

# QUETTA VOICE

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Saturday 11  
February, 2023

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**4 killed 15 injured in bus truck collision in Basima**



**Govt must adopt measures to stop foreign currency smuggling: CJP**

## Multi storey time bombs in earthquake prone Quetta Pakistan

Syed Ali Shah

Quetta, Pakistan's south-western city was razed to the ground within 30 seconds on May 31st, 1935 in the aftermath of the deadliest earthquake. The British rulers introduced a specific building code of 30 feet in height after thorough research and studies to avoid human losses in the case of future earthquakes. The building code also outlawed the use of certain materials in roofs, and only wood and tin roofs were permitted. The building code introduced in 1937 defined seven building types.

### Quetta city before the deadliest 1935 earthquake

The British colonial rulers strictly ensured the implementation of the building code. Governments be military or civilians failed to ensure the implementation of the building code after the independence of Pakistan. For some time, the Quetta Municipal Corporation maintained the implementation of the building code. However, that is no more the case as more than 100 feet-high shopping malls, and residential plazas have been constructed in the heart of the city.



Rescue workers at the spot to retrieve the trapped laborers after the collapse of building on Stewart Road: Photo Manan Mandokhail

### A view of Quetta Railway Station before the deadliest 1935 earthquake

A well-placed source in the Quetta Metropolitan Corporation (QMC) revealed that over 500 buildings were constructed

in violation of the building code. Rich owners of plazas and shopping malls constructed buildings right under the nose of the QMC and the Quetta Development Authority (QDA) officials. Simply they greased the palm of the concerned officials and got their maps passed overnights with no objection. The administration was also complicit in this regard.

Poorly constructed build-

ings in violation of the building code have put the lives of citizens in danger. One laborer was killed and four others got injured when an under-construction building collapsed the other day in Quetta's Stewart Road. Despite applications of the residents of the area to the Administrator QMC, the contractor and owner kept continued the construction work in freezing temperatures. Subsequently, the building



A view of Quetta Railway Station before the deadliest 1935 earthquake

collapsed and claiming a human life and injuring another four.

Three points from Balochistan High Court's order regarding building code in Quetta:

1. No building is to be constructed without an approved building plan.
2. No residential building shall be allowed to be converted into a commercial building.
3. No permission shall be granted for the construction of a commercial building in a residential area.

To be precise, Quetta is located in the earthquake red zone. This is neither a political matter nor an economic issue rather it is a matter of human lives. The Balochistan government must form a committee to probe into the construction of buildings in violation of the building code to avert human losses in the future. A lesson must be learned from the deadliest earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

## Pak-China seed cooperation vital for Pakistan's food security; Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal Friday said that the new phase of seed cooperation between Pakistan and China holds key importance for Pakistan to meet the food security challenge in the future. He said that the South Asian country are in dire need of seed cooperation to meet the climate change challenges.

He expressed these views during an event held to mark the successful return of the seeds, on the sidelines of "Celebration of the Return of Pakistani Seeds from Chinese Space Station". China helped



Pakistan take seven herbal seeds to the Chinese space station for space breeding by exposing them to cosmic radiation and micro-gravity to mutate their genes.

In an interview with Xinhua, Ahsan Iqbal said, "Pakistan is very vulnera-

ble to climate change, due to which we need smart agriculture, for which we need new varieties of seeds, which are resistant to the new weather challenges, and which are more suitable to the climate change risks." Liu Xinming, a chief scientist

from China's Ningbo Univer sity, said the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs transferred the seeds to China Manned Space Agency on April 12 last year.

The seeds were launched into outer space carried by Shenzhou-14 spaceship on June 5 2022, and after six months of flying, returned to the earth with the Shenzhou-14 astronaut crew on Dec 4 last year, Liu added.

Atia-tul-Wahab, a professor at the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences, University of Karachi, said her institute proposed the government to send the herbs' seeds to space. "We sent some

grains to the space and kept the same quantity in our laboratory. Now upon their return, we will closely examine them and do their tests at our laboratory. Then both seed varieties will be sowed separately to see the end results through comparison," she said. Atia said that it was for the first time that Pakistan sent seeds to space and it was a landmark achievement for the country, adding that her lab was eyeing for sending food staples including rice, wheat and pulses to space for further research. She said that the herbs sent to space are used in traditional Pakistani medicine, and that. Web Desk

## Two officers martyred in an IED blast in Kohlu Balochistan: ISPR

News Desk

Two Pakistan Army officers were martyred in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast in Balochistan's Kohlu district on Friday, the military media wing said. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said the two officers Major Jawad and Captain Sagheer embraced martyrdom in Balochistan's Kohlu district.



"Based on credible intelligence, a sanitization operation was initiated on Feb 10 in the Kohlu area of Balochistan to deny terrorists any liberty of action," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. During the ensuing sanitization of the area, the ISPR said, an IED exploded close to the leading party.

The ISPR said that a sanitization operation is underway in the area to apprehend perpetrators and enemies of peace.

"Such cowardly acts by inimical elements cannot sabotage the hard-earned peace and prosperity in Balochistan. Security Forces are determined to neutralize their nefarious designs even at the cost of blood and lives," the statement stated.

Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Qaddus Bizenjo strongly condemned the terrorist attack and vowed that the perpetrators of the attack would be brought to justice. In a statement issued after the incident, Mr. Bizenjo said the brave soldiers embraced martyrdom for protecting the motherland. He said the government was determined to wipe out terrorism from Balochistan.



وزیر اعظم ریلیف فنڈ برائے متاثرین زلزلہ ترکیہ

**G-12166**

Account Title:  
Prime Minister's Relief Fund for Türkiye Earthquake Victims

IBAN: PK18NBPA0001004182864740  
Bank: National Bank of Pakistan

وزیر اعظم پاکستان کے قائم کردہ ریلیف فنڈ برائے متاثرین زلزلہ ترکیہ میں دل کھول کر امداد کریں

بشکریہ آل پاکستان نیوز پیپر سوسائٹی

#PMReliefFundForTürkiye #PakStandsWithTürkiye

## Govt must adopt measures to stop foreign currency smuggling: CJP

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Umar Ata Bandial has said that the federal government should adopt measures to stop foreign currency smuggling.

The Chief Justice remarked this on Friday while heading a three-member bench comprising on Justice Ayesha A Malik and Justice Athar Minallah which heard the Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) petition challenging the Lahore High Court (LHC) order regarding collection of Super Tax from large scale industries.



The government had imposed a one-time ten percent tax on industries' profits to ease the impact of the rising inflation on the poor.

During the course of proceedings, the court consolidated all the Super Tax cases and fixed them for hearing next week.

The FBR counsel Faisal Siddiqui said that the LHC had suspended the implementation of its final decision in the case for 60 days.

There were traditions in tax cases where the court orders companies to pay 50 percent of the tax, he added.

Barrister Farogh Naseem, counsel for the industries, said that all petitions of the FBR against the LHC's interim order had become ineffective after the final decision of the Lahore High Court.

The court could not order payment of 50 percent Super Tax as petitions become ineffective, he added.

The Chief Justice said the case could be fixed for the hearing next week. He remarked that the FBR imposed the Super Tax in good faith. He said that it was also known that Shell Pakistan, one of the petitioners, paid taxes in the millions of rupees. Web Desk

## 4 killed 15 injured in bus truck collision in Basima

From Our Correspondent

At least four passengers were killed and 15 injured in a bus truck collision in Balochistan's Basima area on Friday.

