

QUETTA VOICE

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Imran Khan announces Jail Bharo Tehreek from February 22nd



PM Shehbaz visits quake-hit Turkey, vows 'maximum support'

Karachi police chief's office attacked, firing going on

Monitoring Desk

Gunmen attacked the office of the police chief in Karachi on Friday evening. Police sources said the firing was still going on and there were no confirmed reports about the casualties. Huge police contingents reached the spot of the incident to eliminate the terrorists involved in the attack. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah took notice of the incident and directed the law enforcers to take action against the terrorists.

The Saddar police station has also issued a statement saying that it had come under attack. "SHO, PI Khalid Hussain Memon informed that unknown accused [attacked] Saddar police station near Karachi Police Office. Firing is going on everywhere," the statement said.

The office and police station are located next to each other. Extra police contingents and Rangers have been called to the site of the attack.

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South DIG Irfan Baloch told reporters that "spectacular" firing was ongoing but said that the situation would be brought under control. He, however, refused to comment on the number of people injured, saying that it could only be confirmed once officials would sweep the area.

Earlier, a spokesperson for the Sindh Rangers said initial estimates suggested there were eight to ten "armed terrorists". Sharea Faisal had also been closed for traffic while the operation was ongoing with the Sindh government spokesperson requesting citizens to remain where they were.

Terrorists breached the 5-storey KPO building near Saddar Police Station on Sharea Faisal at 7:10pm



The Saddar police station, located next to the police chief's office, had also issued a statement saying it had come under attack. "SHO, PI Khalid Hussain Memon said that unknown accused [attacked] Saddar police station near Karachi Police Office. Firing is going on everywhere," the initial statement had said.

South DIG Irfan Baloch earlier told DawnNewsTV said that "spectacular" firing was ongoing but said that the situation would be brought under control. He had, however, refused to comment on the number of people

injured, saying that it could only be confirmed once officials would sweep the area.

Operation completed; clearance under way

He said that the entire city's police force had been called to the scene, in addition to the Rangers and the Quick Response Force (QRF). He further said that the attackers had also lobbed hand grenades. He said that the attackers had come "fully prepared" and were putting up a "tough fight".

Jam and Zehri were removed by Allah not by me: Quddus Bizenjo

Syed Ali Shah

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Quddus Bizenjo delivered a lengthy political-cum religious speech during the session of the provincial assembly. Addressing the provincial assembly session, Mr. Bizenjo said former chief ministers Jam Kamal Khan and Nawab Sanaullah Zehri were removed by Allah, not by him. "People said Quddus removed them I say Allah removed them," he said. "I will break the record of lengthy speeches of Jam Kamal Khan", Mr. Bizenjo told the house. He asked all lawmakers and media men to be inside the house to listen to what he called an 'important' speech. "You all have to listen to me otherwise I can take any extreme step", he asked the lawmakers from the opposition and the treasury benches.

"I am not frightened of anyone except Allah", CM Bizenjo said



The CM defended his decisions and said that it was Allah Almighty Who empowered him to rule over the people. "I am not frightened of anyone except Allah", he said, without naming anyone posing a threat to him. Mr. Bizenjo said that repeated stay orders from courts have affected the sanctity of this house. "I will approach the apex court against stay orders", the CM announced.

He recalled that his own father had undermined his abilities and one day he proved to be the Chief Minister

of Balochistan in 2018. "They say I sleep a lot and they have to think why all political parties are supporting me", he said.

Defending his decisions, the Chief Minister stated that his government's steps were for the welfare of the people and for the promotion of democratic institutions. He said despite all odds, his government struck a better deal about the Reko Diq gold and copper project. He expressed his determination to protect the rights of the people of Balochistan.

Laws from 1812 to 2021 updated in Balochistan on website: Dr. Rubaba

Sheikh Razaq

QUETTA: Balochistan Law Department (BLD) has compiled all the laws covering the past 209 years from 1812 to 2021, all the compiled volumes were uploaded on the website of the Law Department for the convenience of lawyers, the public, and departments. Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi, Parliamentary Secretary of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Science and Information Technology stated that the officers and staff of the department made hectic efforts to upload updated laws on the official website.

Director Codification section of the Law Department Mr. Muzmal Hussain, Deputy Director Mr. Hafeezullah, and former Director of Parliamentary Affairs



Mr. Saeedullah met her and presented the last certified updated complete, and final

published volumes to her during the meeting. Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi paid great tribute to the entire team including the director and deputy director of the codification section for completing this most difficult task within a short period of time. She praised the high quality of work in printing and publishing.

Dr. further said that a second volume was published in 1992 containing updates from 1963 to 1969, and a third volume was publicized in 1994 which compiled all information from 1970 to 1980 saying these three volumes were completed and published in six years, since then, work in this regard was suspended. Last year, we had decided to end this 29-year backlog and restart the task. She said that in this regard, the Law Codification Section of the Department started the work of drafting and printing

by consolidating all laws, orders and references and in the same year between 2021 and 2022, completed the most difficult task of compiling, verifying, and printing three volumes four, five and six by the concerned department.

Volume 4 includes updates from 1981 to 2009, Volume 5 from 2009 to 2014, and Volume 6 from 2015 to 2021, she said.

Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi said that all these important legal documents have been uploaded on the Balochistancode.gov.pk website of the Balochistan Law Department for the convenience of government departments, lawyers, and the public which could be easily utilized and as in the past, no department or individual would need to search the files buried in any department for legal support and reference.

PM Shehbaz visits quake-hit Turkey, vows 'maximum support'

ADIYAMAN: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Friday that Pakistan would continue to provide maximum assistance to Turkey in its post-earthquake rehabilitation and reconstruction phases.

The prime minister expressed these views as he handed over the relief goods — mainly the winterized tents — to the Turkish officials, during his visit to Adiyaman city following the massive earthquake that claimed more than 36,000 lives and left the country reeling.

A special aircraft of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) transported relief goods to Adiyaman, the most-affected area in southeast Turkey that suffered heavy damage from the powerful earthquake of February 6.

The premier interacted with the victims of the earthquake who lost



their families and conveyed to them sympathies on behalf of the Pakistani nation. PM Shehbaz, on the occasion, assured the Turkish government and the victims that Pakistan would extend every possible cooperation to the brotherly country to cope with the devastation.

He termed Turkey as the friend and brotherly country of Pakistan and hoped that the country would overcome the challenging times with resilience.

He also met the rescue teams from Pakistan that took part in the search operation. Web Desk

Imran Khan announces Jail Bharo Tehreek from February 22nd

Monitoring Desk

Pakistan Tehrik e Insaaf (PTI) on Friday decided to launch the Jail Bharo Tehreek on February 22nd. In an announcement, PTI Chief Imran Khan said the Jail Bharo Tehreek would be launched from Lahore. This announcement has come on behalf of the PTI after a police crackdown against its work-



ers in the city. "I am directing my

party to start preparations. We will start the movement from Lahore on Wednesday, and then kick it off in major cities every other day and we all will fill the prisons," he said in a televised address via video link from his Zaman Park residence in Lahore. Imran said the purpose of the movement was to encourage the nation to not be afraid and "break the idol of fear".

MD Saindak Project hands over Rs.2.5 bs cheque to CM Balochistan

Staff Reporter

QUETTA: The Managing Director (MD), of Saindak Metal Limited (SML), Muhammad Raziq Sanjrani handed over a cheque of Rs. 2.5 billion to the Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Quddus Bizenjo on Friday. Under the Aghaz e Haqqoo Balochistan package, the MD SML presented the



cheque to the Chief Minister, an official handout issued said. Balochistan minister

Achakzai and principal secretary to the chief minister, Imran Gichki were also present on the occasion. This payment is proof of CM's principled stance about the rights of Balochistan, the handout stated.

