

QUETTA VOICE

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IHC approves Sheikh Rashid's bail plea in Zardari remarks



Police arrest an accused dressed as a woman in Dukki Balochistan

Opposition members stage protest against WAPDA in Balochistan Assembly

Staff Reporter

QUETTA: Opposition members staged a protest demonstration inside the Balochistan Assembly against unannounced and prolonged load shedding on Thursday evening. Opposition lawmakers left their seats and gathered in the middle of the house to vent their anger. "We are tired of WAPDA and QESCO", Asghar Tareen, a lawmaker from the Jamiat ul Ulama e Islam (JUI) said.

lawmakers chanted slogans

The lawmakers also chanted full-throated slogans against the WAPDA and QESCO and demanded immediate restoration of power supply to all districts of Balochistan. "WAPDA has destroyed the agriculture sector of Balochistan", Malik Naseer Shahwani the Parliamentary leader of the Balochistan Assembly said. Most of Balochistan's population is dependent on agriculture and according to statistics around 75 percent of the population's income is from this sector.

Rural areas of Balochistan

The rural areas of Balochistan are facing unannounced and prolonged load-shedding. This has severely affected the agriculture sector in the province. "We want an uninterrupted power supply for the agriculture sector", Mr. Asghar Tareen stated. "This is not our first protest but the incumbent government has con-



tinuously ignored us", Mr. Naseer Shahwani told me. Members from the treasury and opposition benches lashed out at the WAPDA and QESCO for their failure to provide power supply to rural areas of Balochistan. However, QESCO has claimed that the population of

rural areas is not paying millions of dues against them. Engineer Karim Jamali, the QESCO Chief said that billions of rupees were outstanding against the growers' community and domestic consumers. He however said that most of the dues were against agriculture consumers. "First provide power supply

and then speak about the outstanding", Malik Naseer Shahwani said. Chairman of panel Qadir Nail in his ruling directed the QESCO to make sure the provision of the power supply to rural areas of Balochistan. The house also discussed other issues relating to Balochistan.

In meeting with Erdogan, PM Shehbaz offers 'heartfelt condolences' to quake-hit Turkiye

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday conveyed the Pakistani nation's "heartfelt condolences" over the damage and loss of capital earlier today where he was received by senior officials of the Turkish government and Pakistan's ambassador to Turkiye.

and support with the people of Turkiye", the FO said the premier would "reiterate Pakistan's firm commitment to stand by the Turkish people during



precious lives caused by the massive 7.8-magnitude earthquake that struck Turkiye and neighbouring Syria on Feb 6. According to Radio Pakistan, the premier expressed the sentiments in a meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara. PM Shehbaz said on Twitter that he expressed "profound condolences" to Erdogan on behalf of the people and the government of Pakistan. "I assured him of our steadfast support to Turkiye. I am confident that under [the] president's leadership, Turkiye will emerge from this catastrophe stronger," he said. PM Shehbaz had arrived in the Turkish

Later, he visited the Turkish presidency where he was received by Erdogan. In a press release issued earlier today, the Foreign Office (FO) said the premier would meet Erdogan to "personally convey heartfelt condolences on behalf of the entire Pakistani nation over the loss of precious lives and the widespread damage caused by the earthquake". The FO said the prime minister would also visit earthquake-affected areas in southern Turkiye and interact with the Pakistani search and rescue teams deployed in the area as well as survivors of the earthquake. Tearing the trip a "special gesture of solidarity

these difficult times and to continue extending all possible support to the ongoing relief effort". Recalling aid provided by Pakistan in the form of relief items and rescue teams, the FO said the premier had assured Erdogan "of all possible assistance for the rescue and relief effort". "All available resources have been fully mobilized to help our Turkish brothers and sisters. The prime minister is personally overseeing the relief effort," it added. The FO asserted: "Pakistan and Turkiye enjoy deep fraternal ties. Our two countries have resolutely stood by each other during every trial and tribulation." Web Desk

Blast inside Jaffar Express kills a woman, injured 7 passengers

Mir Salam Jozezai

A woman was killed and seven passengers were injured in an explosion inside the Jaffar Express on Thursday morning. Police sources said the blast happened inside the washroom of the passenger train. When the train reached Chicha Watni, the explosion happened, police sources said. The injured were rushed to the hospital for medical treatment. The passengers train was going from Quetta to Rawalpindi when the incident happened.



The nature of the blast is yet to be known, police said. Police reached the spot as an investigation into the incident went underway.

Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Qudus Bizenjo strongly condemned the blast and expressed condolence over the demise of the woman and the injury of other passengers. In a statement issued after the blast, the CM said the perpetrators of the blast would be brought to justice. He said the government has already directed to tight security of the passenger trains traveling from Balochistan to other parts of the country.

Police arrest an accused dressed as a woman in Dukki Balochistan

Hussain Zarkoon

District Dukki police arrested a suspicious person dressed as a woman and recovered weapons from his possession on Thursday. Addressing a press conference Superintendent Police (SP) Abdul Saboor Agha stated that "A Kalashnikov and a pistol were recovered from the two arrested suspects". Mr. Agha said that one suspect was identified as Ahmed Noor from Harnai District. Further investigation is going on from the



arrested accused connection with the martyrdom of the police assistant sub-inspector Muhammad Saleem. "Nose tightened against anti-social elements in the district", the SP concluded.

Bilawal to attend Munich Security Conference in Germany from Feb 16-20

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will undertake a visit to Germany to attend Munich Security Conference-2023 from February 16-20.

During his visit, he will participate in several events and engage with international media, a Foreign Office press release said.

The foreign minister will also hold bilateral meetings with foreign ministers from around the world.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar will also attend the Munich Security Conference.

Besides, on the invitation of the Lithuanian counterpart, Foreign Minister Bilawal will undertake a bilateral visit to



Vilnius on February 20-21. During the visit, MoU on establishment of Bilateral Political Consultations between the governments of Pakistan and Lithuania will be signed.

Foreign Minister Bilawal will hold talks with his Lithuanian counterpart and call on the Speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament.

In the last leg of his tour, the foreign minister will visit Hungary from February 21-22.

He will hold official talks with his Hungarian counterpart where the two sides would deliberate upon the entire spectrum of bilateral relations and exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest.

Both the Foreign Ministers would also sign two MoUs on bilateral cooperation on Sports and Sports Education, and on cooperation between diplomatic academies of the two countries. INP

IHC approves Sheikh Rashid's bail plea in Zardari remarks

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday approved PTI ally Sheikh Rashid's post-arrest bail application in a case pertaining to claims he made on television that former president Asif Ali Zardari was involved in a fresh assassination plot against PTI chief Imran Khan. The Islamabad police had arrested the former interior minister on Feb 2 after which the court had granted the police his two-day physical remand. A similar case was



rejected twice by Islamabad's sessions court which prompted the PTI ally to approach the IHC seeking his release. The plea was heard by Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani. At the outset of the hearing today, Rashid's counsel Salman Akram Raja informed the court about a statement given by his client. "There is nothing in the evidence that his statement led to any clash between Web Desk

Sanaullah calls on CJP to take notice of audio clips purportedly featuring Parvez Elahi

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah on Thursday called on Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial to take notice of audio clips in which PML-Q leader Parvez Elahi is purportedly heard giving directives for fixing cases before a sitting Supreme Court (SC) judge.

