

QUETTA VOICE

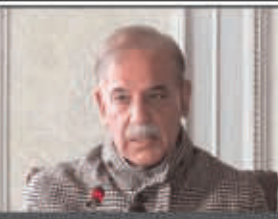
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PM expresses gratitude to 'friendly nation' for assistance before IMF deal finalised



Khawaja Asif demands full court bench for SC suo motu, criticises Panama verdict

No politics on dead bodies: Home Minister Balochistan

Manan Mandokhail
News Desk

QUETTA: Home Minister Balochistan, Mir Ziaullah Langove on Friday urged some protesters not to do politics on the dead bodies of the Barkhan victims. Addressing an emergency press conference at the Chief Minister's Secretariat, the Minister said the provincial government has established a joint interrogation team (JIT) to conduct an impartial inquiry into the Barkhan incident.

Differences emerge among the protesters

Differences also emerged among the protesters regarding the Barkhan incident. The protesters were divided over ending the protest after the arrest of the Balochistan minister, Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran, and the recovery of Khan Muhammad Marri's family members in Barkhan.

The protesters stopped some of the tribal elders from taking away the dead bodies for burial. They said that until and unless all demands of the protesters are not met the dead bodies should not be buried.



"I urge them not to do politics on the dead bodies of others", the Minister said.

"I urge them not to do politics on the dead bodies of others", the Minister said while referring to the protesters opposing an end to the demonstration. Some of the protesters demanded of the Balochistan government to conduct DNA of the three dead bodies and an investigation with regard to the triple murder in the Barkhan district.

The Minister stated that the provincial government was committed to conducting an impartial inquiry into the Barkhan incident and for this purpose the JIT was working to unearth the truth behind the incident.

Minister cannot be denotified

When asked about the denotification of the minister, Mr. Langove said that first of all an inquiry should be conducted and completed and then action can be taken against the minister. Minister himself has surrendered before the police for investigation, he said.

Home Minister Balochistan however said that all details with regard to the Barkhan incident cannot be shared since an investigation was going on in this regard. "We are aware about our responsibilities, he said.

After 4 years Khan Muhammad Marri family gathered

Syed Ali Shah:

QUETTA: After four years of forced separation, the family members of Khan Muhammad Marri

jail. The charge was vehemently denied by the Minister.

Two young sons of Marri have been murdered along with a teenage girl in the Haji Kot area of Barkhan.



gathered in Quetta in the wee hours of Friday.

Marri's wife Granaz, four sons and a daughter were recovered in the Barkhan by levies force and reached this provincial capital in the wee hours of Friday.

Khan Muhammad Marri, the head of the family had accused the Balochistan Minister, Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran of making his family members hostage in his private

Levies recovered their dead bodies the other day. The enraged Marri tribesmen and heirs of the victims brought the dead bodies to Quetta and staged a sit-in in the Red Zone of Quetta to mount pressure on the authorities to arrest the culprits involved in the killings.

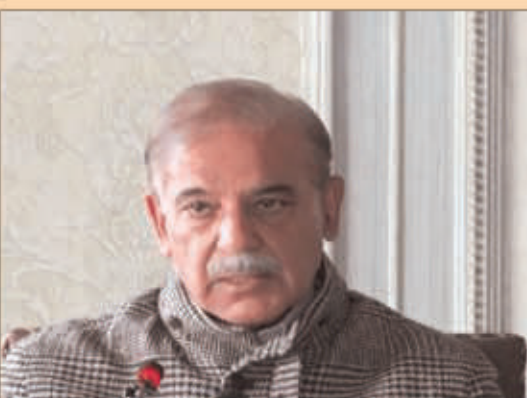
Mounting pressure on social media and formal media ensured the recovery of Khan Muhammad Marri's family from the private jail.

PM expresses gratitude to 'friendly nation' for assistance before IMF deal finalised

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday expressed gratitude to a "very friendly nation" for providing assistance to Pakistan even before the finalisation of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund to resume a lifeline needed to avert default.

"There is an allied country of Pakistan, we were all thinking that they were waiting for the IMF agreement and then they would play their part but that allied nation a few days ago conveyed to us that 'we are giving you [this financial help] straight away', and these things can never be forgotten.

"There are many such sincere contributions of theirs in the past for



Pakistan," he said while addressing an apex committee meeting in Islamabad. He did not name the country, the extent of the

week to 10 days.

