed 16 lives including four children and a woman in a week. Dozens of people were unconscious as rooms were filled with gas in various parts of the city. Gas load shedding coupled with low gas pressure has compounded the problems of consumers in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan.

Quetta, Ziarat, Kalat and other parts of Balochistan are in the grip of chilly weather for the last month.

Five lives lost in one day

At least five people including four children and a police sub-inspector were killed during two separate incidents of gas leakages in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan province on Wednesday morning. Police sources said four children of a family died inside a mud-walled house after the gas leakage triggered an explosion in the Killi Badezai area of Kharotabad Quetta.

Two women were also injured in the gas blast that was triggered by the gas leakage in the house. The injured women were rushed to the burn unit of the Bolan Medical Complex Hospital (BMCH) for medical treatment. Senior doctors reached the burn unit to make sure of timely medical treatment for the injured by the blast.



Children were sleeping in their room when the blast was triggered by the leakage

Police sources said the hapless children along with their mothers were sleeping inside the mud-walled house when the room filled with gas. "Gas load shedding caused the blast inside the house", Abdullah Khan, one of the relatives of the victims told Daily Quetta Voice. He said the family had left the gas heater on and there was a sudden gas load shedding and the family was asleep when the gas supply came back. This caused the incident, he narrated. In another incident, a police sub-inspector Shabir Gujar died after his room was filled with gas in the Pod Gali Chowk area of Quetta. Police sources said that the victim was sleeping and the room was filled with gas. The sub-inspector was currently serving in the Shalkot Police Station Quetta.



SSGC did not respond to CM Secretariat Balochistan

Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Qudus Bizenjo took a notice of the increasing incidents of gas explosions in Quetta. The CM Secretariat to speak to the Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC), but there was no response, an official handout issued here on Wednesday evening said. The CM has demanded of the federal government to take notice of the attitude and performance of the company in Balochistan, the statement concluded.

Islamabad court reserves verdict on plea seeking PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry's physical remand

Islamabad court reserves verdict on plea seeking PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry's physical remand

An Islamabad district and sessions court on Wednesday reserved its verdict on a police request seeking PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry's eight-day physical remand, hours after he was arrested for "inciting violence against a constitutional institution".

The former federal minister was taken into custody early Wednesday morning after a first information report (FIR) against him was registered at Islamabad's Kohsar police station by an official of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for "threatening" the electoral body's members and their families.

According to Fawad's brother, Faisal, the former federal minister was "taken away" in four cars that did not have any



number plates at 5:30am. Faisal said that the family was unaware of Fawad's location at the time.

"We are also not being given any details of the FIR registered against him," he said. Faisal, who is also a prominent lawyer, termed his brother's arrest "illegal" and asserted that he will fight this battle in court.

The PTI leader was later brought to Lahore's Cantt court where the judicial magistrate granted police Fawad's transit remand.

Later in the day, Islamabad police presented Fawad before Duty Judge Naveed Khan and sought his physical remand for eight days. The prosecutor told the court that authorities needed Fawad's phone and his laptop, adding that the politician's custody was required for conducting a photogrammetric test and a voice match.

During the hearing, ECP lawyer Saad Hasan read out the contents of the FIR. He contended that the PTI leader had termed the electoral watchdog to be a munshi (clerk).

The lawyer argued that the ECP was a constitutional body, adding that the regime change narrative had been formed under a well-thought out plan. "Fawad Chaudhry damaged the ECP's reputation by making threatening statements," Hasan added that Fawad's remarks were aimed at inciting one group against the other. He contended that the ECP had received many threatening letters. "The purpose of Fawad's speech was to promote hatred against the commission." He further said that Fawad had not apologised for his remarks and was still standing by them, adding that there was a lot of "electronic proof" present against the politician. Web Desk

After Fawad's arrest, Imran calls on judiciary to 'protect PTI's fundamental rights'

Following the arrest of PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry, former premier Imran Khan on Wednesday called on the country's judiciary to protect the party's fundamental rights.

Fawad was arrested early Wednesday morning for "inciting violence against a constitutional institution" after a case was registered against him on the complaint of an Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) official.

In a televised press conference, the PTI chairman addressed the judges of the apex court, saying that they had been entrusted with upholding rule of law.

"The kinds of verdicts being given and how the Constitution and



laws are being torn apart, there is no future for such a country." He also questioned what Fawad's crime was. "It is a crime to call the election commissioner a munshi (clerk)?" he asked, referring to Fawad's press talk on Tuesday.

Imran asserted that the ECP was responsible for holding free and fair elections in the country, reiterating his criticism of the commission's decision to appoint media mogul Mohsin Naqvi the caretaker chief minister of Punjab.

"On what basis did you choose Mohsin Naqvi as the caretaker chief minister?" he said. "Was there no one else that you picked the person who was against us the most?"

Imran said that he expected the judiciary to "protect our fundamental rights". "The nation is expecting you to protect our rights."

Imran claimed that Naqvi had reinstated all the officials who were part of the cabinet of Hamza Shahbaz. Web Desk

Iran ready to provide gas facility to Pakistan: Iranian Consul General

Mir Salam Jogezi, Iranian Consul General based in Quetta, Hassan Darvaish on Wednesday said his country was ready to provide gas facilities to Pakistan.

He said Iran was ready to resolve Pakistan's energy problems. He expressed these views while talking to Quetta-based journalists at the Iranian Consulate.

Hassan Darvaish stated that direct flights would be commenced from Quetta to Tehran very soon. This would address a long-standing demand of the people of Balochistan, the Consul General stated. He said Iran enjoys cordial relations with Pakistan.



Iran's Consul General Hassan Darvaish said that Iran and Pakistan have common interests, language, culture and religion, and the media can play a key role in promoting relations between the neighboring countries.

Pakistan's foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has met Iran's Foreign Minister Hussain Amir Abdullahian at the ECO Conference. Last year, relations in the economic sector have been promoted and we have reached a high level beyond the limited scale. He said that the target of trade volume between

Pakistan and Iran has been set at five billion dollars and this target can be reached by starting more economic activities. Ready, Iran welcomes the export of mangoes, rice and other fruit items from Pakistan. Media can play an important role in bringing the people and governments of the two neighboring friendly countries closer.

Violent protests and sieges are not allowed in Iran. Direct flights can start soon so that cooperation in the tourism and the economic sector can be further promoted. In this regard, an Iranian company is ready to start flights from Quetta to Tehran.

UAE hints at 'huge investment' in Pakistan amid economic turmoil

ISLAMABAD: United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan has dropped clues his government is planning to broaden its investment footprint in Pakistan — as the country drastically needs foreign inflows to prop up its deteriorating economy.

The royal dignitary arrived in Pakistan on a private visit and held a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who received the former at Chandra Airport along with other government functionaries.

"Be prepared, the UAE will make a huge investment in Pakistan," the sources quoted the UAE president as saying during a cordial meeting with the premier at the airport.