Earlier in the day, two alleged audio clips of Elahi surfaced on social media in which the ex-Punjab chief minister can be heard giving the directions to two men regarding fixing certain cases before a particular apex court judge.

It is pertinent to mention that the SC has not issued a statement regarding the alleged audio clips.

Elahi did not identify both the men by their full names, but reports suggest that one of them is a senior official of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

In the first purported audio, a man believed to be Elahi's is heard telling "Joja sahab" that the apex court judge should be appointed to hear the "Muhammad Khan case".

The man called Joja responds by saying that "he will go to Islamabad today". "He was saying today that they'll send [the case] to Islamabad. We will try in the process which starts after that," the man adds.

"Do try to get it done," Elahi purportedly says. The PML-Q leader allegedly goes on to say that the judge was "very



audacious" to which the man called Joja agrees. In the second alleged audio clip, Elahi purportedly tells another man that a specific case has to be fixed for hearing before the SC judge. The other man is then heard asking whether the case has been filed to which Elahi responds in the affirmative and says that Joja should be asked about the details. "I will find out from Joja sahab. I talked yesterday as well and it wasn't ready till yesterday. I will check," the other man purportedly tells Elahi. "[Ensure] that the task is properly done. You do it," Elahi allegedly goes on to say to which the latter responds that he will do it. Elahi also tells the man that "no one has to be told" to which the latter expresses his understanding. Commenting on the alleged leaks in a press conference in Islamabad, the interior minister referred to the video leak controversy involving former accountability court judge Arshad Malik. In the video, Malik had told a close aide to PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif that he had been "blackmailed and pressurised" to convict the former prime minister. "Arshad Malik had explained how he was made to issue a verdict. He took names and named those who called him and what they said. He had mentioned the chief justice of the time [but] there was no action taken." INP

QUETTA VOICE

Editor Asim Khan

BPSC: an unprecedented decision, if implemented

Indeed, it would be an unprecedented decision if the provincial government empowers Balochistan Public Service Commission (BPSC) to recruit employees from grade-5 to 17. There has always been a black mark over Balochistan regarding the sale of jobs. Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Qudus Bizenjo deserves appreciation for taking this hard and politically difficult decision since all ministers and MPAs always strive to recruit their own blue-eyed in government departments.

Action should match words

The important question is still, Action should match the words of Chief Minister Balochistan regarding the BPSC decision. Undoubtedly, recruitment through BPSC would wash away the black dot of corruption and ensure better governance in the province. This would also help recruit competent and deserving youth to serve the province in the future irrespective of creed, color, and political affiliation.

As per a well-placed officer in the Balochistan government, currently, over 30,000 posts of employees are lying vacant. Only in the Balochistan higher education department, the number of lecturers and professors posts is over 1000. Similarly, in secondary education in Balochistan, over 10,000 posts of teaching staff/teachers are lying vacant.

BPSC act empowers the government to increase the number of members

Yes, the existing manpower and the members at the BPSC are not in a position to conduct tests and interviews for all grades. However, the BPSC act 1989's section 3 allows the provincial government to increase the number of the members from present 8 and establish new branches of the commission in the divisional headquarters of Balochistan. This would also be easy for candidates to apply in their nearest branches and appear in tests and interviews. Financially, it is also economical for the government. The provincial government would not need to pump extra resources to run the system.

Sindh and Punjab are the best examples and they can be approached with regard to the establishment of BPSC branches in interior Balochistan. It is not only the responsibility of the Chief Minister rather all political parties should play their role in this regard to pave the way for good governance in Balochistan.



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 oversized 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-

Asghar Harifal

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

Time for an election

By Mosharraf Zaidi

The polycrisis in Pakistan rages on. Urgent questions agitate the condition of the Pakistani. A sovereign default may not be imminent, but an existential economic crisis has raged for months, perhaps years – depending on who is measuring what. How long before economic difficulties cause major social unrest in Pakistan?

The dissolution of the Punjab Assembly means that an already frayed federal compact could be tested more severely than at any stage since the 7th NFC Award and the 18th Amendment. How much dissonance between provinces and across the federation can the existing system bear before subnational narratives and movements emerge as key variables in governance?

The terrorism of the TTP has surged in recent weeks. Can the country continue to send its soldiers and police personnel in harm's way without a coherent, politically feasible counter terrorism strategy in place?

Significant chunks of post disaster reconstruction remain pending from the 2005 earthquake and the 2010 floods. Will the reconstruction of the damage caused by the climate change induced superfloods of 2022 follow a different trajectory?

Afghanistan is relatively stable after nearly four decades, but short periods of stability there have always produced long

periods of instability. Will the Taliban be able to sustain their control over Afghanistan's territory in a manner that eventually leads to the end of terrorist sanctuaries in that country?

Saudi Arabia is changing rapidly, and for the better. Does the millennial leadership of Pakistan's most vital strategic partner have the appetite to continue dealing with the dysfunction of the dinosaurs of the Pakistani military and civilian elite?

China has responded to the domestic pressures that the strict Covid-19 lockdown in there had generated by opening up to travel. Suddenly there is hope that economic growth forecasts could be revised upward. Will a once-again growing China revert to the pre-pandemic laissez faire infrastructure financing binge in countries like Pakistan?

There isn't an obvious right or wrong answer to any of these questions. Many of the determinants of these questions lie outside the jurisdiction of Pakistan or Pakistanis. Yet there is one thing common to them all. They are substantial questions. Can a weak and internally contradictory government, scared of its own shadow, try answer such questions? Not even a little bit.

Pakistan has been aching for a free and fair election since 2018. The only way the country has any chance at tackling these questions is by conducting a truly free and

fair election. Only a government with a fresh mandate – even if such a mandate is conjured up through a coalition – can attempt to tackle these challenges. Absent the public's renewed confidence through an election, there is no version of Pakistan that will work.

Of course, an election and a new mandate, even a thumping majority, do not guarantee that the resulting government will be able to tackle these questions capably. But they will be able to tackle them the way they want, the way the Pakistani wants. Since 2018, the decision of the military leadership to install a government of its own liking in Islamabad has meant that elected civilian leaders have neither the full agency to sink or swim on their own, nor the liability to be answerable for their decisions.

Imran Khan's popularity after losing the vote of no-confidence in 2022 is not easily explicable or replicable, but it is not entirely drawn from his charisma nor the appeal of Khan's lies about a global anti-Khan conspiracy. It is also not hinged on the anti-military tone that Khan adopted after being dumped by his once-upon-a-time patrons. What does explain some of Khan's appeal since 2022 is that he very clearly aligned all his weaknesses with the military leadership and all his strengths as his own.