The prime minister said that negotiations with the IMF would soon be successful but economic difficulty would still persist in the form of "very stringent" conditions by the Fund.

Pakistan held 10 days of intensive talks with an IMF delegation in Islamabad — from Jan 31 to Feb 9 — but could not reach a deal.

The IMF, however, said in an earlier statement that both sides have agreed to stay engaged and "virtual discussions will continue in the coming days to finalise the implementation details" of the policies, including the tax measures, discussed in Islamabad.

The government is in a

race against time to implement the tax measures and reach an agreement with the IMF as the country's reserves depleted to a around \$3 billion, which experts believe is enough for only 16 or 17 days of imports. The agreement with the IMF on the completion of the ninth review of a \$7bn loan programme would not only lead to a disbursement of \$1.2bn but also unlock inflows from friendly countries. Yesterday, President Arif Alvi signed off on the Finance (Supplementary) Bill, 2023, generally known as the mini-budget, bringing into effect tax measures which will raise an additional Rs170bn in the next four. Web Desk

Father kills son over a property dispute in Dukki Balochistan

News Desk

A son was shot dead by his father over a property dispute in Dukki area of Balochistan. The Police sources informed that the accused has escaped from the spot after the incident.

According to the initial reports, father Baloch Khan Malakhail shot and killed his 27-year-old son Rozi Khan in Sarka Chena yesterday. The victim received 4 bullets in the stomach and suc-



cumbed to injuries. His body was handed over to the heirs after the necessary official procedures. Police sources said that the reason is a

matter of domestic enmity. The police have filed a First Information Report (FIR) of the incident and started searching for the accused.

Khawaja Asif demands full court bench for SC suo motu, criticises Panama verdict

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Friday criticised the judiciary for "trespassing" into the parliament's jurisdiction by "rewriting" Article 63-A of the Constitution, as he demanded a full court bench be constituted for the ongoing suo motu proceedings linked to the delay in the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa elections.

Addressing the National Assembly today, Asif said: "Why not examine if the [assemblies] dissolution was right or wrong? Or go back to when Article 63-A was rewritten? The top judiciary transgressed and rewrote the Constitution [even though] it is not their job."

The remarks come at a time when the Supreme Court has constituted a nine-member bench for a suo motu notice aiming to resolve the issue of when elections in Punjab and KP would be held.

Days ago, President Arif Alvi had unilaterally announced April 9 as the election date after the Election Commission of Pakistan rejected his invitation to meet for the purpose.



During his address today, terming himself a "respondent" affected by the judiciary's decisions, Asif said: "I would say with immense respect that this matter should have been raised by a full court instead of a nine-member bench. The entire Supreme Court

should find the solution to this issue."

He added: "I do not want to criticise if there are some in the bench whose characters have a question mark on them, but if the entire court sits for the matter, I think there can be redressal for the things that have happened in the past eight months.

"When they (judges) will trespass into our territory, then we also have the right to say that they did not fulfil their responsibilities."

Referring to the Panama Papers case against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, the minister alleged the judges dealing with the reference had called the PML-N supreme various "wrong names". Asif said: "This top judiciary should ask itself. It is not me to explain the causes of this discrimination on the [NA] floor but I will leave it up to the judiciary."

He claimed that "confessions" of all those involved in the results of the Panama case — including the establishment, judiciary and PTI Vice-President Shah Mahmood Qureshi — had also come forward in the past few months. Web Desk

Teacher in Dhadar arrested for subjecting a student to sexual abuse

From Our Correspondent:

BOLAN: Levies arrested a school teacher for allegedly subjecting a student to sexual abuse in Balochistan's Dhadar area. The parents had lodged a first information report (FIR) against the accused. The accused was identified as Karim Bakhsh, a junior school teacher serving in a government-run school in the area.

A local social activist, Muhammad Arif Bangulzai reported the incident in a video widely shared on social media. People belonging to various walks of life strongly condemned the incident and demanded of the government to take stern action against the accused teacher. This prompted the Chief Secretary



Balochistan, Abdul Aziz Uqaili to take notice of the incident and directed the concerned administration to arrest the culprit.

The Deputy Commissioner, Syed Sami Agha has arrested the teacher involved in the incident, the CS Balochistan tweeted on Friday.