Levies sources said the collision left four people dead on the spot and 15 were injured. The injured were rushed to hospital for medical treatment. An emergency was declared in the hospital for treatment of the injured.



## 2 coal miners died inside a coal mine in Dukki Balochistan

Hussain Zarkoon

At least two coal miners died when the rope of a trolley broke inside a coal mine in Balochistan's Dukki district on Friday evening. The rope of the trolley broke and it hit the two coal miners working inside the coal mine, Levies sources said. They said both the miners were dead on the spot. Rescue workers and fellow miners reached the spot and retrieved the dead bodies. The deceased miners have been identified as Akhtar Muhammad son of Shah Nawaz tribe of Alizai tribe of Afghanistan and Khawaj Muhammad son of Faiz Muhammad, a resident of the Qila Saifullah district. The dead bodies were shifted to the hospital and handed over to the heirs after the completion of necessary official procedures.





## QUETTA VOICE

### Balochistan needs inclusive development

Balochistan, the country's resource-rich province is lagging behind all other provinces in terms of key social indicators including education, health, sanitation, clean drinking water etc. Mismanagement, injudicious distribution of development funds coupled with a lack of political commitments are the underlying reasons behind backwardness of the province.

Track record shows, successive governments have always launched politically motivated development schemes to please their influential supporters. Constituency, individual and political schemes always dominated the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) in every year's financial budget. Nexus among the Chief Minister's Secretariat, the Planning Development and Finance Department continue to deprive the constituencies of other lawmakers.

**Opposition's constituencies were ignored**  
Opposition lawmakers constituencies remained ignored during last three-years of former chief minister, Jam Kamal Khan's government. Despite agitation in and outside the assembly, the opposition lawmakers were not able to force government to allocate funds for their constituencies.

This is irony of fate that the mandate of the lawmakers is to frame laws since the assemblies are called legislative assemblies. But legislators are least bothered about the legislation rather they take keen interest in construction of roads, buildings etc. That's why, provincial governments prefer not to hold local bodies elections rather decentralization of development projects.

**Development deficit of Balochistan is likely to be Rs. 100b**  
Balochistan government announced to have allocated Rs. 172 bs for the PSDP during the financial year 2021-22. However, currently the government has more than Rs. 40bs as per the statement of ruling party's Spokesman Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetrar. The province has already spent Rs. 40bs and it has more than 40bs for the remaining year. It means the deficit is close to Rs. 100bs.

Chief Minister Qudus Bizenjo needs to put his house in order and introduce a strict financial policy to ensure completion of development projects. The government should ensure inclusive development and end the practice of exclusive development so that this backward province could come at par with other parts of the country. Action should match words now.



The beleaguered public offices have come under a new wave of employee associations broadening the turf war. The new rallying point is to assert the right for the coveted packages in wages given to the provincial secretariat. Guided by the tools employed by secretariat employees to secure bloated wages in comparison with the attached department, the number of associations has multiplied and the pre-existing ones have coalesced into a broader alliance.

They have further asserted to arrogate the positions of head of attached departments claimed by provincial secretariat employees. A few days back Balochistan Secretariat Employees Association announced its withdrawal from a grand

alliance of other employees' associations. The alliance was formed to put pressure on the government for demands they all shared; which included the rise in pay and allowances and to address the discrepancies.

#### A growing number of employees adding public grievances

The growing number of employee associations, in the name of their welfare, underscores the growing utility of forming pressure groups to protract spheres of influence. Taking a cue from the past, the growing trend will bring serious pressure on the frail institutional framework adding to public grievances.

One of the phenomena, engendered by growing pressure groups in the public, is written writ large that institutions have exponentially grown in size, while at the same time turned into pathetically ossified entities, foretelling their imminent fall. The eventuality

will not only bring about suffering for all employees associated with these institutions but it will also add to the flight of the public at large. The bloated oversize of public departments in association with their age-old calcified nature has turned them into a self-serving superstructure and lost relevance to the common man.

#### A department created for the general public turned into a service provider for employees only

A department created for the service of the general public has turned into a service provider for their respective employees. All the offices at district, divisional or provincial levels have more affairs related to employees than that of the ones for whose welfare the same are created. The resources placed at the disposal of these institutions with the aim to alleviate the issues of citizens, are arrogated to themselves and have turned into a

bone of contention for members of the institutions. Speaking of personal experience of a department, with district and divisional level offices, it was noted that more than 90% of the correspondence made with that office was related to the personal affairs of the employees working in that department. It is the case with every public sector institution. Their raison d'être is service unto self.

#### Element of powers keep their opponents at bay

The element of powers among employees' associations also include larger size; the larger the size, the more nuisance value to keep the opponent at bay. At the provincial secretariat with the aim to enlarge its own size decades-old clerical staff positions are exponentially expanded leading to a 'one size fits all' structure. Despite specialization in every field turning into a norm, the public sector is stuck in an age-old management model. The information technology devel-

opment has turned the public sector structure into an obsolete entity. The manpower and the machine have found no compatibility. The only change in the last 75 years is that number of positions has shifted from one service group to another. Mutual bargaining among the service groups is termed reform in the system. A third-body assessment guided only by the public interest has never taken place.

The resistance to change has not only left the public sector unworkable, the private sector has overtaken it in the market. When private sector services are required from the market, the public sector functionaries are found totally clueless about the trend in the market. Resolutely, the public sector is uniformly characterized by sub-standard quality. The public sector has still not parted from the role, long performed by it but is now overtaken by the private sector with better performance. A role swap from a player to a regulator has still not taken place. The role of regulator, which should have been taken by the public sector, is distasteful for it.

The author is a serving Balochistan Secretary for Archives and Culture

## Where do the young belong?

By Ghazi Salahuddin

Over the years, I have had very ambivalent, mostly disconcerting, feelings about the capacity of our educated young people to play a constructive role in Pakistan's affairs. One measure of my discontent about the entire situation is their abysmal reading habits that I have repeatedly discovered in my encounters with them in colleges and universities.

One argument against this assessment of the worth of a young person's intellectual worth is that the printed material has greatly lost its relevance in a digital world and our young people have found their own ways of connecting with the reality of the world. I am also sometimes chided for being too old to be able to read the minds of today's youth. Many of them are doing fine, an educationist friend insists.

Still, I remain worried about the collective educational deprivations of this generation, only a small percentage of which has access to any form of higher learning. I have a reservoir of anecdotal evidence to exemplify the existing level of the knowledge and intelligence of the young, in a general sense.

A development professional was invited to speak to post-graduate

students of a private university in Lahore. There were more than one hundred of them in the auditorium, he told me. Not one of them was able to tell him the names of three cities of Balochistan, besides Quetta.

One question that I often pose whenever I get the opportunity to speak to university students is: what does it mean to be young in Pakistan at this time? Sadly, it doesn't seem possible to explore this subject in depth and encompass, against the backdrop of Pakistani society, all the passions and yearnings and aspirations that are associated with an adolescent's perilous journey to adulthood. Particularly for the female gender, being young in Pakistan is a fearsome hazard.

Now, this is something that I could take up at any time. Why I am writing about the young people of Pakistan now is because I have noticed that their craving to find refuge somewhere abroad is becoming so much more evident. And this defeatist response to the crisis of Pakistan has a bearing on the role that the young are set to play in shaping the future of Pakistan.