It seems unlikely that the PML-N or PPP can pull off such sophisticated

and effective political messaging in the weeks and months to come – but there should no doubt about their attempts to do so in the not-too-distant future. Both PDM members will attempt to distance themselves from the cool shade of the military's bosom under which they currently reside. This is a manoeuvre both parties have honed over decades, and one that Khan has masterfully taken from under their noses.

The military may have gotten too used to having all power in Pakistan flow to it and through it. Things that feel good are easy to catch and hard to quit. Claims of the military being neutral or having dissociated from politics were clearly greatly exaggerated.

All of these factors make an early and immediate general election even more imperative. No one in Pakistan should be more keen for a free, fair and credible general election than the military – so it can rid itself of the stench of the post 2016 era and the 'mistakes' of 2018, 2022 and everything before, during and after. But as ever there are vultures and parasites lined up from here to eternity, ready to argue against the most obvious way forward for the country. Three of the arguments merit dismantling, early and often.

The first and most frequent argument against an immediate election is the one used by many that are understandably con-

vinced that absent a PTI victory, Imran Khan will refuse to accept the outcome of any election. This is true and has been proven in 2013. But what happened in 2014 was more important. Khan camped out, kind of, at D Chowk – and he huffed and puffed as is his wont, but he could not blow this house down. An electorally legitimate Nawaz Sharif survived the triple threat of Tahirul Qadri, Imran Khan and the invisible hand of Pakistani politics. Winners aren't whiners. Hold a free and fair election. The loser won't have the capacity to destabilize or undermine a real winner – just like 2014. Besides, if Khan is not going to accept anything but a victory, then holding an election in October 2023 or holding it in April 2023 will make no difference. Hold the election. As soon as possible.

The second argument against an immediate announcement of elections is that the country and its economy aren't stable enough for an election. But this was true a year ago, and the economy has gotten worse since then. Yes, Shaukat Tarin lined the Finance Division with landmines, but Ishaq Dar is doing the same. The economy cannot recover without difficult decisions that require the electorate's mandate. The desperate retired uncles arguing otherwise as they salivate at the prospects of an unelected cabal of technocrats taking over Pakistan.

Great debates

By Murtaza Solangi

We have finally entered the most trying times of our history. Economic meltdown with no sign of relief, extreme political polarization and instability combined with rising terrorism – are all on full display.

There is also pressure on various stakeholders after the failed Imran project, and they are sandwiched between attacks from the PTI of Imran Khan and the dissenting voices from the current coalition. Governance is breaking down, ungoverned spaces are popping up all over the country, and the people are fast losing hope.

Moral degeneration and the crime rate are on the rise due to despondency. And the bigotry nurtured over the decades has become an uncontrolled monster manifesting itself in the most ugly incidents like the one in Nankana Sahib recently. The great disorder under the sun asks for great leadership. Do we have it? Can we rise up? Can we sail through these choppy waters? Questions galore.

In terms of economic hardships, this probably is the worst time in the three quarters of a century of Pakistan. The country today looks friendless in the comity of nations thanks to the policies of our power elite. We might avoid a proverbial default after agreeing to the most shameful conditions put up by the IMF, but our problems are not going away even after the IMF

programme goes through.

Can we agree on an economic reform agenda to avoid international humiliation and put our country on the path of economic resurgence? We are bordered with the markets of around three billion people to our north and the east. Can we transform our economy to cater to the market needs of just those two neighbours as well as restructure our economy to be a useful part of the global value chain?

These are questions of our survival. Can we create a national consensus on these issues and issue a national economic charter across party lines and commit to our people as the way forward after the elections? The same old same old won't work. In order to reach the consensus, a series of great debates on mainstream and social media are needed. Will our media find time for these useful debates about the very future of our people or continue to get bogged down with silly shouting matches of 'he said he said'?

A cursory look at world history tells us that nations have experienced the worst times of their history including wars and great depression before but only countries with wise leadership and foresight have sailed through. During these depressing times, people with resources to survive have to help other people. That will help a country from going down a spiral of anarchy. People around the world have stood with their people in distress.

So can we. Will we? Will our power elites open their wallets and hearts to help the people of their own country to survive this troubling time?

We have seen countries disappear from the world map despite the mighty military power they used to have. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia don't exist today. This happens also when religious, linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity is not treated as a strength. The same diversity becomes your death warrant if you don't appreciate and celebrate it.

Pakistan continues to develop the population time bomb with every passing day. With no resources available to develop human resources, we continue piling up large crowds of ignorant, unskilled and unhealthy people. Combine this with the historic nurturing of bigotry and religious intolerance, and we are fast becoming a global nuisance.

The Pakistan passport today has become one of the most undesirable documents. We need a national consensus on population control as well as the state's equal opportunity to people of all faiths and no preferential treatment to any religious group. That is what Jinnah preached on August 11, 1947 while addressing the constituent assembly. Can we educate our people about that in our congregations, homes and other places? Will our media become a source of enlightenment and promote.

To survive and prosper

Dr Akmal Hussain & Dr Khalid Malik

That Pakistan is in a profound economic and political crisis is no longer in dispute. Most observers and economists are united in that opinion. What to do about it is less clear. The Chinese character for risk is closely related to opportunity, which is more accurately defined as a 'crucial point when something begins to change'.

Will it? We hope so. This article is more about 'what' needs to change.

There are two distinct thoughts about the current economic crisis. One: adjust now, stabilize the economy and then restart the growth process. Let us call this the traditional view. This thinking underlines the IMF programme: let the exchange rate be determined by market forces, curtail expenditures, increase taxes and so on. Each time this logic has been followed, the subsequent growth spurt hits the foreign exchange barrier with the under-performing export sector seen as the basic culprit. Technical discussions about export subsidies being inefficient, and/or the need to revamp the export sector, especially textiles.

The second approach, less successful of late, is to rely on the largesse of friends – China, UAE and Saudi Arabia. And, in earlier days, the USA. The thinking being that the country can scrape through without major structural changes in the Pakistani economy or in the ability of the ruling elite to maintain their global lifestyles.

The government has tried hard to pursue a mix of the two strategies, but it has become abundantly clear that the IMF option is the only option left.

Will that be enough? Will that lay the base for future prosperity? Will that shift the economy and society in 'putting people first'?

A quick review of successful development experiences, including South Korea and China, highlight some deeper more critical factors than just macroeconomic issues of balanced budgets and higher tax-to-GDP ratios. These include: a determined long-term policy perspective since development is all about transforming society and the economy; enhancing capabilities, by investing in people; and, by recognizing that social policy is as important as economic policy in this transformation.

One, establish (and adequately fund) effective public education and health systems. No

country, bar none, has succeeded in developing without a functioning public education system.