PM Shehbaz recalled his recent visit to the gulf country and emphasised that both countries would work on the understanding reached between the two leaders in various fields, during his visit to the UAE.

The UAE president said that the brotherly relations between the two countries went back many decades and his father, who had immense love for Pakistan and its people, laid the foundation of their bilateral ties.

The president also assured the prime minister that the UAE would always stand by Pakistan.

Taking to Twitter, the premier wrote: "Extremely delighted to receive



my brother His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed on his arrival in Pakistan, which is his second home. Building on our last meeting, we discussed ways [and] means to further strengthen our brotherly relations."

The president expressed warm affection towards the prime minister on his arrival in Pakistan and took the premier to his personal jet, sources told Geo News.

The premier also met the family members of the president and held conversations with his children in the English and Arabic language, the sources added.

The UAE, on January 12, agreed to lend \$1 billion to Pakistan and roll over an existing \$2 billion loan, the country's information minister had said, as the country's central bank foreign reserves fell to just three weeks' worth of imports.

The UAE's financial support offered some respite to the country that is still reeling from devastating nationwide floods that have caused more than \$30 billion of damage.

The loan announcements came as PM Shehbaz kicked off a two-day visit to the UAE. "This support will help us tide over economic difficulties," the premier said in a statement. Web Desk

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Reimagining Pakistan seminar in Quetta

Politicians, intelligentsia and members of the legal fraternity almost discussed all issues relating to the country and Balochistan at the first Reimagining Pakistan seminar.

Political pundits called it a gathering of political dissidents since most of the political figures have been sidelined by their own political parties.

Throughout the seven hours long sessions, Mr. Abbasi faced the brunt of stormy and aggressive speakers criticizing Islamabad for what they called stepmotherly treatment.

Miftah Ismail presented killings facts about the declining economic condition of the country and the socio-economic state of the people.

Former Secretary of Finance Balochistan, Mehfooz Ali Khan shared killing facts about Islamabad's stepmotherly treatment towards Balochistan.

Young intellectual, Rafiullah Kakar termed the undeclared MPA fund as a major speed breaker and political bribe before the political parties.

To be precise, it was an event that brought the high-ups who had served the country in the center and province to one forum and they all openly shared their experiences and knowledge to bring an end to the prevailing crisis.

Gender budgeting- a tool for gender removing inequalities

Mehfooz Ali Khan



Article 25 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan says that there will be no discrimination among the citizens on the basis of sex.

Gender budgeting thus identifies the gender-specific implications of public finance - which is usually presented as gender-neutral - and, in particular economic policies.

There are many policy options to reduce this imbalance but budget is important as a policy and planning instrument

for governments that can be used for reaching the goal of Gender Equality. Gender Responsive, Gender Sensitive and Gender Aware budgeting in a country, region, or a province can create enabling environment to bring equality.

Gender impacts of budgets and policies. Gender budgeting thus identifies the gender-specific implications of public finance - which is usually presented as gender-neutral - and, in particular economic policies.

We talk in the context of Balochistan, the first question that strikes us that, 'Is there any study ever conducted to find out the Gender Gaps? Did we undertake any post or pre-budget assessment of the annual budget on different segments of the society, especially women, who form almost 50% (48.76%, to be specific) of our national population?' In Balochistan, this ratio is 47.47%. If our budget is not Gender Sensitive, almost half the population is left out.

all levels and they are hardly involved in the budgetary process. An analysis of PSDPs since 2013-14 till 2020-21 shows that there was not a single project in the years 2013-14 to 2014-15, as if women did not exist or they were not worthy of any consideration.

ered vulnerable because they are solely dependent on male counterparts both at home as well as at the workplace. Surprisingly there are no separate Rest Rooms/Washrooms for ladies in Secretariat and directorates.

Women development department manned by male officers There is a women's Development Department, mostly manned by male officers and workers, who are supposed to work for the welfare of female workers. They lack the capacity to formulate and implement plans for female uplift.

Power failure

Monday's prolonged power failure across Pakistan was a powerful reminder of the deepening fault lines across the nation, as political rivals raced to seize authority in spite of the country's growing disarray.

Together, these challenging events at the beginning of the week again popped up a compelling question: after Sri Lanka shot to global headlines following the default on its foreign debt repayments, is Pakistan next in line to meet a similar fate?

Pakistan following Sri Lanka's footsteps has become an oft-repeated question across the country's gossip circles, from living rooms to boardrooms and beyond.

In sharp contrast to the mood across the power corridors, mainstream Pakistanis have increasingly suffered the fallout from galloping inflation and other challenges on a regular basis.

rivals repeatedly urge their followers to support democracy, there's a bigger disaster lurking just over the horizon. Fast mounting inflation coinciding with a balance of payments crisis and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government's delayed return to the IMF loan programme have together caused what could best be described as an unprecedented and imminent perfect storm.

Meanwhile, the failure of the ruling class to appreciate the gravity of a rapidly worsening security outlook has just added to the intensity of the storm. In brief, Pakistan has fast become the proverbial titanic surrounded by a powerful storm in a vast ocean with no relief in sight close by.

The country's mounting policy failures have only been made worse by the likes of Finance Minister Ishaq Dar who is now almost begging for a resumption of the IMF loan, not long after he publicly proclaimed his 'I don't care' about the IMF line early December.

And while political lift in public confidence, a potentially painful reform plan risks failing quickly.

return of Maryam Nawaz to Pakistan to lead the ruling party in their next election campaign, more Pakistani security personnel fell in the line of duty during terrorist attacks. Is the interior minister still fully in command of his ministry? That question has become increasingly pressing as bloodshed mounts across the country.

Averting Pakistan's looming disaster is more about stabilizing the state and its institutions than successfully carrying the democratic process forward. Indeed, the next round of elections may throw up a clear majority rule in favour of a single party or a group of well knit allies.

Meeting the challenge requires Pakistan to be slapped with an 'economic emergency' of a kind never seen before. That must be the bottom line as Pakistan faces a set of unprecedented pitfalls.

As Pakistan works towards the goal of an export jump, the country must first radically curb luxury imports that have become a major drain on the dwindling foreign currency reserves.

Monday's power failure must propel Pakistan's ruling elite to embark on a set of emergency reforms that begin to tackle real-life challenges immediately.

Meanwhile, the failure of the ruling class to appreciate the gravity of a rapidly worsening security outlook has just added to the intensity of the storm.

In memory of Latif Lala

Mohsin Dawar

With the passing away of Advocate Latif Afridi, progressives and democrats have lost an important leader and one of the finest human beings we had.

Latif Lala, a progressive Marxist, had lived an extraordinary life of belief in the simple principle of fighting injustice.

In a securitized, extractive and oppressive system that has overseen grave injustices against certain communities or expropriated their resources, Lala emerged as a strong voice of the

voiceless. Where others feared to tread the difficult path, Lala never minced his words regarding oppression by the powerful, or in defence of individual liberty or rule of law.