Pakistan has always been a place to go away from but it was due to

the pull factor of better opportunities and the freedoms that the young can openly enjoy in Western countries. What is more in play now is the push factor of a society falling apart and the threat of an economic collapse. I have met parents who are willing to sell their assets in Pakistan to enable their otherwise well-settled children to leave this country. "I tell them to not come back", said one parent, a senior banker.

There are some figures about how the graph was rising in recent months, though many departures may not have been officially recorded. In 2021, around 225,000 workers had gone abroad. In the just ended 2022, this number rose to 765,000. It is hard to imagine what this number would be if everyone wanting to go is able to make it, holding a passport that is among the weakest in the world.

This trend of those who are apparently doing well in Pakistan wanting so desperately to emigrate is frightening. Will not the prospects of Pakistan working its way out of the present difficulties further diminish with this brain drain? As I have suggested, just a limited number of young people are able

to get a good education. Ideally, it is this cluster that would be expected to join the struggle for Pakistan's survival. But they obviously have no concern about the well-being of their homeland.

They used to talk about Pakistan's youth bulge and wishfully call it a great asset. Then doubts began to arise about its quality and competence. Questions were raised about whether it was a demographic dividend or a disaster - an asset or a liability. There should be little doubt now that the young in Pakistan are becoming a seed of disorder, mainly because they are being nurtured by forces of obscurantism and intolerance.

Come to think of it, which young person would have been a better role model and source of pride for the entire country than Pakistan's own Malala Yousafzai? Hers is truly a fairytale of our times. But the unfortunate truth is that Malala is not admired at the popular level in Pakistan. This says a lot about the scope there is for a progressive social change that can only be brought about by a revolution led by the young.

We do have a small number of young people in this sprawling, boundless wilderness

who are striving for a better Pakistan. But they can easily be overwhelmed by the rising tide of economic and political disarray. One shudders to envisage the preponderance of ill-educated and physically under-nourished young people wandering aimlessly in this landscape. Just try to contend with the fact that more than 60 per cent of Pakistan's population comprises the youth - people between the ages of 15 and 33.

As it is, the growth of population in Pakistan is seen, by those who can see, as a ticking bomb. But so much more is ticking in our hearts and in our minds. In addition to economic mismanagement and the consequences of an unprecedented flood, Imran Khan's ceaseless political campaign for about nine months has raised the temperature so high that the country is finding it hard to breathe.

So, in this breathless environment of anxiety and alarm, where is the spirit of youth in play? Were we not told that the youth are to be identified with hope and with courage? But the young in Pakistan, one may say, are not able to be young - not the ones who are voting with their feet or the others who are prisoners of unsavoury circumstances.

## Burning down the house

By Ammar Habib Khan

A stitch in time saves nine. In the case of our economy, we do not like stitches. We deliberate whether a stitch is even required, or what if we don't stitch at all, and maybe the problem will magically solve itself.

We look back at the past, and see many people who also hadn't stitched in time, and we ask them again what to do. As we do not like to retire, we bring the same people again to do the exact same thing that they did two decades back, and get the same disastrous results. Like clockwork, we do not stitch, and the situation continues to worsen.

Economic policy in Pakistan hasn't evolved in the last three decades. Our policymakers continue to make decisions that are detrimental to the sustenance of the economy. The same decisions that have pushed the country over the edge time and again. The current economic crisis, which started as a balance of payments crisis, could have been easily solved through the right stabilization measures. A perpetual political crisis coupled with the inability to take sound economic decisions catapulted a balance of payments crisis into a potential hyperinflationary episode,

resulting in rampant food inflation, historically high interest rates, and a complete breakdown of supply chain.

To maintain the illusion of a strong Pak rupee, the government embarked on administrative controls to manage the price at which the Pak rupee trades against the US dollar. Such administrative measures meant prioritizing energy and food imports, while rationing supply of foreign currency to other industries. As industries were not allowed to import, whether to produce goods for local consumption, or for exports, gradually they depleted existing inventory levels. The inability to import effectively meant that they did not have sufficient raw material to produce goods, and either sell them locally, or export them.

As production of goods came to a halt, layoffs started happening across the board, with many daily wage earners losing jobs in a historically high inflationary environment. As production of goods halted, so did economic output, and collection of taxes, resulting in an economic squeeze, and tax collection that couldn't even mimic inflation levels. Lower tax collection meant higher budgetary deficits, which meant more borrowing by the government. As the gov-

ernment continues to run its affairs largely on borrowed funds, the equilibrium interest rate also continues to increase.

The administrative controls instead of making things easier, actually made the situation much worse, just to maintain an illusion of a strong Pak rupee. The policymakers prescribing administrative controls probably do not ever consider unintended consequences of their actions. Price controls are a favourite tool of politicized economic managers, a tool that has never yielded a positive outcome ever.

Modern supply chains are complex. Each finished product would require hundreds of inputs. The absence of even a single input can potentially lead to an unfinished product. We may consider the example of a trouser that may be exported by a textile manufacturer in Pakistan. We may have the fabric, yarn, dyes, and everything else that is required, but if a zipper is not available (because it is imported), the trouser remains unfinished, and cannot be exported.

The inability of economic managers to appreciate the complexity of supply chains has led to a total disaster, due to which there is a shortage of many goods in the country, even if they are locally produced.

## There can be no economic miracle in Pakistan!

Dr Moonis Ahmar

When Ishaq Dar took oath as federal finance and revenue minister more than a week ago, there was an instant depreciation in the rate of the dollar versus the rupee; rise in the stock exchange index; and reduction in the prices of petroleum products. Does it mean that one person, who has twice earlier served as federal finance minister and escaped from Pakistan five years ago because of corruption charges, can cause an economic miracle? Is there any rational basis of Dar's claim to fix the economy by stabilising the exchange rate, lower the interest rate and mitigate inflation?

Moreover, the meager \$8 billion forex reserves, just enough to pay for only three weeks of imports, is another cause for concern. It will be nothing short of a miracle if Dar is able to have a paradigm shift in the economy because of harsh realities that will not allow the country to escape from the inevitable. In the ongoing fiscal year, Pakistan has to arrange \$40 billion external financing. This is besides the \$20 billion worth of losses the recent floods have inflicted. Artificial appreciation of the rupee against major currencies will not work because of high demand of the dollar for imports

and for other purposes. In today's Pakistan, miracles to salvage the economy are certainly not going to happen because of ground realities which are highly unfavorable.

Neither the IMF nor the World Bank or the friendly countries will come for the rescue of Pakistan because the country is constantly requesting donors to waive loans and provide more financial resources in order for it to avoid a financial default. Even in recent devastating floods, the country has not received substantial amount of financial assistance unlike in the case of the 2005 earthquake. Trust deficit and rampant corruption tend to discourage donors from providing cash assistance. Images of floods and the forceful appeal of the UN Secretary General to help Pakistan in this moment of crisis failed to bring positive results. Under the circumstances, Dar's taking up the economy is a major test case for the PML-N led coalition government.

Things were also difficult when Dar took over as finance minister in 2013 because of the PTI-PAT sit-in in Islamabad in 2014, but he managed to deal with that crisis. This time the situation is different because Pakistan's economy is in dire straits and a country of 222 million people with a conglomeration of internal and external

threats along with the devastation caused by the floods cannot have a smooth sailing for Dar despite his so-called magical skills. In 2013, the PML-N enjoyed a two-thirds mandate; but in 2022, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is heading a coalition of around a dozen parties - and that too with a razor thin majority.