In a land with little social protection, pursuing universal health coverage with a focus on the poor is the right step to take now.

There are structural and funding issues which need to be urgently addressed for both subjects. Current income support programmes for instance not only need to be substantially enhanced but have to be conditioned on enhancing capabilities.

Two, fix the agricultural sector. First, tax agricultural income, especially since almost 70 per cent of the land is in the hands of large and medium farmers.

It is a myth (and little evidence) to argue that large farms are more productive than small farms. A cursory look at why East Punjab has done so much better than West Punjab shows that structural changes (land reforms) and incentives (and more educated next generation farmers) are at the heart of the differences.

If 'putting people first' is our defining slogan, then it is time to support small farmers (defined as less than 7.5 acres) which form 78 per cent of farmers and 32 per cent of total farm area. Start by reallocating state land to poor farmers, with strong technical support for seeds, fertilizer, and advice.

Initiate and scale up a Rural Employment Guarantee programme, enshrining the core idea of employment as a basic right. And, through this, provide a necessary injection of purchasing power into the rural economy, especially for the landless and those affected by the floods.

Three, restructure the export sector. Without getting into a long debate about subsidies, set up a five-year transition plan on a subsidy draw-down, with an agreed structural transition and diversification towards high value added, knowledge intensive exports.

But results are likely to take time. Four, remittances: Imagine a Pakistan economy without any remittances. The system needs to adjust and organize better investment grade products for overseas Pakistanis. Right now, the incentives are mostly about investing in real estate.

Many innovations are possible. Take the example of Ethiopia, a non-oil producer, which set up a \$150 billion sovereign wealth fund, seeking investment for state-owned enterprises and assets as the government pushes ahead with its privatization initia-

tives.

Five, get rid of an open capital account. Countries like China with \$3 trillion reserves have not opened their capital accounts. Why has Pakistan kept the capital account open for so long? Open accounts limit domestic policy autonomy and can deeply disrupt domestic production arrangements.

A comprehensive study about trade and financial liberalization for the 2014 Global Human Development Report concluded that 'opening up' benefits developing countries only when their human capabilities are high. Later studies have reconfirmed this essential point. Even in the EU accession process, less advanced countries like Romania and Bulgaria have tried to argue for selective capital controls.

There has been some talk in Pakistan about a one per cent economy. But a deeper concern is about a Pakistani elite, which feels as global as any, able to travel and co-exist in UK, US and Dubai spaces. Indeed, many Pakistani business operators tend to have a business base overseas as well. Even experienced Pakistani economists have tended to consider western practices in looking at current policies, rather than critically examining what has worked in other developing countries and applying those lessons to Pakistan. For a 220 million country we appear to be driven by the needs and values of a few million people at the most.

Six, fiscal space: It goes without saying: eliminate all the special SROs, and the associated giveaways (unearned incomes or rents). The last National Human Development Report (for Pakistan) estimated an annual cost of \$70 billion dollars in these legal giveaways to the elites, which contrasts with half that estimated amount for corruption. Just stop!

Rethink the centre-province fiscal arrangements, set 'checkable' development standards for expenditures which may also minimize political largesse, and require provinces to raise their own tax revenues as matching funds. It could well be, as has been argued elsewhere, that these steps may not be enough and that a deeper fiscal surgery is now required. There is talk of reducing non-combat military expenditures. What needs to be kept in mind in this regard is that only the government in consultation with the nation's military has the sovereign right to determine the details regarding the financial operational capability of its forces. Not the IMF.

Inequality and hunger

By Chuck Collins

Beginning on May 24, the World Economic Forum is gathering in Davos, Switzerland for an in-person meeting, discussing the global tax system and financial inclusion.

Thanks to protests and new research, however, participants will not be able to avoid the elephant in the room: the surging inequality of wealth during the pandemic.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Indian lyricist Javed Akhtar to grace Faiz Festival in Lahore

LAHORE: Javed Akhtar - the renowned Indian poet and lyricist - is set to attend the Faiz Festival in Lahore, Pakistan, as India's head delegate.

The seventh installment of the festival will offer over 60 free literary, music, and art events to the public from February 17 to 19.

Unlike previous years, all events will be free of charge for the public, following criticism over the high cost of tickets.

Diamond hotspots in Pakistan need exploration: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Several rock suites in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), and Balochistan have been assessed as high-potential ones for diamond exploration, said Muhammad Yaqoob Shah, Principal Geoscientist at the Islamabad-based Global Mining Company.

Discussing the presence of diamonds in the earth's vaults of Pakistan with WealthPK, he said in modern times, diamond mining was operational from every possible target.

He said diamond was mined from unconventional diamondiferous host rocks. Geologically established genetic models and extensive field/laboratory observations strongly indicate diamond formations in Pakistan, he added.

"Diamondiferous source mantle rocks may occur in Jijal complex rock suite. It is rich in garnet and pyroxene zones containing rare carbonate minerals with contents of titanium, nickel, chromium, and hematite ranging between 2763-9886ppm, 16-62 ppm, 14-109 ppm, and 10.90-15.20% respectively.

include discussions, lectures, theatre, dance performances, gawwali, and will host foreign delegates from the UK, Canada, USA, and India.

Among the foreign delegates, Javed Akhtar will launch his new book and participate in the mushaira, a poetic symposium. The Alhambra Arts Council on Mall Road and the surrounding areas, including Canal Road, are being prepared for the three-day literary festival. All activities in the festival will be free of

charge, except for a concert by Shafiqat Amanat Ali, which will cost Rs 3,000 per ticket. The event promises a variety of local personalities and international performers, such as Rizwan Wali Muhammad, son of Habib Wali Muhammad, who will present his father's as well as Faiz's works, and a delegation of qawwals from the family of Sabri Gharana from the UK. The festival has become a significant platform for literary and cultural exchange. INP



KARACHI: President Dr. Arif Alvi offering condolences and Fateha over the sad demise of Late Zia Mohiyuddin, at his residence.

AIR CHIEF AWARDS HI (M) TO DG BOMETEC ON BEHALF OF GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN

On behalf of Government of Pakistan, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force conferred Hilal-i-Imtiaz (Military) upon General Fan Jianjun, Director General Bureau of Military Equipment Technical Cooperation (BOMETEC), People's Republic of China, during his visit to Air Headquarters, Islamabad today.

The award was conferred in recognition of his wholehearted efforts in enhancing bilateral military relations and the pivotal role played by General Fan in PAF's capability enhancement thus ensuring regional balance of power.

The visiting dignitary called on the Air Chief in his office. During the meeting several key areas of mutual interest along with regional developments

were discussed. Chief of the Air Staff shared broad contours of his vision and PAF's modernization drive to further augment current operational capability necessitated in contemporary warfare especially in Artificial Intelligence, Cyber and Space domains. He also briefed the visiting dignitary about various ongoing projects for PAF's Operational Construct in line with the emerging trends.