Despite massive pressure, he stood like a rock beside me during a particularly difficult time and led the panel of lawyers that represented me and others in court.

While we mourn the loss of one of the most sane, courageous and profoundly good human beings, we must ask ourselves one fundamental question: what shall we do to respond to the tasks of building a progressive and democratic society true to the ideals of democracy, rule of law and freedom from violence and terror?

Digital inclusion

The early years of the coronavirus pandemic brought so many changes to our lifestyle, including the way we conduct businesses. During the first two tumultuous years of this natural catastrophe, people's movement was greatly restricted, forcing them to adopt alternative lifestyles.

This shift led to a phenomenal surge in e-commerce which still seems to be on the rise, prompting many countries to promote digital skills that may enable their young people to find multiple sources of employment.

A report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) concludes: 'as lockdowns became the new normal, businesses and consumers increasingly 'went digital', providing and purchasing more goods and services online, raising e-commerce's share of global retail trade from 14 per cent in 2019 to about 17 per cent in 2020.'

This surge was witnessed in almost every continent and region. The UNCTAD report noted that an online marketplace in Latin America 'sold twice as many items per day in the second quarter of 2020 compared with the same period of the previous year.'

Kazakhstan, the online share of retail sales increased from 5 per cent in 2019 to 9.4 per cent in 2020. Thailand saw downloads of shopping apps jump 60 per cent in just one week during March 2020.'

Many governments tried to take advantage of the situation by promoting digital skills and drafting plans to ensure the growth of e-commerce. The report said: 'Costa Rica's government initiated a platform for businesses without an online presence, and a smartphone app and texting service to facilitate trade among producers of agricultural, meat and fish products. In Africa, Senegal ran an information, education and awareness campaign on the benefits of e-commerce across all segments of the population. In Asia, Indonesia launched a capacity-building programme to expedite digitalization and digitalization among micro, small, and medium enterprises.'

The e-commerce sector saw a 'dramatic' rise in its share of all retail sales, from 16 per cent to 19 per cent in 2020. Estimates suggest that the digital retail economy experienced the most growth in South Korea, where internet sales increased from around one in five transactions in 2019, to more than one in four last year.

According to the UN website, the UK 'saw a spike in online transactions over the same period, from 15.8 to 23.3 per cent; so too did China (from 20.7 to 24.9 per cent), the US (11 to 14

per cent), Australia (6.3 to 9.4 per cent), Singapore (5.9 to 11.7 per cent) and Canada (3.6 to 6.2 per cent). Online business-to-consumer (B2C) sales for the world's top 13 companies stood at \$2.9 trillion in 2020. Overall, global e-commerce sales jumped to \$26.7 trillion in 2019, up four per cent from a year earlier.'

It seems that Pakistan has been slow in responding to the challenges posed by the pandemic. Only a few government institutions have launched programmes to equip young people with digital skills so that they can take advantage of this rising trend of e-commerce and online shopping.

In 2020, the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) in collaboration with the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) launched the Revitalizing Youth Enterprise (RYE) project. It trained young people aged between 16 and 24 in high-demand digital skills. Around 75 per cent of the participants were in the 18-24 age bracket, and the remaining 25 per cent were in the age bracket of 16-18.

Around 200 poor students from Karachi, Sukkur, Multan and Bahawalpur were selected for the training programme. The students were offered short courses on digital marketing, social media management, e-commerce and graphic design. Girls and women also participated in this online project that helped them earn income

in a conservative society where going out and working in offices and factories is difficult for most women.

This training was useful for students of religious seminaries as well. One madrassah student who got enrolled in the social media and digital marketing course managed to get a client who paid him Rs28,000 for marketing his products.

Pakistan's unemployment rate for 2021 was 4.35 per cent, a 0.05 per cent increase from 2020. Unemployment is one of the reasons forcing our young people to leave the country. A recent survey by an Islamabad-based institution shows that an overwhelming majority of the youth want to leave Pakistan where employment opportunities are shrinking. The future seems even bleak.

From graduates of high-end colleges and universities to an overwhelming majority of students from religious seminaries, most people fail to find work. Pakistan has over 36,000 registered seminaries. Over two million students study there. Most of them do not have modern skills required to find a place in the country's job market. Such digital skills projects could be a way for them to find decent sources of income.

The Ministry of Information Technology also claims that it has launched several projects

that will train over 3.5 million young people in digital skills. It is planning to launch another digital skills project, over 800,000 students have already registered. The ministry claims that it is also working with the Punjab government to launch a project for freelancers.

But many experts believe that these training programmes are not enough. The PPF, the NRSP and other institutions should establish digital hubs which should coordinate with manufacturing units, factories, industrial concerns and service industries and learn about their needs. They should prepare the youth in a way that they could be accommodated there. These hubs should be a bridge between these trainees and businesses.

Many young people, especially from rural areas and less-developed regions, do not know enough about employment and skill opportunities. Proper guidance and training programmes will help them acquire the required skills. Also, digital skills training should be mandatory at the school level. If students of Grade 7 and 8 start learning basic courses of the digital world at the school level, they will be in a better position to hone their skills at the college and university levels.

The government should set up dedicated colleges to promote practical education instead of forcing students to study thick books of theory that are less important in professional life.

Climate optimism

Rizwan Basir

Pakistan has once again made a strong case for foreign funding for its flood recovery efforts. It has raised around \$10 billion, more than the required amount of \$8 billion to rebuild the areas damaged by the recent floods.

These pledges were made by the international community at the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan in Geneva.

This is the first time the UN has come up with a financing system to help vulnerable countries make up for the losses caused by climate change. The fact that Pakistan has successfully met its financing targets is laudable.

The largest commitment of \$4.2 billion has come from the Islamic Development Bank Group. The World Bank has pledged \$2 billion. The funds will help the government build a more resilient Pakistan and an economy which is dynamic and sustainable.

Like COP27 last year,

the Geneva moot has proven to be a success for Pakistan. The country continues to cultivate a strong sense of empathy and responsibility among the international community - two values which have remained absent from the system for years.

The global calendar of climate change events for 2023 is ripe with opportunities. From COP28 to sustainable finance summits and everything in between, climate diplomats around the world have a chance to turn these fragments of climate action plan into sustained and structured development for addressing climate change. To do so, a few necessary measures are needed.

First, vulnerable countries must keep seeking unity to pave the way for amplifying their voice in the international arena. This is not wishful thinking. We have already seen how developing countries worked together at COP27 and asked rich nations to set up the Loss and Damage fund. At the beginning of COP27, John Kerry had said that the creation of the Loss and Damage fund "is just not going to happen." But it did happen. Now, COP28 - set to take place in Dubai this year - might also be a perfect opportunity to ensure that the developed world launches targets to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels. Second, the Loss and Damage fund as well as the Global Shield

Project must get implemented as quickly as possible.