Wasu Khan Renowned Baloch singer passes away

News Desk:

Quetta: Renowned Balochi folk singer Wasu Khan passed away on Friday. Wasu Khan had been suffering from kidney disease for a long time and breathed his last at the hospital.

Wasu Khan was born in Goranadi village of Sahabpur, Balochistan. He was a prominent name in the Baloch folk music industry. He gained the limelight with the narration of Pakistan's political history in one breath.

Wasu Khan gained fame when he performed with renowned singer Shehzad Roy in the latter's 'Apney Ulloo' music video.



The two artists had worked together on multiple projects.

He received many national and international awards.

Cash-strapped Pakistan receives \$700m from Chinese bank

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Friday said that the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has received \$700 million from the China Development Bank (CDB) in a much-needed boost to forex reserves as the country grapples with a worsening economic crisis.

The finance minister took to Twitter to make the announcement. "Alhamdulillah! Funds \$700 million received today by State Bank of Pakistan from China Development Bank."

In an earlier tweet, Dar had maintained that the loan would "shore up" Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves.

Earlier this month, the country's foreign exchange reserves slipped to the alarming level of below \$3 billion for the first time in nine years, reducing import capacity to slightly over two weeks.

As the government seeks to revive the International Monetary Fund (IMF) pro-



gramme, Pakistan has sought to secure assurances from Saudi Arabia and China for more

loans.

Devastating floods last year and repeated bouts of political turmoil have left the country struggling to pay for basic goods and at serious risk of joining the list of defaulters.

It desperately needs the IMF to release an overdue tranche of \$1.1 billion from an existing bailout programme. The country's finance secretary has said he hopes talks with the Fund can be wrapped up this week.

But with its debt-to-GDP ratio already in the 70% danger zone and between 40% and 50% of the government revenues earmarked for interest payments alone this year, it will soon need more. The country is now hoping that its friends would come to its rescue as it has done all the hard yards to convince the IMF. Islamabad has agreed to implement the Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP), which contains policy suggestions by the IMF. Web Desk

QUETTA VOICE

Editor Asim Khan

Reimagining Pakistan seminar in Quetta

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

Policies for digital banking: Part - II

By Ishrat Husain

The journey in pursuit of the vision started in the early 2000s when the SBP decided to mandate banks to join one of either two ATM switches available in the country.

The ILink switch has played a critical role but still after two decades the number of ATMs remains 17,000 and only one million transactions are taking place every month mainly for cash withdrawal. The Electronic Transaction Ordinance was promulgated in 2000 providing legal recognition to digital signature and documentation reducing the risks associated with the use of electronic medium of business. Commercial banks were allowed to open and operate internet merchant accounts. The SBP acquired a SWIFT connection and made it mandatory for banks to acquire SWIFT connectivity for settlement of cross-border financial transactions.

The other major initiative the SBP took was to complete the largest single project – worth \$30 million – to fully computerize bank operations, set up data warehousing and establish electronic links with the banks. At the same time, a real time gross settlement system – now PRISM – was set up to provide a platform for wholesale transfer and settlement of funds. By 2002 almost 40 per cent of the bank branches had

been automated with a phenomenal growth rate. The number of online branches jumped to 1356 in three years' time – an increase of 376 per cent.

During the last five years, the progress in e-banking has been impressive. Its share in the total value of retail payments has risen from 24 to 42 per cent. But paper-based transactions still dominate with Rs190 trillion. This is the slice of the pie digital banks have to nibble forcefully and raise the share of E banking to at least 80-90 per cent in the next five years. Currency in circulation has doubled in the last ten years and is boosting informalization of the economy. The number of internet banking users is eight million and that of mobile banking 12 million. Even if we add them up, this accounts for only 20 per cent of unique mobile phone owners. Thus the market for digital banks, as they take off, is quite substantial provided they have the right strategies, products and services to capture it.

Having enunciated the purpose digital banks have to serve – financial inclusion and broadening access – it is necessary to outline the policies the digital banks should pursue to advance this goal of financial inclusion. First, they have to demonstrate that their transaction costs are lower than the existing

providers, the customers enjoy much greater convenience as they save effort and time, fees and service charges are lower while speed of transactions is faster, accuracy is better, payments are secure and cybersecurity is assured. In other words, this new breed of banks should display a high level of efficiency at a lower cost.