It may be mentioned here that the SML's finance committee meeting was held as a result of the efforts of the chief minister, the handout concluded.

Accused involved in killing of 9 people arrested from Killa Saifullah

Hussain Zarkoon

Police claimed to have arrested an accused involved in the murder of nine people including a police assistant sub inspector (ASI) from Killa Saifullah district of Balochistan. "The accused was involved in the martyrdom of our ASI", Syed Saboor Agha, the Superintendent of Police, Dukki, told reporters on Thursday evening. Mr. Agha informed that the accused identified as Karim Nawaz was also wanted in eight murders in the Barkhan district of

Balochistan. "We arrested him from Killa Saifullah district", the SP said. He said sen-



ior police officers were interrogating the accused in connection with the murder of police ASI and eight other people in the Barkhan district of Balochistan. He said police also obtained physical remand of the accused from the anti terrorist court. This arrest has come two days after a plice ASI Muhammad Saleem was martyred in a firing incident in Dukki district of Balochistan. "Our policemen ensured an immediate arrest of the culprit soon after the martyrdom of our ASI", the SP concluded.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Reimagining Pakistan seminar in Quetta

Politicians, intelligentsia and members of the legal fraternity almost discussed all issues relating to the country and Balochistan at the first Reimagining Pakistan seminar. The speakers delivered stormy and speeches based on facts and figures with regard to the prevailing economic crisis and political uncertainty at the seminar organized by the Balochistan Peace Forum (BPF) run by Senior politician Nawabzada Lashkari Raisani.

Political pundits called it a gathering of political dissidents since most of the political figures have been sidelined by their own political parties. Nevertheless, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, the former prime minister defended the Pakistan Muslim League (N) supreme Nawaz Sharif and urged the judiciary to undo its wrongs to the former premier.

The session was underway for 7 hours

Throughout the seven hours long sessions, Mr. Abbasi faced the brunt of stormy and aggressive speakers criticizing Islamabad for what they called stepmotherly treatment. Hussain Wadela, the patron-in-chief of Gwadar Haq Do Tehrik put very hard questions before the audience and called for addressing the grievances of the people of the country's port city.

Miftah Ismail presented killings facts about the declining economic condition of the country and the socio-economic state of the people. Former Chief Minister Nawab Muhammad Aslam Raisani reiterated the demand for immediate recovery of the missing persons and termed it one of the most important issues, Balochistan is facing today.

Mehfooz Ali Khan shared killing facts

Former Secretary of Finance Balochistan, Mehfooz Ali Khan shared killing facts about Islamabad's stepmotherly treatment towards Balochistan. He mentioned that gas was discovered in Sui in 1952 and Dera Bugti was provided a gas facility in 2015.

Young intellectual, Rafullah Kakar termed the undeclared MPA fund as a major speed breaker and political bribe before the political parties. He spoke at length about the issues of bad governance, the province is facing today.

To be precise, it was an event that brought the high-ups who had served the country in the center and province to one forum and they all openly shared their experiences and knowledge to bring an end to the prevailing crisis. Dissent voices need to be heard. They should not be pressed.

The monstrous regime change experiment was a local fabrication which found ample resonance with some foreign forces. This was pushed through by moving a vote of no-confidence executed by dispersing tonnes of puff and inducements.

It will, however, remain a humiliating chapter in our national history regarding how those who have nothing to do with governing the country have dictated its fate through eventful decades, thus forcing it to remain captive in the clutches of decadent influences perpetrated by a few inflexible and highly arrogant mindsets.

The regime change experiment was not an act unto itself. It is the after-effects of this wicked enactment which have started visiting us with disastrous consequences. The decision to stay away from the Multilateral Conference of Secretaries of the Security Councils of regional countries to discuss Afghanistan, held recently in Moscow, marks only the beginning of a sequence of immensely damaging repercussions which will likely define our conduct in the future.

The conference was attended by representatives from China, Iran, India, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan with Russia as the host. The

Plunging back into the past

By Raouf Hasan

Foreign Office's self-effacing plea that Pakistan "will continue to participate in all constructive meetings on Afghanistan", and the insinuation that it had abstained because of the presence of India at the conference, makes the decision even more embarrassing.

Pakistan, thus, became the lone regional country to earn the notoriety of staying away from a huddle to discuss and "find efficient solutions that are adequate to the challenges and threats emanating from the territory of Afghanistan" — a subject that is critically important for its security as also for curbing the menace of terror which, ostensibly, has origins across its western border.

In his address at the conference, while acknowledging the presence of other conflicts in the area including the one in Ukraine, President Putin elaborated that "this does not reduce the significance of the situation in Afghanistan". He went on to state that "we are also worried about attempts to use the situation in Afghanistan to allow extra-regional forces to expand or build their infrastructure. These countries will create this under the pretext of countering international terrorism, but they are not doing anything that is necessary in the counter-terrorism struggle". This

is an ominous warning regarding such efforts which are apparently underway, spearheaded by the US and the western world, to influence the situation in Afghanistan. Who are these countries and why are they engaged in reigniting the conflict whose flames burned the region for four decades?

While there is little doubt that such efforts could well unfurl in due course of time, is it that Pakistan will become a partner and a conduit in this conflict again? It is to safeguard against such possibility, and make its case emphatically, that Pakistan should have been at the conference to secure its interests. Instead, it opted to stay away. Was this to hide its palpable complicity, or just an expression of inability to weather the pressure that it has faced to reverse the policies of the Khan era?

Let us also not forget that outreach to Russia by the Imran Khan government became a major issue which ultimately contributed to his ouster. The contents of his speech at the Islamabad Policy Dialogue regarding improving relations with Russia were repudiated by the then COAS the very next day which ultimately paved the way for a reversal of policy once Khan's government had been dismantled through a regime change

operation with support from the US.

Pakistan, it seems, has learnt little from its foreign policy blunders of the previous decades and is, once again, plunging perilously into bloc politics of the past. Having borne the brunt of rubbing the invitation from the former Soviet Union to the then Pakistan prime minister for a visit to that country and, instead, proceeding to become part of the US-sponsored treaties SEATO and CENTO, fighting a war against the USSR and then the war on terror as a non-Nato ally, and generally pursuing extra-regional policies, Pakistan has remained infatuated with its ceaseless romance with the US misadventures.

While America may have escaped their direct damaging consequences, Pakistan has not. For all the years since attaining independence, it has reaped the fruits of this ill-advised policy syndrome which keeps coming back to haunt it. This same syndrome is looming again, burying a hapless country under its expanding shadows, and enveloping it in irremediable darkness.

The consequences of the removal of the constitutional government of Khan keep growing with time. From the unceremonious reversal of key policies which were

being implemented to bring benefit to Pakistan and its people or plunging the country into possible economic default and unleashing state terror on political opponents, Pakistan has been reduced to a shadow of its former self. But espousal of doom is now written as a key constituent of the national policy as it appears well beyond the reach of some actors pretending to be the government to reverse the tide.

Pakistan seems to be adrift turbulent currents of deceitful self-inflicted circumstances which are taking it further away from the foundational principles of a progressive and welfare state that was poignantly elaborated by the Quaid himself from the floor of the first constituent assembly back in 1947. That declaration of intent is unceremoniously buried at some far-flung and unknown location which can neither be reached, nor probed.