The existential threat to the coalition government in the shape of Imran Khan is real, and it will be difficult for the PML-N "financial wizard" to lead a paradigm shift in the economy. The threat of famine following massive floods looms large and the government has meager resources to import food items in order to prevent a crisis situation. With all economic indicators predicting a hopeless situation, what magic wand is Dar going to wave to fix the issues which tend to aggravate the country's political and economic situation!

One needs to analyse three major realities which will continue to undermine Dar's "mystic" skills for an economic turnaround. First, the reality of corruption, nepotism, bad governance, absence of rule of law and lack of accountability needs to be taken seriously. Miracles never happen when the country is unable to deal with issues which seriously shatter work ethics.

Nations are not built by mere words or rhetoric but must eradicate the culture of corruption and nepotism. How can a country be pulled from the brink of an economic disaster when it lacks the motivation, integrity and planning on the part of those who matter?

Dar cannot let miracles happen because his hands are not clean, as well as of many others who happen to be his coalition partners and frontrunners of his own party. Constant begging from donors and friendly countries will not help because the elitist culture of Pakistan is totally oblivious of ground realities pertaining to serious political and economic crisis. Artificially reducing prices and appreciation of rupees versus the dollar would be counterproductive and generate further crisis.

Second, no economic miracle is going to happen unless our leadership has eight qualities in theory and in practice: hard work, integrity, brilliance, vision, commitment, dedication, planning, and wisdom. Looking at the other models of success, particularly in developing world, one can learn from former Singaporean PM Lee Kuan Yew, former Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamad, former Chairman of Chinese Communist Party Mao Zedong and Nelson Mandela, the founding

president of post-apartheid South Africa. Other models of success are found in the UAE, Qatar, Muscat and Oman. Since the inception of Pakistan, leadership vacuum and the lack of qualities essential to successfully run a country is a bitter reality.

Whether in civilian or in military control, Pakistan failed to emerge as a role model in good governance, rule of law and sound work ethics. Laziness, incompetence, dishonesty, fraud and cheating became acceptable norms which mitigated Pakistan's rating in human development index, corruption perception Index and human security index. Deterioration of quality of life of people in terms of absence of clean and safe drinking water for all, quality and compulsory education, housing, public transport and hygienic food are major challenges. When people at the helm of affairs are hated because of their corruption and nepotism, how can Pakistan put its own house in order? Third, miracles will not happen unless there is culture of merit in Pakistan. When decisions are made on the basis of vested interests and likes and dislikes, the country can never emerge as a successful state. Erosion of merit has a long history in Pakistan which eroded the trust of capable and qualified.

## Transcending limits

Ali Hassan Bangwar

Historic moments warrant introspection and reflection. The contemporary pandemic-ridden world seems to be at the crossroads. The prevailing onslaught of Covid-19 against humankind calls for a comprehensive contemplation on what went wrong in our quest for modernisation. The pandemic has resulted in an unprecedented crisis, the likes of which the world has not seen since World War II. Rather than viewing it as a traditional fleeing event, we need to mull over the lessons the pandemic is trying to teach us.

When deliberating, one may be forced to conclude that something is wrong with what we have been doing. We shouldn't be oblivious of an inevitable principle: one gets what one gives. When we harm nature, nature harms us back. Among all creatures, humankind is high up the evolutionary ladder due to unmatched cognitive abilities and intellectual prowess. These intellectual abilities were inherently aimed at distinguishing good and evil, and regulating life on earth in a manner that benefits not only humans but their surroundings. Paradoxically, humans have outstepped and outreached their assigned authority and overestimated themselves as an omnipotent entity enjoying complete impunity of all their activities

regardless of their impacts. Rather than running the affairs and utilising the intellect and bounties in a just and sustainable manner, men have badly embezzled with nature's resources at the cost of destruction of other forms of life and of natural ecosystem. The recently released UN IPCC's terrifying sixth assessment report on the anthropogenic destruction of global climate is but a single instance of mankind's high-handedness against their surrounding environment. Even men didn't spare his fellow beings.

A few in the world hold majority of the wealth - the result: millions of people are currently consumed by poverty, hunger and disease. The rich-poor divide widens as time passes by. Global poverty and wide-scale inequality are on the rise. Laws are made and broken for and by the rich, while the poor remain entangled in them. Merciless pogroms are a norm. The week dies of being preyed and consumed by capitalist predators. The tyranny against the weak, and the atrocities of rulers over their subjects have surged as time passes by. The growing scourge of terrorism and extremism, rising populism and demagoguery, and fascist political leadership is the new normal. Mass adulteration, hoarding, black-marketing, organised crimes, cheating, manipulating, exploiting have all

become common traits of our culture.

There is an ever-rising trend of flattery and hypocrisy, while everything remains centered around material success. Morality, ethos, empathy and compassion are all considered as outdated notions. One might wonder how is NASA even thinking of colonising Mars if we have utterly failed to learn to live peacefully on earth despite being here for millenniums.

Though heinous acts may go unattended or unpunished by our judicial system, we must realise the earth has its own system of justice. Floods, droughts, forest fires, heat waves, tsunamis, epidemics, earthquakes, torrential rains and violent volcanic eruptions are just a few of the consequences that have come about due to our actions. COVID-19 among other cataclysms questions the sustainability of the existing global order and the underlying principles of globalisation. The pandemic has given humankind the opportunity to rethink and reform existing socio-political and economical orders in line with principles of egalitarianism, eco-friendliness, compassion and empathy. Rather than wasting resources on weapons, we must utilize it for the underprivileged, the poor and the weak. Since we have already prospered materially, we now need to invest in humanity if we want to shield ourselves from nature's



## Fawad stresses political stability to end economic crisis

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry on Friday said ongoing economic crisis was an outcome of the political instability in the country. Taking to Twitter, the former information minister said Pakistan could not reach a final agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to revive the loan programme stalled since September last. He said the foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP)

had slipped under \$3 billion. He said attempts were being made to create a Constitutional crisis in the country by delaying elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where the PTI dissolved assemblies last month to put pressure on the coalition government. He warned that the move of delaying elections would serve blows to the state Mr Chaudhry also pinned hopes on judiciary as a case regarding polls in Punjab is being heard by the Lahore High

Court (LHC). Taking to Twitter, the former information minister said Pakistan could not reach a final agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to revive the loan programme stalled since September last. He said the foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) had slipped under \$3 billion. He said attempts were being made to create a Constitutional crisis in the country by delaying elections in Punjab. INP

## Pakistan reports another 21 Covid cases

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has detected another 21 Covid-19 infections with no fatality during the last 24 hours, showed the statistics released by the National Institute of Health (NIH) on Friday morning.

According to the NIH data, the death toll in the country remained the same at 30,640 whereas the number of total infections now rose to 1,576,464 after adding the fresh 21 cases.

During the last 24 hours 4,526 tests were conducted throughout Pakistan whereas the positivity ratio stood at 0.46 percent. The number of patients in critical care stood at 10.

Anal of new Covid treatment yields encouraging results: Study

A single-injection antiviral treatment for newly-infected Covid-19 patients reduced the risk of hospitalization by half in a large-scale clinical trial, according to a study published on Wednesday.

Stanford University professor Jeffrey Glenn, coauthor of the study published in the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM), said the new drug "showed profound benefits for vaccinated and unvaccinated people alike."

While the number of Americans dying daily

of coronavirus has fallen to around 500, treatments for the disease remain limited. One of the most common, Paxlovid made by Pfizer, involves taking 30 pills over five days.