The Air Chief also highlighted that both the countries enjoy historic and unprecedented strategic partnership and reiterated his resolve to further enhance the existing bilateral ties in military to military cooperation and training domains between PAF and PLAAF. CAS further said, "Pakistan values its strong diplomatic, economic, defence relationship and time-tested

friendship with China which are based on convergence on all important issues relating to regional peace, security and stability". The Air Chief also lauded the cooperation offered by China as Pakistan's strategic partner in the realization of an independent technology-driven PAF and its innovative plans.

General Fan Jianjun thanked the Air Chief and the Government of Pakistan on being awarded with Hilal-i-Imtiaz (Military) and hoped that cooperation between the Air Forces of the two countries will continue to expand in future. The visiting dignitary praised the professionalism of PAF personnel and the exceptional progress made by PAF over the years, especially through indigenization. General Fan appreciated the CAS PR

IHC reserves verdict on Sheikh Rashid's bail plea in Zardari remarks case

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday reserved a verdict on a petition filed by Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed seeking post-arrest bail in a case pertaining to murder plot allegations against former president Asif Ali Zardari.

Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani reserved the verdict after hearing arguments from Barrister Salman Akram Raja, the counsel for the former interior minister, and Islamabad Advocate General Jahangir Khan Jadoon in the case.

Mr Raja said his client gave a

statement that was broadcast on news channels, adding that there was no evidence that Sheikh Rashid's statement caused confrontation between the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP).

The government lawyer said the AML chief was a senior lawyer and he should exercise extra caution while giving statements. He said Sheikh Rashid publicly abused Asif Zardari and his son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. At which, Mr Raja contended that the advocate general was giving irrelevant arguments.

An investigation officer in the case told the court that he

obtained details of Sheikh Rashid's statement from the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra), adding that the former interior minister said he received information about murder plot allegations against Asif Zardari from PTI Chairman Imran Khan. He said the AML chief could not provide evidence regarding the allegations. The advocate general said if Sheikh Rashid submit an undertaking of not repeating the crime, the court could decide on his bail plea. On Feb 10, Mr Ahmed had filed a bail plea in the high court after a judicial magistrate INP

39 dead in Panama migrant bus crash

PANAMA CITY: At least 39 people, most of them undocumented US-bound migrants who had just survived a perilous jungle crossing, died in a bus crash in Panama early Wednesday, officials said.

Panama's National Migration Service said the injured, including children, were being treated at various hospitals and clinics, without saying how many there were.

The latest death toll, it added, was based on "preliminary information." The bus had "66 passengers on board" when it plunged down a ravine and hit a minibus some 400 kilometers (250 miles) west of the capital Panama City, the press statement said.

The bus was transporting migrants who had crossed the Darien Gap - an inhospitable jungle area bordering Colombia - and were moving westward toward Costa Rica from where they aimed to continue their journey through Central America and Mexico, and ultimately to the United States.

The bus was on its way to a hostel in Gualacra near the Costa Rica border, where the passengers were to have rested before continuing their journey.

Local media said the crash happened as the driver was turning the bus around after missing the hostel.

The nationalities of the occupants has not been revealed but Cuba's foreign minister Bruno Rodriguez said on Twitter that Cubans were among the dead. INP

AC bars NAB from arresting Usman Buzdar in assets case

LAHORE: An accountability court (AC) has barred the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) from arresting former chief minister Punjab Usman Buzdar in assets beyond means case, ARY News reported on Thursday.

As per details, the court, after hearing arguments of the counsel, granted interim bail to former chief minister Punjab till February 27 and restrained the bureau from his arrest.

Usman Buzdar's counsel told the court that the NAB first said his arrest is not needed but now sent a notice. The court ordered Buzdar to submit two surety bonds of Rs500,000 for availing the relief of the bail. Earlier, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) denied that it is inquiring INP



ISLAMABAD: Caption Managing Director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, Amir Fida Paracha talking to a beneficiary during a "Khuli Kachehri", held to resolve the matters of poor people, in PBM Head office.

Pakistan strongly condemns Indian negative actions, human rights violations in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch has stated that human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir continue unabated. Pakistan continues to raise concerns about the situation and calls for just and peaceful settlement of the dispute in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions.

Responding to questions at her weekly news briefing in Islamabad on Thursday, Foreign Office Spokesperson said these raids are reprisals of BBC's documentary on Gujarat massacre of 2002 and India's illegal and unilateral steps in Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir on

August 5th, 2019. The Spokesperson said Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is traveling to Germany today to attend the Munich Security Conference. He will then travel to Lithuania where he will sign MoU on the establishment of bilateral political consultations.

In the last leg of his tour, the Foreign Minister will visit Hungary from 21st to 22nd of this month and will deliberate upon the entire spectrum of bilateral relations and exchange views on regional and international issues. He will also sign two MoUs on bilateral cooperation between diplomatic academies and another on sports and education between the two countries.

The Spokesperson said second round of Pakistan-US mid-level Defence Dialogue is underway in Washington to discuss a range of issues including defence and security cooperation in the broader regional and global context.

The Pakistani delegation in the dialogue is led by Chief of General Staff Lieutenant General Muhammad Saied while the US side is led by US Acting Assistant Secretary of Defence for Indo Pacific Security Affairs Dr. Ely Rameu.

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch announced that Counselor of the US Department of State Derek Chollet is traveling to Pakistan from today on a three-day visit with an interagency INP

One killed, three injured in Jaffar Express explosion

CHICHAWATNI: One woman was killed and three others were injured as a result of an explosion which took place in the Jaffar Express near Chichawatni on Thursday. The train was going from Quetta to Peshawar.

According to media reports, the explosion in the train took place as soon as it left Mian Chanu and the passengers in the train kept pulling the emergency chain but the staff did not pay attention. Rescue 1122 and the police reached the spot and started the investigation as the nature of the explosion was still unidentified. The deceased and injured were shifted to a nearby hospital.

Punjab caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi took notice of the incident and sought a report from the Inspector General of Punjab Police while ordering an investigation into the incident. The CM directed the Commissioner, the RPO, the Deputy Commissioner and the DPO of Sahiwal to reach the spot immediately and provide the best possible treatment facilities to the injured. INP

Pakistan slips to 7th place in cotton-producing countries list

ISLAMABAD: In the list of countries producing the most cotton globally, Pakistan has dropped from fourth to seventh place, according to the Cotton Ginners Forum, as a result of the unprecedented and catastrophic floods which submerged the cotton crops.

Chairman Cotton Ginners Forum Ehsan-ul-Haq said on Thursday that the main reason for this is the record cultivation of sugarcane in cotton zones. He also added that adverse weather conditions have caused an unusual decline in cotton production.

However, domestically, the price of cotton has remained stable. The cost of cotton has decreased by 1500 rupees per maund across the country and now it costs Rs20,500 in the country instead of 22,000 rupees.

Likewise, cotton prices were also reduced and remained in the international market.