This monumental tragedy is embedded in a mala-fide policy of rendering dysfunctional, even eliminating those who care and who can make a meaningful contribution to the building of the state. Instead, power is perpetuated in the hands of those who neither have the character to be leaders of people, nor the ability to think and competence to rule.

Disaster diplomacy

By Dr Ramesh Kumar Yankwani

Eighteen years ago, on October 5, 2005 Pakistan faced a natural disaster in the form of a terrible earthquake that shook many parts of the country, including the capital city of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Muzaffargarh, Bagh, Balakot and the surrounding areas.

As a result of this earthquake, countless villages were affected, and around 87,000 people lost their lives. Similarly, numerous houses, roads, hospitals, buildings, education institutions and infrastructure were severely damaged.

During this great tragedy in our national history, Turkey was the first country that came forward to help us. A medical team consisting of doctors and nurses was dispatched immediately, who ensured the provision of the best medical aid to Pakistanis trapped in the disaster-affected areas. The Turkish government announced an aid of \$150 million – \$100 million in financial assistance and \$50 million in relief items. Turkish rescue teams built a temporary tent city and provided shelter to thousands of the earthquake victims.

Our close friend, Turkey, which enjoys great respect in the eyes of Pakistanis is facing a similar tragic situation. Last week's massive twin earthquakes in Turkey and Syria have led to the deaths of

around 41,000 people. As many as ten Turkish cities have been badly affected, and multiple buildings have been destroyed. According to media reports, it is estimated that as much as 70 per cent of the buildings in Antakya, the capital of Hatay province, now stand destroyed.

The earthquake hit Turkey on February 6, and nine hours after the massive earthquake, another one hit the country, further damaging infrastructure and buildings. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the recent earthquakes are one of the worst natural disasters in history.

History tells that nothing has ever been so fearful for a person than an earthquake. The disaster occurs when the inner plate of the earth – consisting of layers of soil, stones and rocks – breaks or moves from its place due to some geological pressure and generates invisible waves on the earth's surface. Most of the damage is due to the collapse of buildings that cannot withstand the earthquake waves and the subsequent lack of timely rescue activities.

In my view, earthquakes actually bring a message that humans, despite so much scientific progress, are powerless before God. Just an earthquake strikes and everything collapses. However, in this time of difficulty, various incredible news reports

have also emerged, which strengthen our belief in God's mercy. That a young girl was rescued after 178 hours is undoubtedly a miracle.

The real test after the earthquake is now for the international community to move forward to provide humanitarian aid and selflessly help people in need. Most recently, a Pakistani-American citizen has won the hearts of those who care about humanity. The said person reportedly provided a huge amount of aid to the Turkish Embassy while keeping his identity hidden.

The Pakistan Hindu Council has decided that special prayers will be offered for the victims of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria on the occasion of the religious festival 'Maha Shivratri' on the 18th of February.

Eighteen years ago, Turkey was in the lead for the rescue of earthquake victims in our country. Today, while showing solidarity with the Turkish people, I would like to appeal to every Pakistani that we should try our best to help the people living in Turkey and Syria in this critical time. There should be joint efforts by the international community to tackle such disasters without any discrimination.

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Policies for digital banking: Part - I

By Ishtat Husain

The State Bank of Pakistan has recently granted five licences for Starting digital banks that would provide the whole range of banking services through digital platforms or electronic channels from the comfort of homes and offices without making trips to brick-and-mortar branches of the banks.

Two types of banks – digital retail banks and digital full banks – have been allowed both in the conventional as well as Islamic variants. The minimum capital requirements for digital banks is much lower than those for banks that are operating branches. A diverse range of applicants including domestic commercial banks, micro-finance banks, electronic money institutions and Fintech players both from within and outside the country had applied for these licences.

As this is a path-breaking step, it is necessary to lay down the objectives and public expectations as well as the policies that should guide the future evolution of digital banking. These should be laid down in the larger context of the Digital Pakistan Strategy and financial-sector reform. While digital banking and e-commerce are ingredients of the overall strategy, this article focuses on financial sector reforms. The salient purpose for which the SBP is promoting dig-

ital banking is aimed at strengthening financial intermediation in the country in the pursuit of equitable and sustainable development.

Of course, financial-sector performance cannot be isolated from the overall macroeconomic environment. When the environment is stable and the track record in macroeconomic management and governance is favorable, the financial sector will do well. Under the present fragile, fluid and uncertain environment, it would be unfair to expect that banks and other financial sector institutions will do well.

The first-generation reforms that started in the 1990s but got an accelerated momentum in the early 2000s centered on liberalization of the financial system, privatization of nationalized commercial banks, autonomy and capacity building of the central bank, decontrol of the pricing of financial products, abolition of directed credit ceilings and reliance on market mechanism to allocate credit.

Recovery of non-performing loans was stepped up through a Corporate and Industrial Restructuring Corporation (CIRC) which helped in the revival of sick units at the same time. A code of corporate governance was enacted and enforced through a four-tier structure. Appointments of the chairpersons and CEOs

were made on a set of fit and proper criteria. A number of banks were either asked to wind up business or merge, and delinquent boards suspended or dismissed creating a deterrent effect against malpractice. Minimum paid capital requirements were doubled, and capital adequacy was related to risk weighted assets.

Continuous off-site monitoring of the banks' DFI's ensured that they operated in a safe and sound manner and complied with the parameters acceptable under the Risk Management Framework. Timely and effective enforcement actions were taken against those found in contravention. Disclosure of financial conditions was aligned with international financial accounting standards. External auditors were prequalified and divided in two categories to audit the banks according to their paid-up capital. Credit ratings by independent certified agencies were made mandatory for the banks and publicly disclosed.

As a result of these first-generation banking reforms, assets under the control of private banks increased from 20 per cent to 80 per cent. Lending rates dropped to single digits while non-performing loans fell drastically. Instead of subsidies from the exchequer, the banks became profitable.

Growing discontent

By Abdul Sattar

Interacting with people has always been one of the main components of the art of ruling. In India, the panchayat system in villages ensures that people from the ruling class regularly interact with the ruled. In modern democracies like the UK, local parliamentarians invest their energies in schemes that appease their voters. They also prefer to meet their constituents by regularly visiting their constituencies and sparing some time for those who vote them into power.

In the past, Greek city states, including Athens, used to have a mechanism that could help them learn about people's sentiments. Even Sparta, which was dictatorial in nature, had crafted some principles that would enable them to have first-hand knowledge of people's feelings.

In Pakistan, there has been a lack of interaction between the ruling elite and the people. Many parliamentarians prefer to stay in federal and provincial capitals, enjoying luxuries of life in elite housing societies and upscale neighbourhoods. It is true that they show up at the funerals of some local notables in their constituencies, but mostly they remain away from their native towns and only bother to meet their voters at the time of elections.

These politicians do not have proper offices in their constituencies to meet their voters and

learn about their problems. After becoming public representatives, they completely ignore their voters who come in droves to cast their votes and help them win.

Our prime ministers, who should be in the upper and lower houses of parliament to answer the questions of public representatives, find excuses to avoid these sessions. It is true that some former prime ministers did attend the sessions, but it is also a bitter truth that most of them frequently offer excuses to remain absent from such gatherings.

For instance, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif was criticized by a number of critics for giving less time to parliament during 2013 and 2017. He reportedly attended 63 days during his tenure after which he was disqualified. Nawaz's nephew Hamza Sharif attended only 31 sessions. His younger brother Shehbaz Sharif was criticized for skipping various sessions of the Punjab Assembly despite being the leader of the house.