Second, they have to diversify their asset base functionally – sectorally, geographically, by size and gender. Commercial banks are earning fairly reasonable margins by investing in risk-free government paper. The present situation where IDR is 70 per cent and ADR below 50 per cent has to be reversed to facilitate private-sector growth, particularly in those sectors and geographies which have a potential for absorption of credit. These are the areas where conventional and Islamic banks have been unable to make forays so far. For them, the alternatives are fairly attractive and reaching out to these underserved segments is relatively risky and costly.

Commercial banks do not have access to a lot of relevant parameters and data to properly assess prospective borrowers. Small borrowers, particularly women, are also unable to meet the documentation and collateral required by the banks.

The administrative cost of processing thousands of small loans impairs the profitability of these banks.

By using machine learning, data capture and data analytics for discerning patterns and behaviours, digital banks can develop credit-scoring models for lending to clients who do not have to go through extensive documentation or securities, collateral or guarantees to offer. A CRM platform can track customer history and provide quick online communication.

There would be upfront costs in R&D to develop these models but these costs should be considered as an investment in the acquisition of customers, expansion of network, robust screening of credit risk, establishment of competitive advantage and increase in volume of business in the future. This would take a few years but perseverance will ultimately pay off. Those investors and owners of digital banks who are looking for instant gratification and quick returns should quit now as this is a long-haul journey. Third, digital banks have to develop a portfolio for investment in underserved sectors such as SMEs, small-and-medium farming, low-cost housing but also in nontraditional economic and social activities such as human development by providing loans or

Qarz-e-Hasna to students from poor families who are talented but do not have the financial means to study. Programme lending and cash flow lending to SMEs and agribusinesses would become easy for digital banks to handle as compared to commercial banks.

Digital banks should provide financing for educational, health facilities and agri-businesses to private entrepreneurs in areas outside the metropolitan cities where the rising middle class has shown demand for quality services. China's industrial success owes a great deal to the Town and Village Enterprises.

Fourth, collaboration with Fintechs should be incentivized to help the usage by coming up with an Application Programming interface (API) so that the digital banks can enhance business efficiencies, accelerate innovation, integrate disparate systems without customization and improve customer experience. They can extend the functionality of their products while saving time and money and thus stay agile in the marketplace. Fintechs can help with the digitization of the supply chain, invoice-based payments, and payments at merchant-based locations. This should enable digital banks to offer end-to-end solutions to their customers.

Stop pretending to be the state

The scope and passion of the spontaneous support witnessed on the occasion of Imran Khan's appearance before a Lahore High Court bench for securing protective bail is an affirmation of his ever-ascendant popularity and singular domination of the national political landscape. This was despite the widespread speculation that the occasion may provide another opportunity for an attempt on Khan's life.

Simultaneously, the perilous dereliction in just about every aspect of governance is expanding with every passing day, but there is neither any method visible, nor an earnest effort to stall the plunge into chaos and anarchy. We are virtually staring into a bottomless pit with no route available for escape.

The pivotal focus of this madness is the elimination of Khan as an adversary, either politically or physically. In the former context, his stature and standing has only increased since his ouster from government and, in the latter context, one failed attempt has already been made on his life with bullets piercing his right leg which is still in a cast pending full recovery. Yet another option is his incarceration which, according to the government's own strategists, will further increase his popularity.

The institutions of the state have collapsed as

economic default looms. The resignation of the NAB chairman on the plea that he cannot operate under pressure from other institutions and individuals to let mega criminals stay free and punish the petty ones is a slap in the face of the ruling elite and their sordid beneficiaries. Sultan said that there can be no accountability to soothe someone's whims: "I can neither initiate a false case, nor drop an established reference merely because the culprit is related to some big shot".

This, in no way, validates his integrity as, during his tenure, he allowed numerous certified criminals walk away free. If a compromised person like him could not continue any longer, one can imagine the extent of pressure exerted on him to do the criminal cabal's bidding. The mandatory provision of the constitution to hold elections to a dissolved provincial assembly within a maximum period of 90 days is being flouted with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the chief election commissioner (CEC) and the governors of the provinces of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa blatantly violating the appropriate Article 224 (1B) (2) which states categorically that "when the National Assembly or a provincial assembly is dissolved, a general election to the assembly shall be held within a period of

ninety days after the dissolution and the results of the elections shall be declared not later than fourteen days after the conclusion of the polls".