The new treatment involves a single dose of pegylated lambda-interferon, a synthetic version of a naturally occurring protein that infected cells secrete to defend against viral infection.

"What it does is it binds receptors on the surfaces of cells that activate our own antiviral defense mechanisms," said Glenn, a professor of medicine, microbiology and immunology who heads the Stanford Biosecurity and Pandemic Preparedness Initiative.

"So if a virus has infected the cell it will turn on processes that aim to destroy the virus's replication," he said. "It will also send signals to neighboring cells to warn them viruses are on their way and get ready to defend yourself."

Receptors for interferon lambda are primarily in the linings of the lungs, airways and intestine -- the main places Covid strikes. "We're turning on these antiviral mechanisms in the cells, the lung, where the infection is happening," Glenn said. The Phase 3 trial of

the drug, conducted between June 2021 and February 2022, involved nearly 2,000 patients with Covid symptoms in Brazil and Canada, about 85 percent of whom had been vaccinated.

A total of 931 newly-infected Covid patients were given a single injection of interferon lambda while 1,018 participants were given a placebo.

The risk of Covid-19-related hospitalization or death from any cause was 47 percent lower in the interferon group than in the placebo group, according to the researchers.

Twenty-five of the 931 people who received the injection within seven days of exhibiting Covid symptoms were hospitalized compared with 57 of the 1,018 who received the placebo.

Vaccinated patients treated with interferon lambda experienced a 51 percent reduction in hospitalization relative to the placebo group.

There was an 89 percent reduction in hospitalization among unvaccinated patients treated within the first three days of the onset of Covid symptoms compared with the placebo group.

Glenn said interferon lambda proved effective against all Covid variants tested. INP



KARACHI: Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. Visiting after Inauguration the Pakistan International Maritime Expo & Conference (PIMEC 2023) at Expo Center Karachi.

## Karachi: Pregnant woman goes 'missing' from Jinnah Hospital

KARACHI: A 24-year-old pregnant woman mysteriously has gone 'missing' from the city's Jinnah Hospital, it was surfaced on Friday.

According to the husband of the 'missing' woman, he shifted his wife to Jinnah Hospital for delivery, but she went 'missing'. The man said his wife went to have a meal at 1pm and returned back to the hospital. CCTV footage also shows that his wife returned to the hospital, but the staff is not cooperating on the issue. "After coming back to the hospital, my wife is 'missing', the man said. Meanwhile, the police have received the application regarding the mysterious 'missing' of pregnant woman

from Jinnah Hospital Karachi.

The police said there is no record of the woman's admission to Gynaecology or any other ward of the hospital. The CCTV footage in which the woman can be seen in the hospital is of a waiting area, the police said and added they are investigating the matter from different aspects.

Earlier, the 'missing' Karachi woman from the Gulshan-e-Hadeed area namely Anum was recovered from Lahore during a joint raid of Malir Operation and Investigation police.

On November 17, a married woman had mysteriously gone missing from Karachi's Gulshan-e-Hadeed area. As per details, the mother-of-one namely Anum

Sohaib went missing under mysterious circumstances after departing for a job interview. According to the husband of the 'missing' woman, he shifted his wife to Jinnah Hospital for delivery, but she went 'missing'. The man said his wife went to have a meal at 1pm and returned back to the hospital.

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## Balloon case demonstrates US hysteria vis-à-vis China

BEIJING: The Joe Biden administration's handling of the Chinese balloon case last week was meant to showcase the United States' strategic strength amid fierce attacks by Republicans and the low approval ratings of US officials.

But instead, it has shown to the world how immature and irresponsible — indeed hysterical — the US has been in dealing with the case.

According to China Daily on Friday, to begin with, many US officials, media outlets and political pundits claim it was a "spy balloon" despite not having any evidence to back up their claim and regardless of China explaining that it was a balloon for research, mainly meteorological research, which went out of control and deviated far from its planned course due to strong winds.

For at least a week, the whole US has been obsessed with the Chinese civilian balloon, as US politicians and media projected it as a grave threat to US national security. But they should realize that it does not make sense for China to spy on the US using a balloon the size of three school buses while modern surveillance satellites can do a much better job, and surreptitiously too.

Speaking of spying, no country employs surveillance more widely and aggressively than the US, including its frequent military surveillance flights near China's shores, which even people such as former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger and former US national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski regarded as provocative.

How would the US respond if China were to conduct frequent surveillance flights off the coast of California, New York or Florida? The Biden administration's decisions on the balloon episode were hijacked by US domestic politics. Republicans, from new House Speaker Kevin McCarthy to Senator Marco Rubio, have spared no efforts to attack Biden for "being weak" in handling the case. The fierce attacks came just days before Biden's State of the Union address on Tuesday, at a time when public opinions INP

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After the increase, the per litre price of milk will soar to Rs210. Recently, Commissioner Karachi ordered to carry out operations and seal dairy shops selling milk at higher prices. INP

## Three injured as car swallowed up by sinkhole in Lahore

LAHORE: At least three persons sustained injuries when a car fell into a sinkhole in the Johar Town area of Lahore on late Thursday night.

According to details, the car with three people inside fell into the 25-foot sinkhole that appeared at the Main Boulevard near Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital.

Rescue teams arrived at the scene and retrieved the three persons from sinkhole in injured condition after a hectic effort on one hour. Rescue sources said that heavy machinery will be used to pull the car out of sinkhole. INP

## Pakistan's literary icon Amjad Islam Amjad passes away

LAHORE: Veteran poet and drama writer Amjad Islam Amjad passed away at the age of 78 in Lahore on Friday. The literary icon of Pakistan died off a heart attack, according to his family. Amjad Islam Amjad is also the recipient of Sitara-e-Intiaz and is the author of more than 40 books in a career spanning 50 years.

He has received many awards for his literary work and screenplay for TV, including Pride of Performance. Some of his well-known dramas are "Waris", "Dehleez", "Samandar", "Raat", "Waqt" and "Apnay Log". INP

## Dairy farmers announce increase in milk price

KARACHI: The Karachi Dairy and Cattle Farmers Association has announced to unilaterally increase milk prices by Rs20 per litre from February 11.

According to the Dairy Farmers Association spokesperson, the hike in fuel fodder prices has compelled them to jack up the milk prices. Currently, the milk is being sold at Rs190 in the metropolitan while the official rate has been fixed at Rs180.

After the increase, the per litre price of milk will soar to Rs210. Recently, Commissioner Karachi ordered to carry out operations and seal dairy shops selling milk at higher prices. INP



KARACHI: Commander of the Pakistan Fleet Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami talks speaks during a ceremony for the Navy's multinational Maritime Exercise AMAN-23.

## Political polarization put Pakistan into great economic pain: PBF

PESHAWAR: Senior Vice President of Pakistan Business Forum (PBF), Muhammad Riaz Khattak has said that the main political parties of Pakistan have currently immense responsibility on their shoulders.

While addressing a seminar "Is Pakistan economically governable" here on Friday, he said political polarization in the country is the major reason for the country's economic downfall. Once politicians and dictators came into power, they centered additional on perpetuating their political careers instead of promoting national interests. The country's initial economic models lacked consistency and still do therefore.

Riaz Khattak said the economic history of Pakistan, supported three

eras, shows political polarization as a reason for the present economic happening.

He said, "In the numerous political phases of the country, completely different leaders came to power and introduced their economic models when assumptive workplace. Every time, the new administration established new policies whereas dynamical those that had been in situ before."