During the same term, the political rival of the Sharifs, Imran Khan, also had the lowest attendance in parliament. During the 2013-2018 term, he attended only 20 National Assembly sessions out of the total of 465.

Not only do prime ministers and chief ministers love to ignore parliamentary sessions, but federal and provincial ministers also follow in the footsteps of their political

mentors when it comes to attending legislative sessions. Many ministers and advisers spend their time in different countries, attending various conferences or accompanying the prime minister as a member of the delegation.

Those who monitor parliamentary affairs often witness the anger of various committee members over the absence of ministers and advisers. It seems that members of our ruling elite are not only indifferent to the problems of their constituents, but are also accustomed to skipping the meetings held to discuss such problems. This indifference prompts them to come up with anti-people policies. Their development schemes and social projects indicate that they cater to the needs of the select few. They seem to have less awareness about the issues being faced by the people.

For instance, since 1988, the country may have witnessed hundreds of development and infrastructure projects, and most of these projects were designed in a way that led to the demolition of numerous slums and low-income areas.

From the Lyari Expressway and Gujjar Nullah affectees and farmers around Ravi in Lahore to victims of the Mirani dam in Balochistan, millions of people have either been displaced or their livelihoods destroyed because of these projects. Due to anti-encroachment

drives, thousands of people lose their sources of employment every year. It is amusing that authorities never pay attention to elite schools or expensive hotels or thousands of private-property owners who encroach upon costly public land. The ruling elite still plans to launch such schemes that will largely affect the poor residents of various localities. We are yet to see if those who have encroached railways land will be evicted or not when the railway upgrade projects are carried out in the next few years.

But why do sections of our ruling elite demonstrate such nonchalance towards ordinary people? The answer lies in lack of interaction between the rulers and the ruled. There was a time when sections of the elite would send their siblings to low-cost schools, public universities and government colleges where rich people would get an opportunity to interact with students from different financial backgrounds. But with the rise of gated communities and ultra-modern housing societies, such interaction has come to an end.

Elite and posh neighbourhoods have their own schools and higher education institutions which are affiliated with foreign education institutions. Small markets and vendors outside these areas used to be one of the ways connecting the rich of the country to vegetable sellers or shopkeepers. With the rise of shopping malls, such

interaction is also over.

Most factory owners in the past would visit their manufacturing plants, interacting with their employees. Now with the rise of modern technology, the owners can monitor workers through CCTV or any mobile application. The fall of trade unions, which used to protest against harsh working conditions or non-acceptance of their demands, has also reduced the need for capitalists to show up at factories and talk to workers.

Most politicians from the bottom layer of social stratification made it to parliament through student and trade union politics. Jehangir Badar, Iqbal Haider, Taj Haider, Mairaj Muhammad Khan and others were involved in either trade unions or student politics. Our ruling elite has weakened trade unions and banned student organizations deliberately.

Consequently, it has become almost impossible for a low-income person to participate in politics, and entering the Pakistani parliament has now become just a dream for ordinary people. It is no wonder then that an overwhelming majority of our lawmakers in provincial assemblies and parliament are millionaires and billionaires. And these people serve the same class.

If our politicians want to consolidate democratic traditions, they need to reconnect with the people and interact with them.

Enabling digital transformation

By Jorgen C Arentz Rostrup

Digital technologies in Pakistan could create up to \$9.7 trillion (\$59.7 billion) in economic value by 2030, if they are fully leveraged. This is equivalent to about 19 per cent of the country's GDP in 2020. "Digital Lives Decoded 2022", a study conducted by Telenor Asia, found that 54 per cent of Pakistanis believe mobile devices and mobile technology have significantly improved their careers and aided in developing their skills, with women reporting that their mobile devices have significantly improved their quality of life.

Mobile phones are also widely seen as a way of generating income. Nearly half of the people surveyed in the study feel mobile usage provided work and income opportunities that were unavailable before the pandemic. In Pakistan, 38 per cent of the respondents believe mobile access has created new opportunities for them.

Our research points to mobile connectivity being an enabler of productivity, progress, economic opportunity, and flexibility. Enabling people to connect to what matters most to them, accessibility to information, increasing productivity and an easy and safe way to manage their finances, are just a few of the many advantages of an increasingly digitized world.

However, privacy and security have become serious concerns in every country we surveyed for the Digital Lives Decoded 2022, including Pakistan.

In the World Economic Forum's Global Risk Report 2023 unveiled last month, the failure of cyber security measures, including loss of privacy, data fraud or theft, and cyber espionage was identified as one of the top five risks that Pakistan faces. The Global Cyber Security Index, which measures the commitment of countries to cybersecurity, placed Pakistan 18th out of 38 Asia-Pacific nations, trailing Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India.

As key providers of connectivity and digital access, telecommunication and the financial industry can today be seen as important gatekeepers of security. Companies need to build resilience and have robust capabilities to detect cybersecurity attacks, minimize impact and be able to quickly restore operations as top priorities of their business security agenda in the years to come.

However, many countries including Pakistan are currently facing an unprecedented rise in the cost of living and business operations. Further, economic volatility has severely impacted the business sector's financial health. The need for future investments to pro-

tect and secure customers and businesses against cyber threats may thus not have the focus it requires. There is therefore an increased need for close dialogue and engagement within all ecosystem players including the government to work in tandem in strengthening capabilities and capacities in cyber security in the country.

There is a clear need and opportunities for Pakistan and its young, entrepreneurial community to leverage on new technologies and modern telecommunication and digital infrastructure. However, the current business and regulatory environment in the country is restricting further investments in the industry.

With critical digital infrastructure still recovering from the damage of serious floods last year, an emphasis on launching 5G, especially in Pakistan where mobile broadband usage is still low, may not drive maximum benefit to end users and the economy. 4G technology should continue to be developed as it still has immense potential to support society's current and short-term future demands quite effectively. Good and effective use cases on 5G should be explored based on local needs as the technology further matures. Due to an unprecedented rise in the cost of operations in Pakistan, the sector's financial health has been severely impacted.

India cannot suppress Kashmiris' freedom sentiment: Saghar

ISLAMABAD: All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter Convener, Mahmood Ahmad Saghar, has said that India cannot suppress the freedom sentiment of the Kashmiri people through its oppression and suppression.

Mahmood Ahmad Saghar in a statement issued in Islamabad said the Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government has started a campaign to evict people from their lands and homes in Indian illegally

occupied Jammu and Kashmir with the sole aim of changing the demography of the territory. He said the measures taken by Modi's fascist Indian government in the occupied territory are a clear violation of the international laws, as Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally recognized disputed territory. He said the illegal and unilateral actions of August 5, 2019, the Indian government has accelerated its atrocities against the innocent Kashmiris and has, so far, given domicile certificates

to lakhs of Hindus in IIOJK to turn the majority of Muslims into a minority. Mahmood Ahmad Saghar said the Modi government is using terrorism as a state policy to intimidate Kashmiris. He added that Kashmiris were making a lot of sacrifices for freedom from India which would not go waste. He appealed to the world community and international human rights organizations to play their role in stopping Indian atrocities on innocent Kashmiris and help settle the KashmiriNP.



RAWALPINDI: Former Federal Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed addressing to participants' outside Lal haveli.

Weekly inflation up by 2.89 percent

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by Sensitive price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 2.89 percent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on February 16, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 234.77 points as compared to 228.17 points during the past week, according to PBS data. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 38.42 percent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 = 100 is covering 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732 witnessed a 2.45 percent decrease and went up to 239.34 points from last week's 233.61 points.