In its 2023 Emergency Watchlist, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) notes, "2022 has shown that the role of climate change in accelerating the global humanitarian crisis is undeniable." It reports food insecurity as a key threat multiplier for regions facing climate risk in 2023.

Last, multilateral climate funds - especially larger ones such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) - need to become part of the climate emergency discourse. Of all the funds raised by Pakistan for its recovery thus far, none has come from the funds whose core mandate is to support climate action. These two reasons could explain this: first, the funds do not have a separate financing window to address climate emergencies; and second, their processes for accessing financing are crippled with unnecessary bureaucratic protocols - ultimately depriving countries in need from timely financing.

The time to act is now: the climate-vulnerable developing world needs to get together and take advantage of climate optimism. The year 2023 has to be the year when the international community embraces the values of empathy and responsibility and takes serious steps towards climate action.

Cold wave in Sindh likely to persist till Jan 27: Met office

KARACHI: Ongoing cold wave likely to persist in Sindh till 27th January, Met Office said in its weather report on Wednesday.

Minimum temperature in Karachi recorded 7.5 degree Celsius today. It may remain 6-8 degree Celsius in Hyderabad, Thatta, Sujawal and Badin districts, Met Office said in its weather forecast.

Minimum temperature may drop to 2-4 degree Celsius in

Sukkur, Ghotki, Larkana, Qambar-Shahdadkot, Kashmore, Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Jamshoro, Dadu, Khairpur, Tharparker and Umerkot districts of Sindh, according to Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD).

Temperature may drop to 3-5 degree Celsius in Shaheed Benazirabad, Naushahro Feroze, Sanghar, Matiari, Mirpur Khas, Tando Muhammad Khan and

Tando Allah Yar, Met Office predicted.

People have been advised to take precautionary measure during the cold wave.

PMD forecast rainfall and snowfall on mountains in Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, north-eastern Punjab, Islamabad, Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan on Wednesday (today). Some areas in KP and Kashmir could receive moderate to heavy rainfall and snowfall. INP



ISLAMABAD: Shazia Marri, Federal Minister, and Chairperson BISP, chairing a meeting with a World Bank delegation.

ECP de-notifies 43 more PTI MNAs

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday de-notified 43 more Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members of the National Assembly (MNAs) following the acceptance of their resignations by NA Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf.

After the announcement of PTI MNAs' return to the National Assembly, the federal government made a move to accept their resignations in an apparent bid to reduce the number of opposition lawmakers.

The de-notified PTI MNAs include Riaz Fatyana, Sardar Tariq Hussain, Mohammad Yaqub Sheikh, Muraza Iqbal, Sardar Mohammad Khan Leghari, Zile Humma, Rukhsana Naveed, Ghazala Saifi, Nouseen Hamid, Sobia Kamal Khan and others.

Earlier, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) received resignations of 43 more MNAs of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has accepted and forwarded 43 resignations of the PTI MNAs to the ECP for approval.

Prior to this the PTI Secretary General Asad Umar in his tweet said the PTI's 44 MNAs had decided to withdraw their resignations. He said the PTI has been demanding the NA speaker to accept all the resignations in one go but he remained reluctant to do the same as he announced to approve the resignations one by one after meeting with the lawmakers. It is pertinent to mention here that after the announcement of PTI MNAs' return to the

National Assembly, the federal government made a move to accept their resignations in an apparent bid to reduce the strength of opposition lawmakers.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had decided to resign from the National Assembly on April 11 last year, minutes before the election of Shehbaz Sharif as the new prime minister.

Prior to this the PTI Secretary General Asad Umar in his tweet said the PTI's 44 MNAs had decided to withdraw their resignations. He said the PTI has been demanding the NA speaker to accept all the resignations in one go but he remained reluctant to do the same as he announced to approve the resignations one by one after meeting with the lawmakers. INP

Don't make public scapegoat, bitter pill of IMF's conditions should be fed to elite also: PEW

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) has said that the only option available to Pakistan is accepting strict conditions of the IMF but instead making of the public a scapegoat, this bitter pill of IMF conditions should be fed to the elite also.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, Chairman PEW Muhammad Aslam Khan stressed that all the unnecessary government expenditure and all privileges of the ruling classes should be abolished so that the people get a few sighs of relief.

He said that the elites have completely hijacked the country's system, due to which Pakistan has been entering from one crisis to another.

Now the plunder of the elite has increased to such an extent that the country's integrity is in danger, he added.

Aslam Khan observed that not a single ruler of Pakistan has ever worked seriously to eradicate elitism, correct the direction of the economy, improve governance,

eliminate corruption, reduce unemployment and get rid of debts.

The rulers did not have any positive target and they never preferred to work within their means but they always preferred to spend heavily and always ran the country with the borrowed money, he said and added that the one who is an expert in begging is considered a great economist therefore the whole country has become addicted to loans.

At that time, Chairman PEW said the only way to maintain the state is debt while addition to loans blocked the way of industrial and agricultural development in the country.

When the western countries turned their backs on Pakistan, we went to Saudi Arabia, China, and the Gulf states, who gave loans worth billions of dollars to Pakistan but now they are no more interested in lending to Pakistan.

He was of the view that in the prevailing status of the country's economy, neither

industrial production nor exports were possible without the large-scale imports of raw materials, machinery and parts.

Aslam Khan said, "A nation that makes atomic bombs does not have the ability to make simple motorcycle engines or power looms. The agricultural country does not have the ability to manufacture tractors, basic agricultural equipment, chemicals, and parts, due to which pulses, vegetables, fruits, cotton, and wheat have to be imported."

In Pakistan, all emphasis is placed on the development of property and the stock market, while industry and agriculture are neglected, he added.

The Chairman PEW said that due to the lack of the required number of oil refineries to meet the country's needs, billions of dollars are being lost annually and this is a waste of resources. The wastage of resources continues and there are no signs of any change for the sake of Pakistan. INP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Human Rights, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada chaired the 3rd meeting of inter-ministerial and inter-provincial steering committee for National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights.

ECP proposes polling dates for Punjab, KP elections

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday proposed dates for holding elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Election Commission wrote letters to principal secretaries of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governors about the polling day.

The ECP has suggested to hold general elections in Punjab on any date between 9 April to 13 April while in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa it proposed polling day on any day between 15 April to 17 April.

The governors will decide about the final

date for polling and inform the ECP.

The Election Commission of Pakistan on Tuesday had said that it was ready to hold elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. An important meeting was held in this connection at the ECP under the chair of Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja.

The meeting was told that preparations regarding setting up of polling stations and voters' lists had been made. The CEC directed to spur efforts for conducting the polls in both the provinces.

The meeting decided to release the election schedule after governors of both the provinces would give their polling dates.

The meeting was attended by the ECP members, provincial election commissioners and officials of all the wings of the commission.