This resulted within the state receiving new models with none incentives, he said adding that this proves that whoever comes into power desires to pursue their interests instead of the state's national interests.

The Business leader said that specially the Era of Problematic Economy' from 2000 forrader owing to nuclear weapons tests

in could 1998 and therefore the Kargil Episode in 1999, the USA sanctioned us. However, these sanctions were raised and US aid to Pakistan began after Pakistan backed the USA in its "War on Terror" since the 9/11 attacks. President Pervez Musharraf introduced the patron Credit Model. He invested with in educated individuals and provided them low cost loans from that they started their tiny industries and this created jobs within the country.

In 2009, there was no correct economic model so Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani visited China and therefore the United Nations agency for facilitate, however they failed to show abundant interest in serving to Asian nation. In 2013, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif introduced the 'Crony market. INP

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## Pakistan sends another relief consignment to earthquakes' victims in Turkiye

ISLAMABAD: Another relief consignment carrying about two hundred and fifty tents has been dispatched to Turkiye through a special flight from Islamabad International Airport.

Talking to the media persons on the occasion, Minister for Power Khurram Dastgir assured that maximum number of winterized tents will be sent for the earthquake victims of both Turkiye and Syria. The Federal Minister said an air bridge has been established to ensure continuous dispatch of relief items to Turkiye and Syria.

Khurram Dastgir said that preparations are also being made to send the relief items through land and sea. He said we plan to send a truck caravan to both the calamity hit countries. Special Assistant on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi said it has also been decided to establish camps at the district level to collect relief items for the quake victims.

He said the philanthropists should generously contribute in order to extend help to the victims. Senator Talha Mahmood said Turkiye has always stood by Pakistan in the hour of difficulty. INP

## Awareness seminar on "Trafficking in Persons in Pakistan" held

LAHORE: Punjab University Institute of Social & Cultural Studies (ISCS) organized a seminar on raising awareness among youth about "Trafficking in Persons in Pakistan" under the Alumni Network Small Grant project were held on Friday.

Vice Chancellor University of Poonch, AJK Prof Dr Zakria Zakar, Director ISCS Prof Dr Rubena Zakar, Executive Director Idea Pakistan / analyst Salaman Abid, Focal Person Punjab, Shahzad Amir, Executive Director SSDO Syed Kausar Abbas, Director PU Centre for Peace and Security Studies Prof Dr Farhan Navid Yousaf, faculty members and students attended the event.

Addressing the participants, the speakers highlighted various aspects of the topic and gave awareness to the students. They were on the view that civil society, NGOs, experts, security forces, media and academia should play a constructive role to raise awareness regarding the issue. INP



WASHINGTON DC: Ambassador Masood Khan writing his remarks in the Condolence Book at Turkish Embassy in Washington DC.

## Aman-2023 multinational naval exercise kicks off in Pakistan

KARACHI: Pakistan Navy on Friday kicked off one of the largest maritime exercises in the Arabian Sea along with the participation of navies of 50 countries.

The opening ceremony, held at Navy Dockyard in Karachi, was attended by a large number of military representatives, observers and diplomats from participating countries.

The eighth exercise of Aman series involve ships, aircraft and special operation forces of participating countries. The multinational exercise would be held from Feb 10-14. A message of Chief of the Naval Staff of the Pakistan Navy Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi was also read on

the occasion.

Welcoming the participants, Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi said the maritime exercise aimed at promoting harmony among countries and peace. He highlighted that maritime security was facing non-traditional challenges, adding "the climate change has profoundly affected the marine environment".

The exercise has been divided into harbor and sea phases. The harbour phase involves activities such as seminars, operational discussions, professional demonstrations, international get together and pre-sail planning of evolutions at sea.

The sea phase would include tactical manoeuvres, exercises related to maritime security such as anti-piracy and counter-terrorism, search and rescue, gunnery firings and air defence exercises.

The maritime drill is aimed at providing a forum for understanding maritime concepts and operational cultures, enhancing interoperability as well as identifying ways and means to combat common threats at sea.

Pakistan Navy launched the exercise in 2007 with only three participants but the message of collaborative maritime security was widely acknowledged and now 50 countries have joined the drills this year. INP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Japan WADA Mitsuhiro and Secretary Ministry of Economic Affairs Dr. Kazim Niazi signed two project agreements for Taxila Museum improvement and upgradation of schools in rural Sindh signing ceremony held at EAD.

## CPEC created 192,000 jobs, 6,000MW of power supply, 809km of highway: PM Coordinator

BEIJING: As a megaproject with a cumulative investment of \$ 65 billion in 2022, the CPEC has created 192,000 jobs, 6,000MW of power supply, 809km of highway, and 886km of transmission line, which laid a solid foundation for Pakistan's socio-economic development.

This was stated by Rana Ihsan Afzal Khan, Coordinator to Prime Minister of Pakistan on Commerce and Industry, in an interview with China Economic Net (CEN).

Citing an example of a road project under the

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Rana said, "it used to take almost 24 hours to travel from Islamabad to Gilgit Baltistan.

As soon as the CPEC came in and the road network was improved with traveling time shortened by half, we saw that all of a sudden there was a boom of tourism and economic growth in Gilgit, he added.

According to the official website of the CPEC Authority, five transport projects under the CPEC have been completed, and among them, three are motorway projects, including KKH Phase II,

Multan-Sukkur Motorway (M5), and Hakla - D-I Khan Motorway, adding 809 km to the road network of Pakistan and driving economic activities in the cities along the road.

Meanwhile, the Orange Line Metro train and the Cross Border Optical Fiber Cable lay the foundation for the modernization of Pakistan's transport system.

Motorways are an important part of Pakistan's "National Trade Corridor Project" and CPEC, which aims to link its three Arabian Sea ports (Karachi Port, Port Bin Qasim and Gwadar

Port) to the rest of the country through its national highways and motorways network and further north with Afghanistan, Central Asia and China.

"The network of roads and Gwadar Port have been established. Now we are moving towards the Gwadar new international airport and the ML-1 railway project, which will further improve logistics, the speed of trading, and people-to-people contact," Rana stated.

About "Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)", Rana said, it is an initiative of connectivity of not only

infrastructure but of economy, trade, and people to people. When connectivity is improved, so does the accessibility to different economies, and trade and movement of technologies will be enhanced. That is BRI to the world, a catalyst for economic growth and cultural exchanges," said Rana Ihsan Afzal. "In the past five years, CPEC has improved connectivity within Pakistan and helped us control load-shedding across the country. Pakistan is looking forward for it to be mature and reach its true potential." Rana added. INP



# Getting MEFP from IMF after 10-day difficult negotiation key development: Mian Zahid

Says negotiations for Staff Level Agreement will continue online, reforms, restrictions in long-term interest of country

KARACHI: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain has said that obtaining the Memorandum of Economic and Fiscal Policies (MEFP), after 10 days of difficult negotiations with the IMF, is an important development.

In a statement issued on Friday, he said that after the return of the IMF delegation, further negotiations will continue online while Pakistan will have to impose new taxes worth Rs170 billion, introduce reforms in the electricity and gas sectors and come up with a plan to eliminate circular debt, after which a staff-level agreement would be possible.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the staff-level agreement will be subject to the approval of the IMF board after which Pakistan will qualify for the loan installment of 1.2 billion dollars paving way for loans from other sources. He further stated that progress has been seen in the negotiations between Pakistan and the IMF but the international organization has described the government's steps so far as insufficient for the staff-level agreement. The assurances of subsequent steps have not been accepted but the institution has appreciated Prime Minister

Shehbaz Sharif's determination to take tough decisions to improve the economy.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the IMF asked Pakistan to increase its revenue, strengthen its financial position, increase electricity and gas prices, hike interest rates, reduce untargeted subsidies, and help vulnerable and flood-affected people.