The items which recorded an increase in their average prices on week-on-week (WoW) basis included cooking oil 5 litre (8.65%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (7.49%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (6.76%), non-food items, petrol (8.82%), diesel (6.49%) and cigarettes (6.18%). On a Year-on-Year (YoY) basis, the commodities which recorded a decrease in their average prices included tomatoes (65.30%), electricity for Quarter I (7.50%) and chillies powdered (7.42%).INP

Islamabad Police file case against unknown person after 'pet' leopard runs amok in residential area

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Police on Friday opened a criminal investigation against an unknown person for "domesticating" a leopard, a day after it ran free and injured several people in an upscale residential area of the capital. Yesterday, video clips of the feline jumping across walls and navigating roads in the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) Phase II neighbourhood of Islamabad went viral on social media, leading to an hours-long effort by authorities to capture it. On Friday Islamabad Police tweeted that its Sahala Police Station, under whose jurisdiction DHA Phase II falls under, booked an unidentified suspect under sections 324 (attempt to commit murder) and 289 (negligent conduct with respect to animal) of the Pakistan Penal Code. The leopard was a pet in an unknown person's home. INP

Mari Petroleum declares record earnings in 1HFY23: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Mari Petroleum Company Limited (MARI) posted Rs68 billion gross revenue in the first half (July-Dec) of the ongoing fiscal year 2022-23 (1HFY23), which is the highest over the corresponding periods of the last five years, reports WealthPK.

The record high semi-annual gross sales in 1HFY23 pushed the average half-yearly sales to Rs51 billion for Mari Petroleum. When compared to the same period of last fiscal (1HFY22), MARI earned 38% incremental gross revenue in 1HFY23.

In 1HFY23, MARI reported net sales (net of GST and Excise duty) of Rs61 billion, which is again the highest of all times in the last five years. In comparison to the same period of FY22, MARI's net sales in 1HFY23 were 44% higher.

In 1HFY23, MARI declared 44% incremental net profit of Rs23 billion. It reported a net profit ratio of 39% and earnings per share value

of Rs178.87 in 1HFY23. Mari Petroleum Company Limited is listed as MARI on the Pakistan Stock Exchange in the oil and gas exploration sector. With a market capitalisation of Rs199.3 billion, MARI is the third largest company out of its four peer firms in the sector. Incorporated in 1984, MARI mainly deals in hydrocarbons.

MARI - Quarterly Analysis - 1HFY23. During the first quarter of FY23, MARI posted gross sales of Rs35 billion and net sales of Rs31 billion. The company made a net profit of Rs12 billion. In 1HFY23, MARI reported a net profit ratio of 40% and EPS value of Rs95.31.

However, MARI reversed the declining trend in market value in the second quarter (Oct-Dec). In 2QFY23, MARI shed only 1.4% of its market cap from Rs209 billion to Rs206 billion.

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EXERCISE SPEARS OF VICTORY, 2023 CONCLUDES AT KING ABDULAZIZ AIR BASE

A contingent of Pakistan Air Force participated in Exercise Spears of Victory, 2023 which has concluded at Air War Centre Dhahran (King Abdulaziz Air Base), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The PAF contingent consisted of pride of Pakistan, JF-17 Thunder and F-16 aircraft which roared in the aerial boundaries of our Muslim brethren country while participating in the exercise. The exercise also witnessed participation of modern fighter jets and support elements from PAF and friendly countries.

Air Marshal Abdul Moeed Khan, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Air Defence) witnessed the closing ceremony of the exercise and appreciated the efforts of PAF contingent for making the exercise a great success. While interacting with the

air and ground crew he said, "The existing global security scenario coupled with the evolving dynamics of air warfare calls for an enhanced partnership between Pakistan and friendly countries. International and regional strategic situation is undergoing profound changes with growing complexity in security environment and such exercises provide an opportunity to enhance interoperability in the face of shared challenges".

The third version of the exercise started in the Eastern Region of Saudi Arabia during the first week of February. Besides, the host country, Saudi Arabia, Air Forces from Bahrain, Greece, Jordan, Pakistan, Qatar, UK and USA took part in the event. The exercise aimed at providing an opportunity to enhance interoper-

ability with participating countries. In addition to fostering military relations, the exercise also provided a platform to practice integrated employment of combat & combat support assets along with formulation / validation of tactics against contemporary threats.

The scenario contained a high number of offensive and defensive complex training missions with presence of electronic warfare and air defence systems supplemented with the presence of aggressive fighter aircraft to simulate enemy capabilities. The exercise profoundly enhanced the operational capability, tactical maneuvering skills, the concept of joint employment, alliance-building among friendly countries and war-time preparedness of the participating air and ground crew. PR

ANF seizes 741.693kg drugs worth US \$ 17.827m

RAALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan has seized 741.693 Kg drugs and 6020 Liters Hydrochloric Acid (HCL) of worth US\$ 17.827 Million and arrested 19 culprits from different parts of the country.

According to press release, ANF impounded 4 vehicles while conducting 30 counter narcotics operations throughout the country. The seized drugs comprised 5,338 Kg Heroin, 689,741 Kg Hashish, 14 Kg Opium, 11,556 Kg Methamphetamine (Ice), 20,430 Kg Amphetamine and 3376 Diazepam Tabs of 0.628 Kgs.

ANF Balochistan recovered 239,200 Kg drugs and 6020

Liters Hydrochloric Acid (HCL) in 5 operations and impounded a vehicle. The seized drugs comprised of 3 Kg Heroin, 227 Kg Hashish and 9,200 Kg Methamphetamine.

ANF Punjab recovered 202,580 Kg drugs in 4 operations while arrested two persons involved in drugs smuggling and impounded a vehicle. The seized drugs comprised of 1,080 Kg Heroin, 14 Kg Opium and 187,500 Kg Hashish.

ANF KPK recovered 221,767 Kg drugs in 11 operations while arrested 4 persons involved in drugs smuggling. The seized drugs comprised of 199,841 Kg Hashish, 1,496 Kg Methamphetamine and 20,430 Kg Amphetamine.

ANF Sindh recovered 73,980 Kg drugs in 4 operations while arrested 7 persons including 3 women involved in drugs smuggling and impounded 2 vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 1,180 Kg Heroin, 72 Kg Hashish and 0.800 Kg Methamphetamine. ANF North recovered 4,166 Kg drugs in 6 operations, arrested 6 persons including a foreigner in drugs smuggling. The seized drugs comprised 0.078 Kg Heroin, 3,400 Kg Hashish, 0.060 Kg Methamphetamine (Ice) and 3376 Diazepam Tablets. All cases have been registered at respective ANF Police Stations under CNS Act 1997 and further investigations are under way. INP

PMYP, ICCI ink MoU to promote youth entrepreneurship in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Youth Program and the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote youth entrepreneurship in Pakistan. The signing ceremony was held at Prime Minister's Office in which the President ICCI, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and Deputy Secretary Youth Affairs Dr. Ali Malik signed the MoU. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs, Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Senior Vice President ICCI, Mr. Fahad Waheed, Executive Members ICCI, Ch. Javed Iqbal, Sheikh Muhammad Ijaz, Maqsood Tabish, and others were also present at the ceremony. Speaking on the occasion, the President ICCI stated that this partnership was essential for fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and promoting economic growth in the country. "Through this MoU, the two organizations can work together to identify and support talented young individuals with innovative ideas, offering them training, mentorship, and access. INP



HYDERABAD: Advisor to Chief Minister of Sindh for Law and SpokesPerson Barrister Murtaza Wabab visiting the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Digital Law Library after inauguration at Sindh High Court Bar.