This violation is ongoing when virtually all legal and constitutional experts have stressed on the inviolable need to hold the elections within the stipulated period as contained in the constitution. The same has also been ordered by the high courts of Punjab and KP. Instead of proceeding with holding elections, the ECP is planning legal recourse in a desperate bid to delay the process which emanates from the fear that the incumbent criminal cabal would be administered a battering at the hustings.

To redress the situation and put the process in motion, the president, using his powers under Section 57 of the Election Act, 2017 which states that "the president shall announce the date or dates of the general elections after consultation with the commission", has fixed April 9 for holding elections in Punjab and KP. Rejecting a presidential role in the matter, the ECP contends that it is bound to announce schedules and hold elections only after the "competent authority" announces it. Now the governors of the concerned provinces and the ECP/CEC continue shying away from accepting responsibility to be that

"competent authority" in the existent case which is tantamount to ensuring that the matter lands up in the court with the exclusive intention to delay holding the elections as per the constitutional provision.

Is it that we should dig out the framers of the constitution to explain who that "competent authority" is in the matter whom the ECP/CEC are looking for? Or, following up on the letter written by two sitting judges of the Supreme Court to the chief justice to take suo-motu notice of the shenanigans of the concerned institutions and officials, should we request his lordship to do so? Or should we implore the gubernatorial offices and the heads of the concerned institutions to proceed urgently with discharging their constitutional duties, or resign their offices? Or should we just give up on the state and let it slide into anarchy at an ever-accelerated pace, this being the clear option for the ruling criminal cabal for whom even the most disastrous outcome would be preferable to the prospect of holding elections?

Till some years ago, one could not imagine that a day shall dawn when there would be no one to stand up for the law and the constitution, not even the institutions and individuals whose prime responsibility it is to defend the statute book

and the regulations and practices emanating from it. We are witnessing such a state in our midst now with conditions deteriorating rapidly with no one coming forth to stall the fall.

The regime-change experiment has floundered disastrously, but its architects and implementers are unwilling to take note of the damage which has been done, and that which may yet be done. They show little sensitivity, even less resolve to concede their grave mistake and make amends in terms of letting the law and constitution dictate what needs to be done by binding the respective institutions and officials to perform their duties in accordance with the key constituents of their oath. Or have they made up their mind that their will must prevail irrespective of the damage it may accrue to the state, even its prospect of survival? If that be so, they should have the courage to come out from the shadows and show us what their agenda is for this hapless country. For now, an egotistical and unrepentant mindset has taken hold of the country and its affairs. No method, no mechanism is visible to address the grave challenges it faces in the aftermath of the failure of the ill-conceived regime change operation. It is time to soothe the exceedingly bloated.

A bonfire of literary festivals

By Ghazi Salahuddin

What use do we have for the poets, writers and, in a general sense, intellectuals whose business it is to teach us to think, to feel and to dream? Well, a measure of what such creative individuals have contributed to our society is available in the quality and strength of our intellectual, educational and cultural resources.

Sadly, any assessment that you make in this regard would leave you with a larger deficit than there is in the nation's financial balance sheet. And we do not seem to be so worried about our intellectual deficit while we struggle so desperately to make ends meet, collectively. Nor is it so evident to us that both the deficits have a symbiotic relationship.

Anyhow, we have some comforting distractions around this time of the year. Call it a bonfire of literary festivals. This weekend, we have the 14th edition of the Karachi Literature Festival – KLF – that may rightly be designated as the mother of all literary festivals of Pakistan. It is surely a big event, tilting somewhat towards an economic dimension with the theme: "People, Planet and Possibilities". But as I write these words, I have still to fully recover from the hangover of the literary festival I attended in Lahore last weekend. Actually, a certain kind of mood that

is aroused by a literary festival is passing on from one event to the next. While there will be time to sum up one's involvement with the present season of the KLF, let me dwell a bit on my experience of Lahore.

In fact, the three-day Pakistan Literature Festival – PLF – held at Alhambra was an inaugural event of its own kind, adding a new chapter to the catalogue of our literary celebrations. It was sponsored by the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi, and was wholly organized by a team transported from Karachi. It goes to the credit of the Arts Council's president, Ahmed Shah, and his energetic team that it turned out to be a success, with its focus on youth and a lively blend of literature, current affairs, arts and music.