The meeting mulled over the preparations for the election in Punjab and KP provinces as well as by-polls on the vacant seats.

The CEC asked the authorities to expedite appointments of presiding officers and other polling staff for the elections. INP

India invites FM Bilawal for Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting: reports

NEW DELHI: India has invited Pakistan's foreign minister to a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) that is being held in May, Indian media reported on Wednesday, signalling a possible thaw in relations between the nuclear-armed rivals.

The invitation came days after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called for talks with India over all outstanding issues,

including India-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IJK), before clarifying that talks cannot take place until the "illegal actions of August 5, 2019" are reversed.

Just a month ago, there were street protests in India over Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhattu Zardari's remarks calling Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi the "butcher of Gujarat" on the sidelines of the United Nations Security

Council meeting. India called Bilawal's comments "uncivilised".

Foreign ministry spokespeople for the two countries did not immediately respond to requests from Reuters for comment on the media reports that Bilawal had been invited to the SCO foreign ministers meeting being held in Goa.

According to the Indian Express newspaper, the invitation from Indian External. INP

Pakistan strongly condemns desecration of the Holy Quran in Netherlands

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan strongly condemns the despicable act of desecration of the Holy Quran in the Netherlands on January 22, 2023.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the Foreign Office spokesperson said, "It is undoubtedly a provocative Islamophobic hate crime committed under the guise of freedom of expression. Such offensive acts deeply hurt the feelings of 1.5 billion Muslims around the world and can create disharmony among the international community."

He said that Pakistan has always maintained that freedom

of expression comes with responsibilities. We also believe that it is the responsibility of national governments and the international community at large to prevent such vile acts, which are perpetrated with the ulterior motive to provoke and incite religious hatred and violence.

The FO spokesperson said that the international community should raise its collective voice against Islamophobia and work together to promote inter-faith harmony and peaceful coexistence. That was the spirit behind the resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2022 to mark 15

March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia.

Pakistan's concerns are being conveyed to the authorities in the Netherlands. We urge them to be mindful of the sentiments of the people of Pakistan and the Muslims around the world and take steps to prevent such hateful and Islamophobic acts.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the Foreign Office spokesperson said, "It is undoubtedly a provocative Islamophobic hate crime committed under the guise of freedom of expression. Such offensive acts deeply hurt the feelings of 1.5 billion Muslims. INP

Goldmine exploration project worth Rs48m launched in Attock: Add. Secretary

ATTOCK: Additional Secretary Mines and Mineral Department Punjab Capt (Retd) Waqar Rasheed has said that the department has launched a multi-million drilling project on exploration of gold mines in Attock in collaboration with Geological Survey of Pakistan.

This was stated by him while briefing the media at the Indus River near Attock Khurd on Wednesday. Technical experts of the Punjab Minerals and Mines Department were also present on the occasion.

Responding to media queries, Capt (Retd) Waqar Rasheed said that the evaluation of the project will be completed with an estimated cost of Rupees 48.2 million. He said that the drone and magnet technology is being utilized during the underground drilling along the Indus River near Attock Khurd to get sampling of the gold mines.

He said that Province of the Punjab is full of natural resources while every district of the province has its own resources of land structure of petrography.

The additional secretary further said that these mines and minerals are national assets which are being preserved. He said all out efforts are also being made to utilize these mines in the best interest of prosperity and socio-economic development of the country. INP

52 furniture shops gutted, six houses damaged in Lahore fire

LAHORE: At least 52 furniture shops were gutted completely and six houses partially damaged causing millions of rupees loss due to a blaze here in the wee hours of Wednesday.

Rescue sources said that fire initiated from a furniture godown in Baghbanpura Shalimar Bagh area of Lahore engulfed the surrounding shops and houses.

Rescue teams and fighters reached the scene, vacated the surrounding houses and started efforts to extinguish the blaze.

The fire was brought under control after hectic efforts of six hours. Meantime, 52 furniture shops were gutted completely and six houses were partially damaged rendering millions of rupees loss but no causality was reported due to blaze. INP

First-Ever Shelter Home for transgender initiated in Capital

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) on Wednesday initiated the first-ever Shelter Home for the transgender community in the federal capital.

During a ceremony held in PBM's Shelter Home in Tarlai area of Islamabad, Managing Director PBM, Amir Fida Paracha inaugurated the project in the presence of Director General Ministry of Human Rights, Muhammad Arshad and other officers.

Addressing the ceremony, Managing Director PBM said we are determined to explore every possible solution to mitigate the problems of vulnerable community of the country.

"In order to fulfill the need of spreading hope and happiness among the deprived transgender community in a protected and hygienic environment, PBM and Ministry of Human Rights has launched the joint initiative," Mr. Paracha stated. Elucidating the PBM's initiatives for medical treatment and rehabilitation of indigent persons including transgender community, Managing Director PBM told the new initiative will serve the susceptible transgender persons with temporary night stay, breakfast and dinner in respectable and neat and clean atmosphere. INP

APHC-AJK remembers martyrs of Handwara massacre

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter held a seminar at its office in Islamabad, today, to pay tribute to the martyrs of Handwara massacre.

At least 21 Kashmiris were mercilessly martyred by Indian troops in Handwara town of Kupwara district in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir on this day in 1990. Speakers at the seminar presided over by the APHC-AJK Convener, Mehmood Ahmed Saghar, said that Handwara massacre. INP

NOTICE FOR INVITING PREQUALIFICATION

The Deputy Director Agriculture OPWM Ziarat invites application from eligible applicants for works under the project installation of Bore for Agriculture Purpose in Ziarat/PSDP No. 107(Z/2022.3455) 2022-23 TSE-222301231493

Only electronic bid will be submitted, no physical bid is required. Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Applicants: 5 years experience from the date of registration with the regulator. Turnover Rupees 170,000,000. Registration with Income Tax. Registration with BRA. Presence in Active Tax Payer List. Capabilities with respect to construction or manufacturing. Capabilities with respect to personal, equipment and plant. The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. In case of litigation history (attach affidavit on Rs 100 non judicial stamp paper duly attested for both cases, fresh affidavit during response time will be accepted. Registration with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) C-3 and above (Upto 500 million) in relevant category and specialized codes CE09 (water supply). The applicant must submit last 5 years Bank credit line certificate or latest Bank Statement to ensure financial status of the firm. The applicant must submit Audit Report/ Audit Balance Sheet of FY 2017-18 to 2021-22. Prequalification Documents: The NIP & Prequalification documents can be downloaded from E-submission BPPRA website www.bppra.gov.pk under above mentioned TSE. Prequalification Documents Fee: Rs. 3,000 must be submitted under head account Agric: Receipt (C03136). Issuance of Prequalification Documents: From the date of publication of NIP to 13 February 2023 till 12:00PM. Last date of submission: application can only be submitted electronically latest by 13 February 2023 till 12:00PM. Opening: all application will be opened on same day at 01:00PM on EPPS System Address: Opp: ZTBL near to NADRA Office Ziarat. Contact No. 03327856292

PRO No.2108/25-01-2023
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NEW YORK: Ambassador Aamir Khan Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN delivered statement at the Special Meeting on the "Social and Economic Measures to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" at ECOSOC Chamber United Nation.