Pakistan's IT companies receive positive response from Saudi market: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's top information technology (IT) companies have received positive response from the Saudi market at the annual LEAP Tech Conference, where they signed various agreements with top Saudi companies related to the export of services and shared projects.

Chairman of Pakistan Software House Association (P@SHA) Muhammad Zohaib Khan said while talking to WealthPK that Pakistan's 18 leading IT and telecom companies and 10 startups participated in LEAP in partnership with Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), Pakistan Software Export

Board (PSEB), and P@SHA.

He said that Saudi Arabia is going to be a big market of IT and digitalisation, which offers many opportunities for Pakistani youth. He said Pakistani IT companies need to come out from the country to grow their business and exports. He said Pakistani companies should be prepared and equipped to explore the Saudi market and benefit from opportunities on offer.

"The B2B (business-to-business) connect event was attended by numerous representatives of Saudi companies, where the possibilities of joint ventures and collab-

orations were discussed," said Zohaib.

He said that Saudi Arabia holds exciting potential and opportunities for investors. As part of Vision 2030, a wide range of economic reforms have been made in the kingdom, which is creating new business opportunities, leveraging Saudi Arabia's key strategic assets, and driving economic growth and diversification.

Zohaib said that four Pakistani companies have signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with Saudi companies and many other companies are in conversation, which may pave the way for more agreements. INP



ISLAMABAD: A US Embassy Delegation led by Commercial Counselor Aaron Fishman along with Representatives of Multinational Beverage Companies held a meeting with SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmoed Pasha and Chairman FBR Asim Ahmad at FBR HQs.

PTA deliberately making excuses of not give license to Starlink

ISLAMABAD: It seems that Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has become the biggest obstacle in the way of introducing new technology in the country as a world well-known Starlink a company that provides internet worldwide through satellite hasn't issued a license despite passing the one year time period.

According to the available documents, Starlink was not being given a license in Pakistan under the pretext of security. It analyzed through documents that PTA has reluctant and deliberately made lame excuses of given license to Starlink. It learnt that Link Internet Services Pakistan Limited (Starlink) Starlink Company had formally given application to PTA for getting

LDI license on 24th February 2022 to start service in Pakistan, while on 29th April 2022 another application given for getting 14LL license in all regions of Pakistan.

Both the sent applications of the company was reviewed together with all the concerned stockholders. The technical plan of Starlink was also reviewed by all the stockholders of the Government of Pakistan including SUPARCO, law enforcement agencies, PTA and frequency occupation. The board also reviewed Starlink's technical and business means. Starlink's use of satellite-to-satellite laser technology was also reviewed. However, the objection was raised on hosting that it would make data insecure.

After the comprehensive reviewing PTA has

made the issuance of license to Starlink in Pakistan subject to the clearance of security agencies. Now after passing the one year time period the world renowned company was still seeing the license in Pakistan and in around the world many countries were getting benefit from this latest technology. It was worth mentioned here that internet service through satellite has revolutionized the world and remote areas have also been provided with internet facilities and for this.

There is no need for big infrastructure either, a satellite dish and a device which is connected to electricity and it provides internet facility to all the homes while after the internet the global mobile phone service will also launch Starlink in the same year. INP

Pakistan exported textile products worth \$10 billion in 7 months

ISLAMABAD: Textile exports reached to \$10,039.743 million during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (2022-23), Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Friday.

The textile exports during the period showed a decline of 8.17 per cent as compared to the exports of \$10,933.059 million during the same period of last year (July-January 2021-22). The textile products that witnessed positive growth during July-January (2022-23) as compared to the corresponding period of last year included raw cotton, the exports of which grew by 134.77 per cent, from \$5,233 million to \$12,286 million. The exports of tents, canvas and tarpaulin also went up by 13.44 per cent, from \$65.339 million to \$74.122 million. The textile goods that witnessed negative growth in trade included cotton yarn, the exports of which declined by 34.66 per cent, from \$687.857 million to \$449.419 million. Likewise, the exports of cotton cloth decreased by 9.34 per cent, from \$1,351.532 million to \$1,225.348 million; cotton (carded or combed) by 41.18 per cent, from \$1,610 million to \$947 million; yarn (other than cotton yarn) by 23.15 per cent, from \$34,031 million to \$26,154 million; knitwear by 2.93 per cent from \$2,887.880 million to \$2,803.298 million. INP

Calcite indigenous mining to benefit industry, country: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has abundant reservoirs of calcite, which need indigenous processing to stop the import of processed form of this important carbonate mineral for multiple industrial uses at the cost of hard-earned foreign exchange. A properly framed value chain - from mining to end users - will contribute towards improving the socio-economic value of the mining sector, reports WealthPK.

Discussing the occurrence, rock formation, and importance of cal-

cite with WealthPK, Principal Geo-scientist at the Global Mining Company Islamabad and former general manager geology at the Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation (PMDC) Muhammad Yaqoob Shah said, "It is a carbonate mineral, the most polymorph of calcium carbonate. In other words, when limestone possesses 100% calcium carbonate, it is called calcite."

"It is abundantly found in sedimentary rocks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP),

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), and Balochistan. It shows a hardness of 3 on the Mohs scale of hardness. It may occur in compact, lamellar, and granular forms and has wide industrial uses," he said.

Yaqoob, who is also a member of the National Council for Marble & Granite and Minerals, said, "Calcite is widely used directly or as an ingredient in multiple industrial purposes. It is used as a construction aggregate and filler, in making of mortar to bond bricks, preparation of concrete blocks, tile

making, and adoration. It is also used to prepare high-quality abrasive paper and stone. In the paint industry, it is used as a pigment; in agriculture, it is used to improve soil quality and nutrition. In the pharma industry, it is used as an antacid, a source of calcium, and excipient. It is also used to produce cement, ceramics, and artifacts. It is also used as a gemstone."

The market size of raw calcite is projected to grow to US\$16.48 billion by the year 2028 from US\$10.5 billion in 2020.

Another rare form of calcite named 'Caribbean calcite' is only found in Pakistan, discovered in 2019. It is unique due to its fine layering of blue calcite and aragonite of white and brown hue.

Pakistan needs a proper framework for semi or fully-mechanized mining of this carbonate mineral, which will significantly reduce the chances of wastage. Pakistan can earn a handsome foreign exchange by exporting it in different value-added forms or products. INP



ADIYAMAN: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif consoling a young survivor Burhan, rescued by Pak Army Urban Search & Rescue team, in Adiyaman.

President summons ECP chief for ‘urgent’ meeting over elections date

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday summoned Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja for an urgent meeting on February 20 (Monday) regarding the announcement of the date for fresh general elections.



Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). In his letter to the CEC, the president expressed his displeasure with the ECP's apparent "indifference" and inaction to the matter, adding that his letter dated February 8, had received no response.