IMF has also demanded an increase in social security, phasing out the shortage of foreign exchange reserves and allowing the exchange rate to be determined by the market, and lifting the ban on imports.

The organization also wants to stop the increase in the circular debt and eliminate it, achieve 100 percent recovery of dues in the energy sector, and to increase the energy supply.

The business leader said that timely and decisive implementation of these reforms are necessary to ensure sustainable development.

IMF's demands are tough but the need of the hour and delay in their implementation is not in Pakistan's interest. Pakistan's real interest is not only in obtaining credit but in moving the economy in the right direction. The implementation of these reforms will lead to a sharp rise in inflation, which will allow targeted subsidies for low-income groups. As a result of the proposed economic and financial reforms, Pakistan will be able to get rid of poverty and stand on its own feet. INP



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with Turkish Consul General, Emir Ozbay & others on the occasion of seeing off a cargo plane carrying relief goods for the earthquake victims of Turkiye in Lahore.

## ATC summons Imran on Feb 15

ISLAMABAD: Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) on Friday summoned former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan on February 15 in a section-144 violation case. The ATC judge Raja Jawad Abbas Hasan passed the orders while hearing plea of Imran Khan seeking an extension in his interim bail. PTI chairman's counsel Babar Awan filed plea seeking exemption of the court appearance of Khan on medical grounds.

The prosecutor opposed the request and stated that all the medical reports are of Shaikat Khanum Hospital, which has no legal status. The law is being mocked, he added. The court rejected Khan's plea for exemption from personal appearance in the case and summoned him in person on February 14.

The court directed Babar Awan to ensure his counsel's appearance in the court else it will pass the orders on the interim bail. The court also directed the prosecutor to prove that all people gathered outside ECP for the protest at the directions of Imran Khan.

It was worth mentioned here that several members of the local leadership of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) were booked in a terrorism case over alleged vandalism during the protests in Islamabad after ECP disqualified Imran Khan in Toshakhana reference. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) disqualified former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Imran Khan in the Toshakhana reference under Article 63(1)(p). INP

## LHC reserves verdict on petitions seeking Punjab election date

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday reserved a verdict on the petitions filed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and others over delay in announcement of date for elections in Punjab.

LHC Justice Jawad Hassan reserved the ruling after hearing arguments from the PTI, Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman and federal government. The court is expected to announce the verdict today.

During the hearing, the governor's lawyer maintained that Mr Rehman was not liable to give a date for elections when an interim cabinet has been formed. He pleaded the court to return the pleas as inadmissible with a fine on the petitioner.

A day earlier, the governor also submitted his response in an identical petition filed by a citizen Munir Ahmed, stating: "It is emphatically denied that the answering respondent No 1 was in any manner obligated to appoint the date of elections when he has never dissolved the Assembly while acting on the so-called advice of the Chief Minister". He also rejected an impression that his move is creating any hurdles in the way of ECP to discharge its duties, calling the allegations "fallacious". INP

## Earthquake: Masood Khan expresses solidarity with Turkish brethren

WASHINGTON: Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Masood Khan visited Turkish embassy in Washington to express solidarity with the Turkish brethren after a terrific earthquake that claimed tens of thousands of precious lives in Turkiye. Penning down his remarks in the Condolence Book, the Ambassador said it is not a tragedy for the beloved people of Turkiye but for the whole international community.

He said the entire Pakistani nation is in mourning as your grief is our grief. Masood Khan said we pay tribute to the Government and the people of Turkiye who are dealing with the tragedy with courage and tenacity.

On the occasion, Turkish Ambassador Hasan Murat Mercan apprised Masood Khan of the latest situation in the calamity-hit areas. Masood Khan told the Turkish ambassador that Pakistan had launched an appeal for calamity-stricken people of Turkey. He said the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington has also launched an appeal to Pakistani diaspora in the United States. INP

## Japan provides \$0.37m for improvement conservation of Taxila Museum

ISLAMABAD: The government of Japan has agreed to provide new grant assistance worth 48.8 million Japanese Yen (equivalent to around 0.37 million USD/around 101.6 million PKR) for enhancement of the antiquities conservation and exhibition capacity of Taxila Museum.

A signing ceremony for the assistance was held at the Ministry of Economic Affairs in Islamabad. Mr. WADA Mitsuhiro, Ambassador of Japan, Mr. KINOSHITA Yasumitsu, Chief Representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, and other officials from both countries attended this ceremony.

The Taxila Museum is located in the middle of ancient Gandharan Buddhist ruins in Taxila, a UNESCO World Heritage site with Gandharan arts of great historical and cultural value. The museum preserves and

exhibits the precious artifacts excavated in this area.

As of now, only approximately 30% of the ruins at this site has been excavated, and the excavation is still under progress. However, there are insufficient facilities and equipment to display the increasing number of excavated works in the museum, as well as to prevent these artifacts from deteriorating.

This project aims to promote understanding of the history and cultural heritage of Gandharan Buddhism among domestic and overseas visitors and will do so by providing the Taxila Museum with the necessary equipment for improving its capacity for the conservation and exhibition of historical artifacts excavated from the Gandharan ruins. This project also aims to enrich cultural education for youths, and to facilitate cultural conservation, thereby contributing to SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) Goal 11 (Sustainable INP

## Business community to stand with quake victims of Turkiye, Syria in difficult time: Irfan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) Mr. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh has said that the business community of Pakistan will stand with the earthquake victims of Turkiye and Syria in this critical juncture.

On Friday, Irfan Iqbal along Vice President FPCCI Umar Masood Ur Rehman, visited Turkish and Syrian Embassies for expressing condolences and sympathies on tragic loss of lives and injury arising from a series of recent strong earthquakes.

During meeting with the Ambassadors of Turkey and Syria they shared and recorded their thoughts and prayers for those who lost their loved ones during this difficult time and wished for those injured a speedy recovery.

The President of FPCCI on behalf of the business community of Pakistan assured full support and assistance in shape finance and relief items and also stand with the people of Turkiye and Syria in its difficult time.

They also expressed their hope that Turkey and Syria will recover from this tragedy rapidly and emerge stronger.

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## APHC-AJK pays tributes to Maqbool Butt, Afzal Guru on martyrdom anniversaries

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter organized a seminar at its office in Islamabad, today, to remember prominent martyred liberation leaders, Muhammad Maqbool Butt and Muhammad Afzal Guru on their martyrdom anniversaries.

India had hanged Muhammad Maqbool Butt on 11th February in 1984 in New Delhi's Tihar Jail and sent Muhammad Afzal Guru to the gallows in the same jail on February 9 in 2013 for their role in Kashmir freedom movement. The two leaders were buried in the premises of the jail.