For me, the real worth of a literary festival is not so much the discourse that is held in specific sessions but what transpires on the sidelines. This coming together of scores of leading writers and critics, including some from abroad, inspires an endless series of casual encounters that can be so insightful and invigorating. Lahore last week, thus, was a feast for me as Karachi is turning out to be.

Ah, but the PLF was flanked by sad news. When some of us were waiting to board the flight for Lahore on Friday last week, we got the message that Amjad Islam Amjad

had died in Lahore. When we left for the airport for the return flight on Monday, we learnt about Zia Mohyeddin's demise in Karachi. However, the timing of these tragedies has allowed us to share our sorrow. Amjad Islam Amjad's absence was very conspicuous in the Lahore festival and both, he and Zia Mohyeddin, are fondly being remembered in Karachi and in Lahore.

In Lahore, because this weekend the Faiz Foundation is holding its 7th three-day Faiz Festival at Alhambra and it is as elaborately designed as, say, the KLF. That these major festivals have overlapped is not nice because the literary stars we have are limited in number and some of them have to rush from one place to the other to make appearances in both.

And then, there is the tenth edition of the Lahore Literary Festival – LLF – next week, also at Alhambra. That is why I see all this as the bonfire of literary festivals, illuminating for a brief period our relatively barren cultural and literary landscape. For the literati of Karachi and Lahore, this fleeting interlude is a moveable feast. The pity of it is that with all these really enterprising ventures, they cannot bring Basant back to Lahore. Incidentally, this past week during this month of February, marked as spring in the calendar, had landmark dates that provide.

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.

Green resilience

By Zile Huma

Pakistan has successfully conducted an international donor conference in Geneva with the support of the UN and convinced the world to support flood victims in Pakistan. This conference has helped Pakistan collect around \$10 billion for rehabilitation of flood victims and reconstruction of properties damaged in last year's floods.

After pledging to the international community to provide financial assistance for flood-affected people, Pakistan should now focus on the local business community, especially targeting businesses damaging the environment and contributing to global warming. The government of Pakistan can convene a 'national resilience conference' inviting representatives from the business community who are directly or indirectly involved in carbon emissions, and are the reason for accelerating climate change and environmental degradation like oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) companies, housing societies, mine owners, transport companies, etc.

According to the report 'CO2 Emission from Pakistan's Energy Sector 2021' – published by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) – Nepa has reported that the country's energy sector has introduced the necessary shift. The report says that "in 2019-20, the sectoral contribution shifted to 35 per cent for gas, 26 per

cent, for oil, 8 per cent, hydro, 15 per cent for coal, 3.5 per cent nuclear and one per cent for LPG, while LNG and renewable energy contributed 11 per cent and one per cent, respectively."

According to information shared by the minister of energy in the Senate in 2020, "50 companies – including 15 local and 35 foreign – are working in Pakistan to explore and produce oil and other natural resources". The consumption of fossil fuels is a major cause of carbon emissions. Similarly, the real-estate and development sectors mushroomed rapidly in the last two decades.

Every day a large number of new housing societies are being launched and huge amounts are spent on their publicity advertisements to multiply profits. Not only do such development projects occupy huge lands and clear green areas, they also reduce the country's forest cover. This reduction is making Pakistan more vulnerable to climate-change disasters. Similarly, the industrial sector is another source of producing huge carbon emissions and causes many environmental disasters in the form of wastes.

Agriculture and livestock also produce greenhouse gases (GHG). The mining sector also has huge negative environmental impacts like deforestation, erosion, contamination and alteration of soil features, contamination of local streams and wetlands, and an increase in noise levels, and dust in the air.

Similarly, the transportation network in Pakistan is also a source of pollution and has huge earnings as well.

A 'national resilience conference' will raise awareness among the business community about the issue of climate change and environmental challenges in Pakistan. It is also important to apprise them about the negative impacts of their businesses on the environment, leading to many catastrophes faced by Pakistan. All big companies contribute to social causes under their corporate social responsibility (CSR). The business community should be communicated effectively to play their part to invest in the 4R strategy (Resilience, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, Recovery).