Since his letter, the statement added, some substantial developments had taken place — including the judgement of the Lahore High Court (LHC) to ensure that polls in Punjab are held within 90 days and recent observations of the Supreme Court (SC) instructing that the LHC's orders be

implemented. The statement further added that the president had "waited anxiously" for the commission to realise its constitutional duties to proceed and act accordingly, but he was extremely dismayed by ECP's poignant approach to this crucial matter. In his letter, the president once again reminded the ECP that he was "conscious of his constitutional responsibility of preserving, protecting and defending the Constitution," and was, thus, inviting CEC for an urgent meeting on 20th February 2023 in his office to consult on the date or

dates of the general elections. It must be noted that on February 8, President Alvi had written to the ECP, urging him to ensure that both provincial and national general elections are held within the constitutionally mandated time. "Recent history of the world shows that delays endanger democracy in the long run," the Presidential Office had said at the time. It is pertinent to mention here that the Punjab and KP assemblies were dissolved by the Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on January. Web Desk



ADIAMAN: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets Pakistani Search and Rescue teams working in Adiaman to assist Turkish authorities in relief operations, Adiaman, Türkiye.

Fawad Chaudhry meets US ambassador

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice President Fawad Chaudhry has met the US Ambassador Donald Blome and senior officers and apprised them on 'worsening HR situation' in the country on Thursday.

Fawad Chaudhry said in a Twitter thread, "Had a good meeting with US ambassador and senior officials. The worsening HR situation in Pak was a particular focus of discussion."

"I apprised US officials on PTI concerns on misuse of Anti-Terrorism and Blasphemy laws by the PDM Govt against political opponents."

The PTI vice president added, "The political situation and PTI position on various issues came under discussion. Such meetings are part of mutual desire to have relationship based on equality and wellbeing of people." INP

Earthquake jolts HIOJK's Reasi District

JAMMU: In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, an earthquake hit the Reasi district on Friday.

An earthquake of 3.6 magnitude hit the Katra area of the district but no casualty or damage to property was reported from anywhere, officials said.

The quake struck at 5:01am at a depth of 10 km, the Indian Centre for Seismology said.

The epicentre was 97 kilometers east of Katra. The latitude and longitude of the earthquake were found to be 33.10 degrees and 75.97 degrees respectively. The location of the quake was 97 kilometers east of Katra. INP

HIOJK people being harassed to make them forget Kashmir dispute: Mehbooba

SRINAGAR: In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) President, Mehbooba Mufti, has said that the Modi-led Indian government is subjecting the people of the territory to harassment on one pretext or other to make them forget the lingering Kashmir dispute.

Mehbooba Mufti talking to media men in Kupwara said that the Modi regime was harassing the people of HIOJK to suppress them.

"They want that Kashmiris should forget Kashmir issue and stand in queue for 5 kg ration. For this Kashmir issue our graveyards have been filled, our women have been widowed and children orphaned," she maintained.

She said the rulers are demolishing the houses of the poor. "For the first time, I have seen such a government that says that they will convert houses of poor people into schools, hospitals and parks. Have you seen this happening anywhere in the world where the government demolishes houses of people to construct hospitals," she added.

Mehbooba Mufti said that the occupation authorities have a lot of land and lakhs of kanals of land are with the Indian troops. "The BJP claims that the security situation has improved in J&K, then some forces must move out and the land be used for constructing hospitals and schools. Why are they harassing the poor," she asked. INP

US committed to advance bilateral ties with Pakistan: Envoy

ISLAMABAD: The United States is committed to advancing its bilateral relationship with Pakistan as a senior State Department official landed in Islamabad for in-depth talks with government officials.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Office in Islamabad on Friday, Foreign Secretary Dr Asad Majeed Khan received US Department of State Counselor Derek Chollet at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Thursday.

Welcoming Counselor Chollet, the Foreign Secretary stated that the frequent bilateral visits were a manifestation of the positive trajectory of the Pakistan-US relationship. The foreign secretary expressed satisfaction on the second Mid-level Defence Dialogue and the upcoming Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council meeting in Washington DC. He emphasized the importance of sustained cooperation through the institu-

tionalized dialogues in trade and investment, energy, security, climate change and health. He stressed the need to expand cooperation in Agriculture, Education, IT, and Science and Technology.

Counselor Chollet reaffirmed that the United States was committed to advancing the bilateral relationship. He expressed US solidarity and support with Pakistan and its people in recovery from the 2022 floods.

The foreign secretary thanked the Counselor for the US support and hoped to remain engaged in the long-term recovery and rehabilitation efforts.

Counselor Chollet was accompanied by Clinton White, Counselor of the United States Agency for International Development, Ambassador Donald Blome and Elizabeth Horst, Principal Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs at the US Department of State. INP

Pakistani rupee knocks out US dollar in interbank

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani rupee kept up the momentum of its upward trajectory against the US dollar as the local unit was appreciated by Rs1.63 in the interbank trading on Friday.

According to money dealers, the rupee sailed smoothly during the morning trade and gained Rs1.63 in its value against the greenback which was being exchanged for Rs262.75.

On Thursday, the US dollar was depreciated by Re1 and culminated the day at Rs264.38.

As the government is steadfast in reaching an agreement with the IMF for the resumption of stalled \$1.2 billion tranche and is making progress on the implementation of prior actions as demanded by the global lender, the market anticipates a possible deal between the two. Things are progressing positively with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), sources in the federal finance ministry said on Thursday. The IMF was informed about government

actions and the progress on the implementation of the conditions, the insiders said as Pakistan and the Fund resumed their virtual talks over the release of the ninth tranche of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

They added that the process of implementing conditions for an early agreement with the IMF has been expedited and the ninth review is expected to be successfully completed soon. The government has increased the prices of electricity, gas and petrol while a mini-budget featuring taxation measures of Rs170 billion, was presented in Parliament under IMF conditions. The sales tax rate on all items increased from 17 to 18 per cent while the revised circular debt management plan has been approved, the ministry officials said. According to a report, Finance Secretary Hamed Yaqoob Sheikh said: "Duration (of the talks) cannot be confirmed but we intend to wrap these up at the soonest." INP

Security forces kill suicide bomber in South Waziristan IBO

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: A suicide bomber was killed during an intelligence-based operation by the security forces in the Spinkai area of South Waziristan on Friday.

According to details, the operation was conducted in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) district after intelligence confirmed the presence of a suicide bomber belonging to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

During an exchange of fire, an alleged suicide bomber namely, Rehman Mehsud Alias Nekro was killed after his vest exploded. The killed terrorist had come to Pakistan from Afghanistan and was involved in various attacks on security officials.

In a similar raid Thursday, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Punjab claimed to have repulsed an attack by militants on

law enforcers in Kala Bagh Town of Mianwali district, killing a commander of the proscribed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

According to the CTD statement, the militants belonging to the TTP attacked law enforcers in Kala Bagh Town of Mianwali district. It said militants opened indiscriminate fire on security personnel, prompting law enforcers to retaliate. During the exchange of fire — which lasted for almost 20 minutes, a TTP commander — identified as Habib-ur-Rehman — was killed. However, other terrorists managed to flee from the spot.

The CTD team has recovered a Kalashnikov, suicide jacket and TTP stickers from the possession of killed terrorist. A case against the attack has been registered CTD police station Sargodha while the law enforcers have launched an operation. INP

Govt urged to withdraw supplementary finance bill

ISLAMABAD: The Senate has discussed the Finance Supplementary Bill 2023 on Friday. Participating in the debate, Leader of the Opposition Dr. Shahzad Waseem demanded of the government to withdraw the Supplementary Finance Bill stating that it will add to the woes of the common man.

He said today inflation is already at the highest level of the history of the country. He said despite the financial crisis, the government is spending money on luxuries.

The Leader of the Opposition said salaried people are suffering from price hike. He said even today Imran Khan is the only hope for the masses.