Addressing the seminar presided over by the APHC-AJK Convener, Mehmood Ahmed Saghar, the speakers said the spirit of freedom of Kashmiris can never be suppressed through executions, illegal detentions and other tactics by India in Indian

illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Paying homage to Muhammad Maqbool Butt and Muhammad Afzal Guru, they reiterated the Kashmiris' determination to accomplish the mission of their martyrs at all costs. They said the martyrs are the true heroes of Kashmiris and a great asset of the ongoing freedom movement. The execution of Muhammad Maqbool Butt and Muhammad Afzal Guru was the murder of justice, they added. The speakers said the people of Kashmir are struggling for a just cause, for which they have been giving unprecedented sacrifices for seven decades. They urged India to read writing on the wall and accept the reality of the freedom struggle of Kashmiris. They also called upon the justice-loving people and organizations of the world to compel India to hand over the bodies of Maqbool Butt. INP

## PM Shehbaz announces to send additional relief goods for Turkiye, Syria

ISLAMABAD: The recent earthquake in Turkiye and Syria has prompted a quick response from the international community, including Pakistan. On Friday, Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, ordered authorities concerned to dispatch an additional 142 tons of relief goods to the quake-affected areas of Turkiye and Syria.

Pakistan has been at the forefront of the relief efforts, with a special military aircraft en route to the region from Turkey to carry aid supplies. A Pakistan International Airline (PIA) flight carrying 12 tons of supplies departed from Pakistan on Friday morning while another special flight of the national airline with 30 tons of relief goods is expected to depart soon from Islamabad.

Meanwhile, a cargo of 40 tons of aid goods is scheduled to depart for Turkiye tomorrow (Saturday). The United States has also announced an aid of \$85 million, while the World Bank has pledged a rehabilitation fund of \$1.78 billion for the earthquake victims.

Britain has sent a large number of thermal blankets to help the victims during the cold weather, and a field hospital is also set to be

built in the earthquake-prone areas.

In the face of this devastating disaster, the international community has come together to provide aid and support to the affected regions. These efforts will go a long way in helping the earthquake victims and rebuilding the devastated communities.

PM Shehbaz while talking to media said that victims in Turkiye and Syria are in immediate need of winter stuff.

He added that winterized good are being loaded in the Turkish aircraft and will soon be landing there.

When Pakistan was under flood destruction, Turkish leadership had been on the forefront appealing nations to help Pakistanis.

PM Shehbaz also said that 32 tons of single ply tents, 4 tons winterized tents, blankets and dry ration had been sent.

While, Rs10 billion aid had been reserved for the rehabilitation of earthquake victims.

A total of 1,440 tons of relief aid will be dispatched to Turkiye and Syria by sea and air routes. PM urged the citizens of Pakistan to donate as much as they can for helping their devastated brotherly victims. INP

## Earthquake jolts Swat, adjoining areas

SWAT: An earthquake tremors jolted Swat and its adjoining areas on Friday. The magnitude of the quake on the Richter scale was recorded at 4.4. The National Seismic Monitoring Centre said that the quake took place at a depth of 203 kilometers, while the epicenter of the quake was located near Pakistan and Afghanistan border.

The tremors caused panic among the residents and they rushed out of their home. According to the National Seismic Monitoring Centre, the earthquake struck at a depth of 203 kilometres while its epicentre was located near the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. There were no reports of any casualties or damage but still the tremor caused panic among the local people.

It was worth mentioned here that the death toll from the massive earthquake in Turkey and Syria kept on climbing Thursday, topping 21,000 as the first UN aid reached Syrian rebel-held zones but hopes of finding more survivors faded.

The chief of the World Health Organization said he was on his way to Syria, as bitter cold hampered the search of thousands of flattened buildings and threatened the lives of many quake victims who are without shelter and drinking water. INP

## FM Bilawal to visit Germany on Feb 17

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will embark on a three-day official visit to Germany from February 17-19.

According to sources, the foreign minister is visiting Germany to attend Munich Security Conference starting from February 17.

The 59th edition of the security conference, which draws leaders from around the world, will be held February 17-19. FM Bilawal will give a speech at the conference and meet with foreign leaders.

After attending the Munich Security Conference, FM Bilawal would then leave for Lithuania and Hungary to hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts, sources say.

This would be his second visit to Germany since assuming office last year in April.

During his earlier stay in Berlin, Foreign Minister held delegation-level talks with his German counterpart. The two leaders reviewed the whole gamut of bilateral relations and discussed regional and international issues of common interest.

Underscoring the high importance Pakistan attaches to its longstanding ties of amity and cooperation with Germany, the Foreign Minister reaffirmed keen desire to further strengthen the multifaceted bilateral cooperation, particularly in the fields of trade, investment, education and energy. INP



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf receiving Syrian Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Ramez Alraee at parliament house.

## GCU stages play on harsh reality of life in IIOJK

LAHORE: The Kashmir Society of the Government College University Lahore held a seminar titled "Kashmir and Indian Colonial Strategy", where they staged a special theater play to depict the harsh reality of life in Kashmir under Indian illegal occupation and to gain the support of the international community and Pakistan for the Kashmiri people.

Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Asghar Zaidi chaired the seminar, which was also addressed by guest speaker Dr Syed Mujahid Gilani and eminent actor Azra Aftab.

Dr Syed Mujahid Gilani spoke about the illegal economic policies implemented by India in IIOJK and the impact they have had on the local population.

He endorsed the event's theme by saying, "India is an occupier in Kashmir, and any actions taken by an occupier will be considered imposed on the people."

Actor Azra Aftab said that more such dramas should be produced to depict the harsh reality of life in occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Vice Chancellor Prof Zaidi condemned the Modi regime's plans to hold the G20 Summit in IIOJK and appreciated the work of the Kashmir Society in raising awareness about the plight of the Kashmiris.

Earlier, the President of the GCU Kashmir Society, Chaudhry Keehan Ijaz, opened the event with a presentation that briefed the attendees about the role of students in raising awareness about the Kashmir dispute. INP

## Attempt to declare murder as robbery foiled

SUKKUR: The police on Friday foiled an attempt to declare murder of husband as outcome of resistance during robbery attempt. According to details, a woman along her paramour shot dead husband in Sukkur and declared it killing by dacoits during robbery.

However, during investigations, the woman and her alleged paramour were found involved in murder. The police have registered a case and started raids to arrest the woman and her accomplice. INP

## NHMP introduces new initiatives to ensure safety of drivers, passengers during fog season

ISLAMABAD: The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) on directions of IG Khalid Mehmood studied past trends and introduced various new initiatives that helped ensure the safety of drivers and passengers during the fog season.

According to data, during the past 12 years, there have been 23 pileup accidents on motorways, with nine accidents taking place within the past two years. These pileup accidents caused 29 deaths, 146 injuries, approximately 12 million rupees loss and damage to 176 vehicles.

However, under directions of IG Khalid Mahmood, NHMP adopted new technologies that increased the efficiency of normal operations and also provided additional support that was critical to ensuring commuter safety during turbulent weather. Additionally, NHMP also

launched the Fog Journey Planner which helped commuters plan their travel more carefully, considering historical data of fog. Real-time advisories and detailed closures of interchanges were also issued through Electronic and social media, the NHMP website and the 130 helpline. By improving communications that resulted in timely advisories and subsequent closure of motorways, using next-gen thermal cameras to anticipate driving conditions, conducting safety briefings at various toll plazas, and moving large numbers of affected vehicles in coordinated cavalcades, NHMP was able to achieve its target of zero pileup accidents in the 2022-23 fog season.

National Highways and Motorway Police remains committed to ensuring safety and commuter confidence on Pakistan's national highways and motorways. INP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar briefing the media on conclusion of talk with the IMF Mission at Finance Division.