Pakistan should complete IMF program despite tough conditions: Experts

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan needs to fulfill its commitments made to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to complete the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) program, experts said.

They believe that fulfilling the IMF's requirements would not only provide some much-needed cash to Pakistan, but also help restore the trust of investors and lenders.

Pakistan entered a \$6 billion IMF program in 2019, which was increased to \$7 billion earlier this year. The program's 9th review is currently pending, with remote talks being held between IMF officials

and the government for the release of \$1.18 billion. The IMF's Executive Board approved the revival of Pakistan's EFF program in August last year after suspension of few months.

Dr Ashfaq Hassan, Dean of National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) Business School, said while talking to WealthPK that Pakistan must fulfill its commitments to the IMF.

He said that Pakistan is running out of options due to economic crisis. "The government will have to impose more taxes to achieve the revenue targets as it prom-

ised to the IMF," he said. The IMF is the only way forward during the current situation, he said. Although the conditions of IMF were tough, but Pakistan has to follow.

"It is a fact that people of Pakistan are suffering due to inflation and additional taxes under the IMF program," he underlined, adding that securing the IMF tranche is crucial to unlocking funding from bilateral and multilateral partners, as the country's forex reserves stand critically low. He said the IMF wants the Government of Pakistan to impose additional taxes and raise the prices of certain commodities to make. INP

TENDER NOTICE

The ADMINISTRATION (COLLEGE DIRECTORATE) invites bids from eligible Bidders for supply of following items. **Tender Fee Rs. 1000/- and Bid Security 2% TSE-222301231731**

S.No	Class of Object
1	Educational Lab Equipment (Total Item(s) Count: 264)
2	Medical Equipment and Accessories (Total Item(s) Count: 264)
3	Tools and General Machinery (Total Item(s) Count: 264)
4	Material Handling and Conditioning and Storage Machinery and their Accessories and Supplies (Total Item(s) Count: 264)
5	ICT Equipment (Network, surveillance devices, storage devices, Office Equipment) (Total Item(s) Count: 264)

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: 3 Assignments of Similar Nature and Complexity 2,000,000 in Previous 2 Turn over of at least 4,000,000 PKR in 2 Subsequent Previous Years Presence in Active Tax Payer List. Sales Tax Certificate. The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. Must agree to serve the Contract within 30-04-2023. The Bidder must have functional corporate office in Balochistan having PTCL Phone & Fax No. Must unconditionally agree with all the instructions, terms & conditions specified in the bidding documents & contract agreement. Bidder Must Provide sample. Manufacturer Authorization is required. Procedure of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure. Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Deposit at Call of 2% 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 under-signed, 1,000 PKR Issuance of tender Documents: From the date of publication of NIT to 14 February, 2023 during office hours on working days. Last Date of bid submission: The Tenders must be submitted latest by 14 February, 2023 till 10:30 AM. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under-signed at 11:30 AM. Address: Planning Section Directorate of Colleges & Higher Education Quetta Phone no: 3333309369 Fax no: 0819202676 Email: mgulsabirs@gmail.com

PRQ No.2097/25-01-2023

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PM Shehbaz felicitates Chris Hipkins on becoming New Zealand's PM

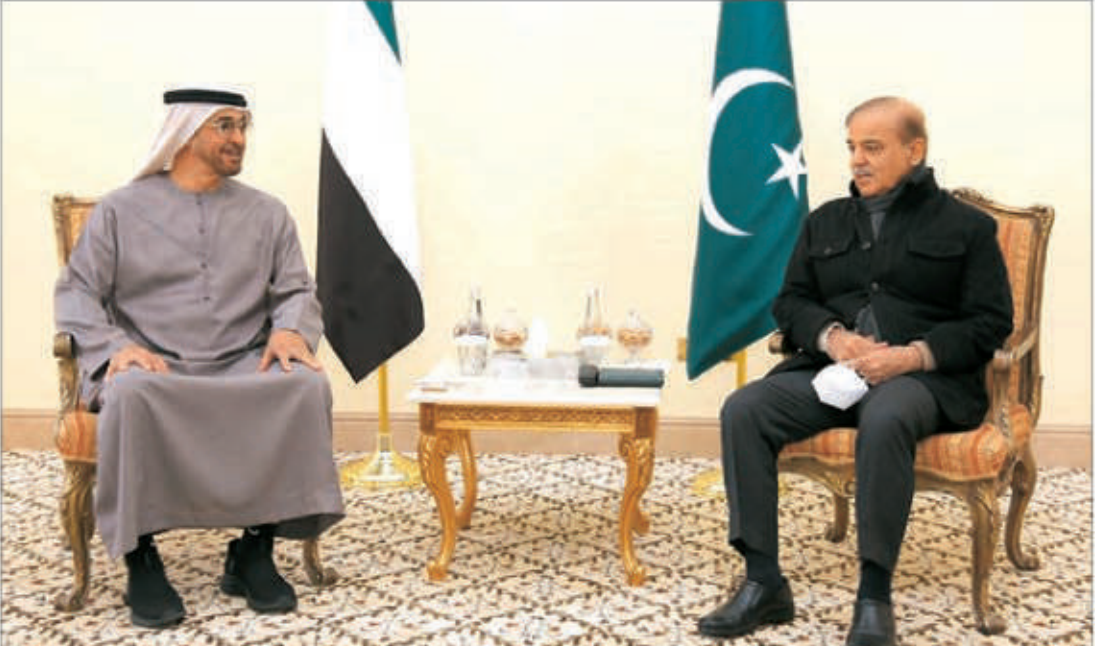
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday congratulated Chris Hipkins on becoming the new prime minister of New Zealand.

In a tweet, the premier wrote he looked forward to working with him to strengthen and expand the relations between the two friendly countries. "I extend my best wishes to him," he concluded.

Earlier Labour leader Chris Hipkins was sworn in as New Zealand's prime minister in a formal ceremony on Wednesday, following the resignation of outgoing Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern last week.

The Labour party elected former COVID-19 Response and Police minister Hipkins, 44, to lead the party and the country on Sunday. This comes after the surprise resignation of Ardern, 42, who said she had "no more in the tank" to lead the country.

Hundreds gathered in the grounds of Parliament as Ardern left for the final time, hugging each of her members of parliament in turn, with many looking visibly emotional.



RAHIM YAR KHAN (UAE): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif I call on with President of United Arab Emirates (UAE) Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan at the Chandana Airport.

Sheikh Rashid slams ECP over arrest of Fawad Chaudhry

RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said on Wednesday the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had become a "political party" in the arrest of PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry.