The government can establish a 'green fund' at the national level. The business community can be given options to either invest in green projects or contribute to a 'national green fund'. Those interested in giving donations can deposit a mutually agreed amount in the national green fund on a yearly basis. The government can utilize this amount for different projects of clean energy, forest conservation, mass awareness, etc. The government can also allocate various projects to different business communities for implementation under their corporate social responsibility (CSR) on a short- and long-term basis. Under short-term goals, different projects related.

'India's stubbornness main obstacle in Kashmir solution'

ISLAMABAD: The stubbornness of India is the main obstacle in the way of peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute.

for decades. The report deplored that the Modi-led fascist Indian government is forcibly denying Kashmiris from exercising their universally recognized right to self-determination.

permanent peace in the South Asian region and India must be clearly told to fulfill its pledges made before the UN to settle the Kashmir dispute.



ISLAMABAD: Rana Tanveer Hussain Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training and Türkiye Ambassador in Pakistan Mehmet Paçacı received Turkiye-return Pakistan Army USAR team at Islamabad international Airport.

Several passengers injured in Green Line BRT accident

KARACHI: Several passengers received minor injuries after one of the buses of the Karachi Green Line BRT lost control and hit the railing near Nagan Chowrangi on Friday morning.

The accident caused panic among the passengers as commuters broke the window pane to escape the bus after it crashed into the side railing. The front of the bus was damaged as a result of accident.

Policy inconsistency resulting in recurring economic meltdowns: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is currently witnessing low growth, skyrocketing inflation, unemployment, falling investment, widening trade and fiscal deficits, precariously low foreign reserves, high debt accumulation and external imbalances, mainly due to policy inconsistencies.

Syed Farooq Bukhari told WealthPK that the cash-strapped country was experiencing a crippling economic crisis with decades-high inflation, massive rupee devaluation and a severe shortage of essential goods.

year 2021-22 compared to the previous year. The country's total debt and liabilities have heightened to over Rs60 trillion. As per the annual report of the ministry of finance, the debt burden of every citizen has alarmingly jumped by 21% to Rs216,708 by the end of the fiscal year 2021-22.

Govt launches anti-polio awareness campaign using truck art

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel on Friday said that the government had decided to adopt a unique way to create public awareness against the crippling disease polio, with the help of truck art to stop virus transmission.

unique and deep-rooted part of Pakistan's cultural heritage, which "will be now used for a cause to eradicate polio through educating people in high-risk areas."

Each time a child under the age of five is vaccinated, their protection against the virus is increased. He said that repeated immunizations had protected millions of children from polio, allowing almost all countries in the world to become polio-free, besides the two endemic countries, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

42 new corona cases reported in last 24 hours: NIH

ISLAMABAD: Health officials on Friday said that 42 new Coronavirus cases were reported during the last 24 hours across the country.

Meanwhile, Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel said that the government has strengthened the role of Border and Health Services in Pakistan to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19.

Corona case positivity ratio was just 0.3 to 0.5 in the country while 90 percent of the country's population already got the COVID-19 vaccine.

Sports League Session-2 concludes in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI: Center of Advanced Studies in Health & Technology (CASHT) Sports League Session-2 (CSL-2) concluded in Rawalpindi.

tournament were played between Markhor 11 Vs Hustlers and Contenders, Titans VS Gladiators, Bright Fighters VS Defenders and Wild Wolf.

Majid Afzal appreciated the sportsman spirit exhibited by the participants of the league. He said, "Sports is the practice of life lessons; how one fails, retries, learns from setbacks and come back stronger each time."

NEW YORK: Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN delivering Explanation of Vote by Pakistan after adoption of resolution during General Assembly.

Mild quake jolts Islamabad, adjoining areas

ISLAMABAD: Mild earthquake tremors of 4.2 intensity jolted Islamabad and its adjoining areas on Friday.

According to the National Seismic Monitoring Centre (NSMC), the tremors were felt at 6:06 in the morning. People came out of their houses in fear by reciting Kalma-e-Tayyaba. No loss is reported as per initial reports. It is to be mentioned here that the tremors relatively closer to the surface are likely to bear long-term adverse effects on the buildings.



ISLAMABAD: Hilal-e-Ahmar Sindh Branch Chairpersons Farzana Naik presenting shield to Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Sardar Shahid Ahmad Laghari during her visit Pakistan Red Crescent headquarter.