Furthermore, Pakistan is predicted to generate 50 million bales this year, the lowest output volume in history. INP



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

Launch of digital knowledge hub to accelerate progress on SDGs: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: The launch of a digital knowledge hub recently will go a long way in helping Pakistan attain Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Empowerment, Advocacy and Development) for localisation of SDGs in Pakistan, a European Union-funded initiative, and the National Parliamentary Task Force

on SDGs launched the "Digital SDG Knowledge Hub." Talking about the initiative, Romina Khurshid Alam, the taskforce convener, told WealthPK that the digital knowledge INP

NOTICE INVITING TENDER		
The office of the Executive Engineer (Building) CWPP&H Department District Nushki invites bids for Contractors/firms (Single Stage-Single Envelope) for below mentioned work. All interested bidders are required to submit documents as per following briefs in support of their sealed tender based on composite schedule of rates 2018, Government of Baluchistan amended up to date from interested contractors / Firms for the work: Earnest Money 2%, Tender Fee Rs. 1000/-		
S.#	NAME OF WORK/SCHEME	E/COST
1.	ESTABLISHMENT OF DD3C IN 30 DISTRICTS OF BALOCHISTAN (POLICE/HOME DEPARTMENT (PHASE-1) (DISTRICT NUSHKI) PSDP No: 2505 22021.0847 TSE-222302248183	23.468 Million
The procurement shall be carried out in accordance with Baluchistan Public Procurement Regulatory, Rules 2014 and Pakistan Engineering Council By-Laws Basic Eligibility:- i) The Contractors have valid registration with Pakistan Engineering Council renewed up to 2023 in relevant Category & code C-6 or above in relevant discipline registration with tax authorities i.e. (NTN, BTRA and Sales Tax Departments Certificates) where applicable. Term over of last three years. Method of Procurement:- Single Stage - Single Envelope bidding Procedure will be adopted. BIDDING / TENDER DOCUMENTS: Issuance: The bidders can obtain the bidding document from the address mentioned above on production of green Challan form for an amount of Rs. 1000/- (Non-refundable) for work deposited in the head of account C-02716 Civil work through Govt. Treasury/National Bank of Pakistan or can be downloaded from the website of BPPRA (www.bppra.gov.pk), during working hour, from the date of publication of this invitation in newspapers till one day prior to the last date of submission. The contractors/firms who obtain bidding documents by downloading them from BPPRA website will also be required to procedure deposited green Challan form of above mentioned Fee. The bids must be accompanied by bid security in Bid for work in the form of call deposit of amount specified above in the office name of the under signed from a scheduled bank. No any Bank Drafts & Bank Cheque will be acceptable. Deadline of Submission: Sealed bids complete in all respect in a single envelope clearly marked with Work title & type of proposal must be delivered by hand or through registered mail to the address mentioned below on or before 6 th March, 2023 at 12:00 Hours. No any proposal will be accepted after mentioned date and time. Opening: The envelope containing "Bid" will be opened on the same day at 01:00 Hours before procurement committee in the presence of bidders or their authorized representatives who choose to attend. Place of issuance, submission inquiries and opening will be:- Address:- Executive Engineer (Buildings) PP&H Department District Nushki. Phone 0825-672699 OR E-mail Address: xen2@districtnushki@gmail.com Bids Validity: Ninety (90) days Terms & Conditions:- Term and condition are mentioned (incorporated) in detail in bidding documents. And procurement Agency may cancel the bidding process at any time prior to the acceptance of bid of proposal, as per provision of BPPRA rules, 2014.		
PRQ No.2462/16-02-2023		
www.dpr.gov.pk @dpr_gob dpr.gob @dgpr.balochistan		

Decarbonisation the way forward for Pakistan's cement industry

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's cement industry, despite being a significant contributor to the carbon footprint, has the potential to spearhead the effort to curb emissions and transition towards a low-carbon economy if it gets ample support and incentives from the government, experts said.

Ubaid Rehman Zia, Senior Research Economist at Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), said while talking to WealthPK that decarbonisation is crucial to achieving Sustainable

Development Goal 7. He said the industrial sector in Pakistan holds a significant responsibility in terms of carbon emissions, contributing a staggering 32% to the total 232 Mt CO2 emissions from the energy sector. He added that the manufacturing of construction materials, such as cement and bricks, exacerbates the problem, accounting for 50% of total emissions from the industrial sector.

The researcher mentioned that coal remains a major contributor (51.4%) to energy con-

sumption in the industrial sector. He added that this trend has been on the rise, with the annual compound growth rate of coal consumption in the industry exceeding 20% since 2016.

"The cement sector in Pakistan accounts for almost 36% of the coal used in the industrial sector," he pointed out.

Ubaid further stated that according to the National Determined Contributions (NDCs) of Pakistan (climate action plan), the country has set a goal of limiting emissions by 50% by 2030,

and added that there is a potential for a 9% reduction in emissions in the industrial sector.

However, he said, the challenge remains to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, especially for the cement sector, which needs to reduce its emissions by 53% by 2030.

Saleha Qureshi, energy expert at the SDPI, told WealthPK that the industrial sector is a vital part of modern economies; however, it also contributes significantly to global emissions, with major industries like cement, concrete, iron

and steel, oil and gas, chemicals, and mining collectively responsible for 80% of industrial emissions. She said that in Pakistan, these emissions make up 6.5% of the country's total CO2 emissions. Saleha said that despite its crucial role in the economy, the low carbon transition in the cement sector in Pakistan faces challenges due to limited fiscal space and investment. However, she added that this presents an opportunity to address the emissions issue and drive the country towards INP

Govt taking decisions inevitable for saving Pakistan from default: Faisal Kundi

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety with the status of Minister of State Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday said the coalition government had taken difficult decisions to save the country's economy from default.

Addressing a presser, the SAPM said the coalition government was fully cognizant of the sufferings of the people at the hands of inflation and was committed to facilitating them.

He said the country was facing potent economic challenges due to the ineffective policies of the previous government, which made an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with endorsement from the parliament.

"The nation knows who is responsible for the current economic crisis in the country", he said.

Imran Khan's government played havoc with the country and its economy by taking harmful decisions. "We are accountable to the masses and want to provide every possible relief to them as we have to contest the election but such decisions were inevitable for addressing the prevailing economic crisis", he said.

Criticizing Imran Khan's claims of a foreign conspiracy against him, Faisal Kundi said the PTI chairman

brought defamation to the country at the international level by his "conspiracy theory" which shifted from the United States to "Rawalpindi".

"He (Imran) is claiming that it was not the conspiracy of United States, but some other forces were behind that", he remarked.

The SAPM highlighted that the present government was still facing challenges of reconstruction of houses for those affected by the floods especially in Sindh, Balochistan, southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Punjab.