The PTI leader was arrested from his residence in Lahore after ECP Secretary Umer Hameed registered a case against him for threatening the members of the election commission in a speech.

In a series of tweets, the former interior minister said the ECP's duty was to hold elections in the country and not to file cases against people, adding that the arrest of Mr Chaudhry had exposed the intentions of the government. He claimed the government had planned "something else" in guise of elections.

Mr Ahmed predicted a round of arresting people would be started before the IMF programme and it would prove a last nail in the coffin of the government.

Referring to depleting foreign exchange reserves and IMF's conditions, he said the prevailing economic and power crises would prove a bone in the throat for the government. He said the country had come to a halt, adding that the arrest of Fawad Chaudhry would add to the political tension.

"Now decisions will be taken on roads as the country is on the course of chaos instead of elections," he said, adding that the people would not trust the results of elections as the ECP had lost public confidence.

He said those where were demanding elections were trying to evade them. The AML chief said beneficiaries of amendments to the NAB laws would soon face accountability in the court of public opinion.

PTI in the habit of defending its 'immoral, undemocratic' actions, says Saad Rafique

LAHORE: Railways and Aviation Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique hit out at the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) saying it was accustomed to defend its immoral and undemocratic actions.

Taking to Twitter, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader said Imran Khan spread chaos and misled people in the guise of his moto of change.

He said the PTI leaders disrespected the term of Riyasat-e-Madinah with their unholy actions and statements. They weakened the foundations of Pakistan and its time for them to face the music.

Pakistan reports 12 coronavirus cases in 24 hours

LAHORE: Pakistan has reported no death in the last 24 hours by novel coronavirus as the number of confirmed positive cases surged to 1,576,201. The nationwide tally of fatalities stood at 30,640 on Wednesday.

According to the latest figures issued by the National Institute of Health (NIH), at least 12 people were tested positive for Covid across the country in the past 24 hours.

Pakistan has conducted 4,056 tests in the past 24 hours, out of which 12 people were tested positive. The Covid positivity ratio was recorded at 0.30 per cent.

Bids to smuggle 120 bags flour, 52 bags wheat foiled, two held

RAWALPINDI: The police and food department during joint actions foiled two bids to smuggle 120 bags flour and 52 bags wheat, impounded the vehicles and arrested the drivers.

The Nasirabad Police foiled a bid to smuggle 120 bags flour, impounded the vehicle and arrested the driver identified as Roohullah.

PM urges youth to apply for loans on easy terms under new scheme

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that under the PM Youth Business & Agriculture Scheme, the young people can apply for a loan up to Rs7.5 million on easy terms conditions while encouraging women, transgender and differently abled people to apply and contribute to national development.

Taking to his Twitter handle, Prime Minister Shehbaz wrote: "I launched PM's Youth Business & Agriculture Loan Scheme yesterday. This new scheme builds on a number of youth development programs.

From PEEF loans to laptop scheme to self-employment scheme, PML-N has demonstrated its commitment to youth empowerment under leadership of MNS.

"Under the current Loan Scheme, the youth can apply for a loan up to Rs75 lac on easy

terms & conditions (there is no interest on loan up to Rs5 lac). I strongly encourage our women, transgenders & differently abled people to apply & contribute to national development."

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced the "Aasan Qarza Program" (an easy loan program) for the youth on Tuesday.

The PM announced that under this program, his government would provide an easy loan of Rs0.5 million to Rs1.5 million.

PM Shehbaz made this announcement during his address to a ceremony of the easy loan program for youth in Islamabad yesterday.

Youth will be provided interest-free loans up to Rs0.5 million and from Rs0.5 million to Rs1.5 million at an interest rate of 7 percent, the PM said adding that these loans will be returned in seven years.

Court orders medical examination of Fawad Chaudhry

LAHORE: A local court in Lahore on Wednesday ordered to carry out a medical examination of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry.

The PTI stalwart was presented before the court by the Islamabad Police in tight security to seek a transitory remand to transfer the former federal minister to the federal capital.

At the outset of the hearing, the lawyers of Fawad Chaudhry objected to handcuffing the former minister. Police should tell on what ground my client has been taken into custody, Chaudhry's lawyer said in his arguments before the court.

He also went on to say there was no need for transit remand. The court on the demand of lawyers, ordered police to present

a medical report of Chaudhry before the court and adjourned the hearing for a while.

During the hearing, police and lawyers of Chaudhry exchanged hot words. Earlier, upon arrival at the cantonment katchery, Chaudhry said he is unaware of what charges he has been arrested by Islamabad police.

Chaudhry said is a former federal minister and should be respected accordingly. Earlier in the day, Islamabad police arrested Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader and former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry from his residence over charges of 'threatening' Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) members.

Court reserves verdict on Zardari's plea in park lane reference

ISLAMABAD: An accountability court on Wednesday reserved a decision over a petition of former president Asif Ali Zardari in the Park Lane reference.

A petition filed by former president Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday stated that the case is not in the jurisdiction of the accountability court after the NAB law amendment in 2022.

The court should either send the reference back to NAB or acquit him, the petitioner told the court.

Zardari's counsel Farooq H. Naik appeared before the court, which reserved its decision after arguments of the two sides.

The Islamabad High Court has ruled recently in Adam Amin Chaudhry's case that a reference could not be taken back, the cases only to be transferred to other relevant courts, the judge remarked.

"The high court's decision not

relevant to this case, it is only applicable to a case of amnesty scheme and tax," Zardari's lawyer argued.

NAB Prosecutor Usman Masood opposed the acquittal plea and said that 1.5 billion amount was borrowed in this case, which later increased to an amount of 2.8 billions. Former president and PPP co-chairman Zardari, his sister Faryal Talpur and other accused face charges of corruption through fake bank accounts and embezzlement in the financial facility for Park Lane Private Limited and Parthenon (Pvt) Limited. The Park Lane case being investigated under different sections of the National Accountability Ordinance (NAO) 1999, and the Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2010, over Zardari's alleged involvement in a loan and its misappropriation.

She then travelled to Government House, where she tendered her resignation to King Charles representative in New Zealand, Governor General Cindy Kiro.

Hipkins and his deputy Carmel Sepuloni - the first person of Pacific Islander descent to hold the role - were then sworn in, in a ceremony lasting a few minutes.

Hipkins, who has so far refused to comment on his policies since being elected leader, will hold his first cabinet meeting later on Wednesday.

Known as "Chippy", Hipkins is well-known to New Zealanders for his competence in tackling COVID-19, though he acknowledged some mistakes in handling the pandemic and faces a tough battle to retain power in an October general election. A 1News-Kantar poll released in December had Labour's support falling to 33% from 40% at the start of 2022, meaning Labour would not be able to form a majority even with traditional coalition partner the Green Party at 9%. The opposition National Party has benefited from Labour's decline.