Minister of State for Finance Aisha Ghaus Pasha has said the government will soon announce austerity measures to reduce expenditures. Speaking in the Senate on Friday, she said the cabinet members belonging to the PML-N have already announced not to withdraw their salaries.

She said the government is working to steer the country out of crises. She said we will have to take structural reforms and tough decisions to put the country on the path of stability. He said there should not be any politics on it.

The Minister of State clarified that enhancement of power and gas tariff will not apply on the consumers using less energy. She said the government has also enhanced the budget of Benazir Income Support Program by forty billion rupees with the aim to provide relief to the downtrodden segments of the society. She said we also want to work in tandem with the provincial governments to extend

relief to the poor class. Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar said it was the PTI government which signed agreement with IMF. He said PTI government is responsible for economic crisis in the country.

The Minister asked the opposition to act maturely and work with the government for the development of the country.

Senator Mushtaq Ahmed in his remarks termed mini budget as a black document and criticized the government for imposing tax on gas, electricity and other necessary items. He said poor people are unable to survive in growing prices of essential commodities.

He suggested that the government should do away with protocol culture and resources should be diverted for the people of the country.

Senator Muhammad Tahir Bizenjo called for joint efforts to deal with the economic crisis. He said the government should take austerity measures.

Taking the floor of the House, Senator Mohsin Aziz said the government is paying no attention to economic challenges. He asked the government to control smuggling.

Kamil Ali Agha termed the supplementary bill 2023 as anti-poor. Hidayatullah Khan said that prices of all essential items are getting out of reach of the poor people. He said imposing tax on cement will affect the construction sector. The House has now been adjourned to meet again on Monday at eleven am. INP

Supreme Court suspends transfer order of Lahore CCPO Dogar

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday suspended the transfer order of Ghulam Mahmood Dogar as the Lahore capital city police officer (CCPO) and forwarded the matter to a larger bench of the apex court.

A three-member bench of the top court headed by Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan heard Dogar's plea and referred the matter to a five-member bench which is hearing a case related to transfer and posting in Punjab.

On Thursday, Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan heard the case and directed the Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja to provide all the records regarding Dogar's transfer. The court also reconstituted the bench and added Justice Munib Akhtar to it.

Ghulam Mahmood Dogar — a blue-eyed officer of former chief minister Parvez Elahi — was removed as the city police chief by the caretaker administration on January 23 and replaced with Bilal Siddique Kamryana. INP

PTI MNAs resignations: LHC seeks reply from NA speaker

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday sought replies from National Assembly (NA) Speaker Raja Parvez Ashraf and other respondents in a case pertaining to the acceptance of 43 PTI MNAs' resignations.

Justice Shahid Kareem took up the petition filed by 43 PTI leaders, including Riaz Fatyana, against the NA speaker's move for accepting their resignations without due process.

The LHC has directed the NA Speaker Raja Parvez Ashraf to submit his reply till March 7 in the case. In the petition, the PTI leaders accused the NA speaker of accepting resignations to 'politically victimize' the opponents. They pleaded with the court to nullify the decision of speaker Raja Parvez Ashraf and the order of the Election Commission of Pakistan. Earlier, the Lahore High Court (LHC) suspended the Election Commission of Pakistan's notification

that de-notified 43 MNAs of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). LHC judge Justice Shahid Karim heard the case and restricted the commission from holding by-elections in the 43 constituencies until further orders. On Jan 25, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) de-notified 43 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members of the National Assembly (MNAs) following the acceptance of their resignations by NA Speaker Raja Parvez Ashraf. After the announcement of PTI MNAs' return to the National Assembly, the federal government made a move to accept their resignations in an apparent bid to reduce the number of opposition lawmakers. The de-notified PTI MNAs included Riaz Fatyana, Sardar Tariq Hussain, Mohammad Yaqub Sheikh, Murtaza Iqbal, Sardar Mohammad Khan Leghari, Zile Humma, Rukhsana Naveed, Ghazala Saifi. INP



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi chairing a meeting with senate of the Federal Urdu University at Governor house.

Pakistan's rice exports to China increase by 53 pct in 2022

BEIJING: Pakistan's rice export to China in 2022 surpassed USD 455 million with a volume of more than one million tonnes, for the first time between China-Pakistan rice trade, said Ghulam Qadir Commercial Counsellor at Pakistan's Embassy Beijing, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday.

Ghulam Qadir indicated that according to the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC), last year, bilateral trade in agriculture products increased significantly and China imported more than 1.19 million tons of different types of rice from Pakistan, an increase of 53% year on year.

"Our rice exports to China surpassed one million tons for the first time, due to facilitation from both governments and hard work of businessmen. With the opening up of China, these exports are forecasted to grow more", he added.

He further said that according to statistics from the General Administration

of Customs, in 2022, China's imports of Semi or wholly milled rice (Commodity Code: 10063020) from Pakistan touched USD 211.88 million, while two kinds of Broken rice (Commodity Code: 10064020, 10064080) reached USD 162.78 million and USD 80.74 million respectively.

"The Chinese Government is supporting Pakistan by establishing offline and online Pavilions and Pakistani rice has hit the e-commerce platform in China and sales are expected to grow further. We are working with GACC to ensure more Pakistani rice enterprises to register and increase our exports even further", Qadir mentioned.

Commercial Counsellor told China Economic Net that Pakistani rice is getting popular in the Chinese market due to its finest taste and quality while the total number of Pakistani enterprises registered with GACC also increased last year and now the number currently stands at 62. INP

Cage fishing promises Pakistan food security, revenue

ISLAMABAD: Cage fishing — practiced in many Asian and European countries on a large scale — needs to be popularized in Pakistan in view of depleting marine catch. The popularization of this practice will not only improve the country's export level and meet the domestic needs but also help the country earn a handsome foreign exchange.

Talking to WealthPK, Director of Marine Fisheries, Lasbella, Balochistan Dr. Ahmad Nadeem said, "It is important to introduce cage fishing in Pakistan on a larger scale. Disastrous or illegal fishing is not only common in Pakistan, but also all over the world. Owing to many reasons, the marine catch is depleting gradually."

"To increase fish production, popularization of cage fishing is important. Cages covering at least an area of a square mile, a hectare (107639 square

feet), or ¼ hectare (about 53,819 square feet) is more beneficial than the liberated catch. The cages can be installed in the sea, freshwater, dams, etc. It is extremely better to enhance production and rear a huge quantity (e.g. from 100 to 100,000) by limiting the fish to a fixed place. This also means limiting the chances of fish mortality or depletion due to any decrease," he said.

"From the larvae to fingerlings and up to the marketable size, cages of different mesh are used to grow the fish. Normally, three types of cages are used — primary, secondary and the chosen one. It is also easy to care for and feed the fish in the cage. They can be fed in cages but they also get natural feed, such as zooplanktons from the water. The species of any specific environment flourish in the cage fixed in the same location," added Dr Ahmad. INP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani exchanging views with Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan, Nawaf Bin Said Al-Malki at Parliament House.

LAHORE: Former judge and ex-attorney general of Pakistan Malik Muhammad Qayyum passed away in Lahore on Friday.

Qayyum had remained the Lahore High Court justice and also worked as attorney general of Pakistan.

The retired justice was the brother of MNA Pervaiz Malik and uncle of PML-N MNA Ali Pervaiz Malik.

His funeral prayers will be offered in Jamia Ashrafia Mosque after Juma prayers.

Qayyum was a senior lawyer of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and had advised the sitting benches of the higher judiciary on constitutional issues. He was responsible for conducting the inquiry into match fixing which was lauded by the ICC known as the "Qayyum Report". INP