Commenting on the Jail Bhuro Tehreek (fill the prison movement), Faisal Kundi said the person who was talking of the movement was himself sacred of appearing before the court. Addressing a presser, the SAPM said the coalition government was fully cognizant of the sufferings of the people at the hands of inflation and was committed to facilitating them.

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Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif reaches Turkiye on an official visit to express solidarity with the earthquake victims. Senior officials of the Turkish Government and Pakistan's Ambassador to Turkiye received the Prime Minister upon his arrival in Ankara.

Pakistan stands with Turkish brethren during testing times: Dar

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar made a telephone call to Dr. Nureddin Nebati, Minister for Finance and Treasury, Republic of Turkiye, and offered his heartfelt condolences and sympathies on human and material losses in the deadly earthquake in Turkiye and extended all out relief support in this difficult time.

He further expressed the resolve of the Government and its people to stand with their Turkish brothers and sisters during these testing times.

Dr. Nureddin Nebati, Minister for Finance and Treasury, Republic of Turkiye expressed gratitude to Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and admired Govt of Pakistan for sending immediate relief aid and necessary help for the earthquake victims in need of hour. He further stated that in their Cabinet meeting Turkish President greatly appreciated the support which Pakistan has been extending for the earthquake victims. INP

CDA accelerates anti-encroachment operations

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has accelerated its anti-encroachment operations across the Federal Capital.

According to details, the second massive operation was conducted in Federal Capital sector F-6/4, where the representatives of the Ministry of Works and the CDA anti-encroachment staff, in a joint operation has demolished encroachments outside government residences using heavy machinery to clear dozens of sheds, garages, removed fences, additional gate and boundary walls and handed over the government land.

Where machinery access was not possible, regular grinders and generators were arranged and removed encroachments with the help of grinders.

Authority also conducted operation against encroachments in the area of Saniyadi village, the anti-encroachment team deployed there took timely action and demolished the under-construction house and foiled the encroachment attempt. In Jaba Teli area, two walls and a water tank were demolished and the attempt to occupy was foiled.

Operation also launched in Khanna Bridge area where the sellers often came to the road and Khanna Loop, which blocked the road, the anti-encroachment staff took full action and confiscated one truckload of goods. Earlier, CDA Chairman Capt (ret'd) Noor-ul-Amin Mengal in a meeting directed the officers to early complete the ongoing development project. He strictly directed to remove encroachments in the way of ongoing development projects, especially IJP Road, Behara Kahu Project, 11th Avenue along with clean and pure water delivery. INP

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However, domestically, the price of cotton has remained stable. The cost of cotton has decreased by 1500 rupees per maund across the country and now it costs Rs20,500 in the country instead of 22,000 rupees. Likewise, cotton prices were also reduced and remained in the international market. Furthermore, Pakistan is predicted to generate 50 million bales this year, the lowest output volume in history. INP

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi meets Maryam Nawaz in Lahore

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader and former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Thursday met with the party's Senior Vice-President and Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz in Lahore.

Matters pertaining to the organizational structure of the party and overall political situation came under discussion during the meeting between two leaders.

The meeting was held at the party's central secretariat in Model Town.

The meeting came after rumours started making rounds on social media that Abbasi was quitting the PML-N and setting up a new party since he resigned from the party's key post soon after Maryam's election as the senior vice-president and chief organizer.

In an interview to a private news channel last week, Abbasi made it clear that his leader is

Nawaz Sharif and if Maryam Nawaz elevated to the PML-N's top office, he will consider remaining in the party's fold or not.

"I was named the senior vice president of the PML-N when Shehbaz Sharif was arrested in year 2019," Shahid Khaqan said.

"When Maryam was given the leadership position and elevated to the Chief Organizer's position, I had tendered my resignation at that time from the party office to the PML-N president," he said. "I could not work further on the party's office, I told."

"I have long-time relations and friendship with Nawaz Sharif, he is my leader, and this relation could not be bonded with Maryam," Shahid Khaqan said.

Responding a question to join another party with a straightforward 'No' he said if he had to quit the PML-N he will return to his home as "I have no other home except it". INP

Imran Khan appoints Aftab Siddiqui as PTI Karachi president

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan has appointed former MNA Aftab Siddiqui as the new Karachi chapter president.

The former prime minister Imran Khan announced the decision while chairing the PTI Karachi chapter leadership meeting ahead of by-polls on nine Karachi NA seats scheduled for March 16.

Imran Khan removed Karachi President Bilal Ghaffar and appointed him as a member of the economic team of the party.

Furthermore, The PTI chief also nominated Khuram Sher Zaman as a member of the

Central Executive Committee. The development came after PTI suffered defeat in Karachi local government elections held in January this year.

It is pertinent to mention here that by-elections will be held in nine constituencies of Karachi on March 16.

The nine constituencies where by-polls are scheduled include: NA-241 Korangi Karachi-III; NA-242 Karachi East-I; NA-243 Karachi East-II; NA-244 Karachi East-III; NA-247 Karachi South-II; NA-250 Karachi West-III; NA-252 Karachi West-V; NA-254 Karachi Central-II; and NA-256 Karachi Central-IV. INP

Rhodium Residency launching ceremony held in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: The launching ceremony of Rhodium Residency was held at a private five-star hotel in Islamabad, in which President's wife Samina Alvi was the chief guest.

Besides the High Commissioners of Great Britain and Australia along with the Ambassador of Nigeria, Sardar Yasir Ilyas, CEO (Sardar Group), Senator Talha Mehmood, Dr Babar Awan, Chaudhry Naseer, Chairman CDA and Commissioner Rawalpindi also participated in the function and were impressed by the project equipped with modern facilities like Rhodium Residency.

Speaking at the ceremony, Yasir Ilyas, CEO of Sardar Group, said, "We have to come out of despair and find investment opportunities in our beloved country, we were born here and will serve our mother, which is our motto."

The CEO of Pothohar Group, Sahil Naseer Chaudhry during his address said that those who invested in Pakistan earned respect and fame along with money.

The CEO of Jamal Steel Builders and Chief Architect Shahid Khan also addressed the audience on this occasion.

Prominent businessmen in Rhodium Consortium, Chaudhry Naseer, Haroon Naseer, Sahil Naseer (Chairman of Pothohar Group), Chaudhry Junaid Afzal and Honorable Sardar Yasir Ilyas and Dr. Rashid Ilyas of (Sardar Group), (Fazal Steel) Aziz and Ayaz Aziz were also participated in the launching ceremony.

At the end of the ceremony Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, the country's leading singer, performed the magic of his voice and received a standing ovation. INP



ISLAMABAD: Old gypsy women on the way carrying dry branches of tree for domestic use.

Kaira highlights Pakistan's continuous support to Kashmir cause

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zama Kaira has highlighted the continuous support which Pakistani nation and government have been extending to the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their freedom struggle.

According to Kashmir Media Service, Qamar Zama Kaira was addressing a seminar "Commemorating Solidarity with Kashmiris" organized by Youth Forum for Kashmir (YFK), in collaboration with Iqbal International Institute for Research and Dialogue and Departments of Politics, International Relations and Urdu at International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), today.