Inequitable distribution of power, resources base of violence: Ambassador Aamir

NEW YORK: Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, Ambassador Aamir Khan has emphasized the importance of enabling circumstances and potential triggers of conflict around the world as grievances over inequitable distribution of power and resources appear to be a fundamental motivating factor in the commission of mass violence against ethnic, sectarian, or political groups.

Ambassador Aamir delivered statement at the Special Meeting on the "Social and Economic Measures to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity".

While mentioning the socio-economic risk factors, the most common remain, situations of armed conflict, extreme poverty and defamation and political, economic or social injustice, he noted with concern that "societies that have already experienced serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law or atrocity crimes, or where these are currently taking place, can be more prone to further atrocity crimes".

"These are typically violations of civil and political rights, but they may include also severe restrictions to economic, social and cultural rights, often linked to patterns of discrimination of certain groups, populations or individuals" he said. He drew attention to one specific circumstance where provisions of the principle of protection should apply in "situations of foreign occupation or alien domination, which can easily spiral into genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity". "We would request the views of those who propagate the R2P concept on the need for collective action

to protect the people of occupied Palestine or of Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir," he insisted. "For more than 7 decades, India has, through force and fraud, denied the right of self-determination to the Kashmiri people, in violation of multiple resolutions of the Security Council prescribing a free and fair plebiscite," said Ambassador Khan.

He also expressed concern on a systematic campaign under way in India by the ruling adherents of Hindutva, saying "Muslims are murdered by lynch mobs, subjected to periodic pogroms and robbed of their livelihoods and citizenship, under the patronage and with the encouragement of the ruling BJP-RSS Government". He mentioned a BBC documentary has also examined the pogrom against Muslims during riots in the western state of Gujarat in 2002. "This had 'all the hallmarks of an ethnic cleansing' according to the Documentary," he added. "Noticing this dangerous trend, Professor Gregory Stanton, the founder of Genocide Watch, has warned that genocide of Muslims could very well happen in India," he said. "Such crimes fall squarely within the ambit of the World Summit's decisions on the responsibility to protect". he said. "The concept of 'Responsibility to Protect (R2P)', as articulated in paras-138 and 139 of the World Summit Outcome documents, continues to evoke varying perspectives as well as conflicting interpretations" The Deputy Permanent Representative expressed deep concern that even after several years, a consensus on the scope of the principle has not been achieved and its application remains driven solely by political INP.

Fawad's arrest a slap in the face of our democracy: Qureshi

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi said arrest of Fawad Chaudhry, was a slap in the face of country's democracy and rule of law.

Taking to Twitter, former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi asked that under what charges Fawad Chaudhry was arrested without warrant. Stop playing with Pakistan otherwise situation could get worse and get out of control, he warned.

The PTI stalwart was arrested from his residence in Lahore in wee hours of Wednesday after he was booked under sections 153A, 506 and 124 A of the Penal Code of Pakistan on a complaint lodged by the Election Commission of Pakistan Secretary Umer Hameed.

Police produced Mr Chaudhry in a court in handcuffs hours after of his arrest and sought one-day transit remand.

In a short media talk, the PTI leader said security had been placed in a way as a "terrorist" was being brought in court, adding that he was unaware of the charges levelled against him.

Three held with 52 cell phones, 34 laptops, 8 PC tablets at Islamabad Airport

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Customs foiled a bid to smuggle dozens of laptops, cell phones, PC tablets and other items worth millions of rupees and arrested three Sharja returned passengers at Islamabad Airport on Wednesday.

According to officials, upon sight of customs team, three Sharja returned passengers leaving their baggage in the airport lounge tried to flee.

However, the customs officials held Akhtar Abbas, Zubair Khan and Ali Raza. During search of the luggage, a drone, 52 smart/iphones, three batteries, 34 laptops, eight tablets and other items worth 10 million rupees were recovered.

During initial investigation, the detainees revealed that it was fifth visit of Akhtar Abbas and first visit of the two others. A case was registered against the nabbed passengers under Customs Act and investigations.

Gwadar will start receiving 100 MWs of electricity from Iran on March 1

ISLAMABAD: Gwadar will have 100 Megawatts of additional electricity from March 1 from Iran, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday quoting Director General Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Qambarani.

"Insha'Allah Gwadar will have 24/7 power supply, this will boost industry, tourism and real estate business in Gwadar," Mr. Qambarani wrote on his Twitter.

To fulfill the electricity needs of Gwadar, the governments of Pakistan and Iran signed an agreement for the supply of additional 100 Megawatts of electricity in June 2022.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif during

his visit to Gwadar last year had directed authorities concerned to complete the project in a short period of time.

Moreover, the Central Development Working Party (CDWP), last June, approved a 132kV transmission line from Jiwan to Gwadar. The project namely the Construction of the 2nd Circuit Stringing of the 132kV, transmission line from Jiwan to Gwadar (94km), will be completed with Rs. 2,322.940 million.

Gwadar relies on imported electricity from Iran and with the construction of the 132kV line, the port city will be connected to the National Grid for the first time.



RAWALPINDI: Assistant Defense Minister for Saudi Arabia Talat Abdullah Alotaibi called on Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Asif.

ECP constitutes tribunal to hear Karachi LG polls rigging cases

KARACHI: The election commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday constituted a tribunal to hear the rigging cases in Karachi LG polls.

As per details, the ECP has constituted the tribunal which includes district and session court judges of Kheman, Malir, south, east, central and Korangi.

The election tribunal is in Hyderabad, Tando Adam Khan, Tando Allahyar, Matyari, Dadu, Jamshoro, Badin and Thatta.

Earlier, the Election Commission of Pakistan released the complete results of all 235 union councils (UCs) in the Karachi Division after the local government (LG) polls. JI Karachi chief Hafiz Naem ur Rehman expressed dissatisfaction with the LG polls' results released by the Election Commission of Pakistan. He said that they will approach the EC Sindh. It is pertinent to note here that both the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf

(PTI) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) accused the Sindh government and ECP of rigging. The election commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday constituted a tribunal to hear the rigging cases in Karachi LG polls.

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Farrukh Habib tries to stop police van shifting Fawad Chaudhry to Islamabad

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Farrukh Habib Wednesday tried to stop police convoy taking Fawad Chaudhry to Islamabad.

Farrukh also engaged in a scuffle with the police in an attempt to stop them from transporting PTI senior leader Fawad Chaudhry.

The video shared on Farrukh Habib's official Twitter account shows the PTI leader was trying to obstruct the motorcade of security officials at a Kala Shah Kaku toll plaza.

In the video, the former minister can be seen standing in front of police vehicle carrying Chaudhry.

The former federal minister was arrested by Islamabad police on Wednesday morning from outside his

residence for "inciting violence against a constitutional institution".

A court in Lahore allowed the police to take PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry to Islamabad.

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QUETTA: Labour busy in placing gas pipe line at Zarghon road.