He reiterated that the efforts will continue in the future as well. He said, the Kashmir dispute is alive due to the sacrifices of Kashmiri people.

Former Ambassador Abdul Basit addressing the seminar said it is an era of consistent soft diplomacy backed by strategy. It is a prime time for Pakistani youth to do research about the Kashmir dispute and counter the Indian arguments, he added.

All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir Azad Jammu and Kashmir chapter leader Sheikh Abdul Mateen on the occasion said the people in Indian illegally occupied Jammu have been facing the Indian brutalities for last over seven decades.

Vice President of IIUI Prof Dr Nabi Bux Jumani maintained that the university will continue to focus on

highlighting the national, regional and international issues.

Executive Director of YFK Zaman Bajwa briefly described that the Indian atrocities in IIOJK ranging from rape to fake encounters and custodial killings demand humanitarian attention from youth and international community.

Dr Kamran Kazmi and Prof Dr Muhammad Khan also expressed their views saying it is high time to enable Pakistani youth to become a source of communicating the Kashmir cause to the international community.

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AC bars NAB from arresting Usman Buzdar in assets case

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As per details, the court, after hearing arguments of the counsel, granted interim bail to former chief minister Punjab Usman Buzdar till February 27 and restrained the bureau from his arrest.

Usman Buzdar's counsel told the court that the NAB first said his arrest is not needed but now sent a notice.

The court ordered Buzdar to submit two surety bonds of Rs500,000 for availing the relief of the bail.

Earlier, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) denied that it is inquiring into assets beyond means charges against former chief minister Buzdar.

It is pertinent to mention here that the NAB Executive Board approved the recommendation of NAB Lahore to launch an investigation against Buzdar in assets beyond the means. INP

Accountability court returns reference against Nawaz Sharif in plot allotment case to NAB

ISLAMABAD: In a significant development, an accountability court on Thursday returned the reference against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and others in the plot allotment case to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB).

The reference had been returned by the court in accordance with changes made to NAB laws.

The case against Sharif and others relates to allegations of corruption and illegal allotment of land during his tenure as prime minister. However, the reference had been held up due to changes in NAB laws that had been made by the incumbent coalition government. Nawaz Sharif, who has been living in exile in London since 2019, had been declared an absconder in the case after failing to appear before the court. His supporters claimed that the case against him was politically motivated. INP

IHC grants bail to Sheikh Rasheed in criminal conspiracy case

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) granted bail petition of former federal minister Sheikh Rasheed in a case of levelling allegations against former president Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday.

A high court bench comprised of Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani ordered release of Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rasheed over Rs 50 thousand bail deposit.

He was arrested from his Rawalpindi residence in the early hours of Thursday Feb 02 and was on judicial remand in jail over a case of levelling allegations against former president Asif Ali Zardari of hatching a "murder plot" for Imran Khan Rasheed had moved IHC to seek bail after a district and sessions court

rejected his bail petition.

In his petition, Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad argued that he was arrested over his remarks against PPP co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari, but the former president has not filed any complaint against him. He termed the case registered against him as "political victimization."

AML chief Sheikh Rasheed was booked under three sections - 120B (criminal conspiracy), 153A (promoting enmity between different groups), and 505 (statements conducing to public mischief) in the FIR, complainant PPP divisional president stated that the AML chief tried to badmouth a former president and cause a "permanent danger" to the PPP co-chairman and his family. With his provocatory. INP



KARACHI: Minister of State for Energy Dr. Musadiq Malik in a Group Photograph during the concluding session of 6th Edition of the Future Summit Nutshell Conferences.

Educational Leadership vital for national building: Speakers

LAHORE: The educationists expressed their views that Education Leadership is vital for best planning to achieve the educational goal for national development and to laid the foundation of educational system based on modern standards and to meet the demands of international market.

They stated this in a seminar titled "Educational Leadership and Sustainability" organized by the University of Education on Thursday here in Lahore. On this occasion, President UE Toastmasters Dr. Humaira Irfan gave a briefing to the participants regarding Toastmasters and objectives of the said seminar.

Addressing the seminar, Vice-Chancellor Dr. Talat Naseer Pasha said that no country or society can develop without the promotion of education and the most important thing for the promotion of education is its best planning, under which the goals and objectives of education should be decided and headed in this direction under the educational

leadership.

He said that education is not only the name of teaching, but it gives a person the consciousness of living life and creates a sense of the goals and duties of life, through education a nation can pass on its cultural, mental and intellectual heritage to future generations.

While addressing the seminar chief guest Dr. Asif Raza said that education is the foundation on which the building of any country or nation is built. And to make education a strong foundation, we need qualified educational leadership.

The Chair of Education for Sustainable Development UNESCO and Professor of York University Canada Dr. Charles Hopkins, also expressed his view on the role of educational leadership in the management of educational development. Former VC Sardogha University Dr. Riaz ul Haq Tariq and former VC University of Education Dr. Munawar Sultana Mirza also expressed their views on leadership building in education sector of Pakistan. INP

International Steels sees massive profit decline in 1HFY23: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Gross profit of International Steels Limited dropped 59% during the first half (July-Dec) of the fiscal year 2022-23 (1HFY23) compared to the corresponding period of the previous fiscal, reports WealthPK.

International Steels Limited (ISL) is listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange with the symbol of ISL in the engineering sector. With a market cap of Rs18.2 billion, ISL is the largest company in engineering sector in Pakistan.

Established in 2007, ISL is currently Pakistan's biggest manufacturer of flat steel. ISL also exports its products to more than 20 countries, and is recognised as the largest exporter of flat steel.

ISL reported a gross profit of Rs2.9 billion in 1HFY23, which was 59% less than Rs7.2 billion reported in the same period of FY22. ISL semi-annual revenues dropped by 22% as the company registered the sales of Rs33 billion in 1HFY23 compared to the sales value of Rs43 billion in 1HFY22.

ISL saw a massive net profit decline of Rs4.1 billion as it plunged from Rs4.2 billion in 1HFY22 to Rs60 million in 1HFY23.

ISL made a net profit ratio of only 0.18% in 1HFY23.

The company reported earnings per share value of Rs0.14 in 1HFY23.

International Steels Limited - Quarterly Review - 1HFY23

In the first quarter (July- Sept) of FY23, ISL made sales of Rs16 billion and gross profit of Rs2.2 billion. It reported a net profit value Rs448 million in 1QFY23. The company generated an EPS value of Rs1.03 per share.

In 1QFY23, ISL's gross profit ratio and net profit ratio came out to be 13.54% and 2.71%, respectively.

In the second quarter (Oct-Dec) of FY23, ISL revenue moved up to Rs17 billion compared to Rs16 billion in 1QFY23. ISL reported a gross profit of Rs735 million and suffered a net loss of Rs387 million in 2QFY23. INP