National Horse & Cattle Show arrangements reviewed

LAHORE: The National Horse and Cattle Show will be commenced in Lahore from March 10 to 12 and in this regard the Punjab Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman has assigned responsibilities to all the relevant departments.

Highlighting the events of the show, he said that forty-two kilometer long cycle race will be held in Lahore. Shahid Zaman said that Ghazal night and Bahar Mashaira will also be organized in the show and over three hundred and fifty youngsters will participate in the unity show.

Efficient macroeconomic policies can help tackle poverty: expert

ISLAMABAD: Efforts to eradicate poverty have been stymied by factors such as high inflation, political instability and recurring natural disasters.

employment, inflation, inequality in income distribution, trade deficits and low investments. "The government has failed to implement policies that promote economic growth and stability, and provide the people with basic needs in times of high inflation."

especially poor, who usually do not have access to health, education and employment. Nasir Iqbal said better governance, more investments in infrastructure, and greater support for education and healthcare were critical to tackle the growing poverty.

Tri-Pack Film's gross profit up 17% to Rs2.7bn in 9MCY22: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Tri-Pack Films Limited's revenue increased 33% to Rs18.4 billion in the first nine months of the calendar year 2022 from Rs13.8 billion in the corresponding period of the previous year.

The freshly discovered export markets and devaluation of the Pakistani rupee are likely to increase the margin on export sales. However, the margins will still be affected by high cost of manufacturing caused by rising raw material costs as well as pricey Re-gasified liquefied natural gas.

financing costs are not likely to provide any relief to the company's bottom line due to the increase in the discount rate as well as the geared capital structure. The project's cost is rising above its initial predictions of Rs9 billion because of increased exchange rate changes as well as increases in the pricing of cement and steel.

foreign exchange fluctuations, political and economic unrest, and the flood-aftermath all have the potential to have an impact on performance of the company. Also, modifications to import laws necessitated by the current economic conditions are posing significant difficulties for development initiatives.

Tri-Pack Films Ltd and Sitara Chemical Industries Limited have market capitalisation of Rs5 billion each. Pakistan Synthetics Limited and Nimir Industrial Chemicals Limited have the largest market cap of Rs6.3 billion each.



MULTAN: First Lady in a group photo with the administration and staff of the Violence Against Women Centre (VAWC) in Social Welfare Complex, Multan.

Pakistani rupee again knocks out US dollar in interbank trading

ISLAMABAD: As the country is expected to reach a deal with the International Monetary Fund as early as this week, the local currency continued strengthening its position against the US dollar. The Pakistani rupee appreciated by 43 paisas against the greenback in the interbank trading on Friday.

According to the data provided by the money dealers, the Pakistani rupee kept up its upward trajectory as the US dollar shed another 43 paisas in its value and was being exchanged for Rs260.50.

On Thursday, the local currency marched ahead with a gain of 97 paisas against the greenback and ended the day at Rs260.93.

The country is expected to receive external financing inflows once it struck a deal with the IMF. According to reports, the global lender is likely to sign the staff-level agreement (SLA) on Feb 28 and this will be followed by an executive board meeting of the IMF in the first week of March.

President Arif Alvi also gave approval to the Finance Supplementary Bill, 2023 under of Article 75 of the Constitution of Pakistan which represents a critical milestone in the government's efforts to unlock the IMF programme.

The State Bank of Pakistan is also expected to raise policy rate by 200 basis points later today in an off-cycle review this week.

"We support the use of monetary policy to rein in inflation, anchor inflation expectations, and support the exchange rate," said Esther Perez Ruiz, the IMF's resident representative in Pakistan, in an email to Reuters.

Meanwhile, the foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank have increased by \$65.6 million or 2.05% WoW to \$3.25 billion during the week ended on February 17, 2023, marking the second consecutive increase on weekly basis, according to the data released by the State Bank on Thursday. According to the data provided by the money dealers, the Pakistani rupee kept up its upward trajectory as the US dollar shed another 43 paisas in its value and was being exchanged for Rs260.50.

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Robust trade ties to bolster Pakistan's economic stability: US

WASHINGTON: The United States has declared that a robust trade relationship with Pakistan is vital to bolster the South Asian country's economic stability.

This was said by US State Department spokesman Ned Price while addressing a news briefing in Washington on Thursday. He said the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council ministerial meeting hosted by the US Trade Representative Ambassador Tai exemplified American commitment to deepening economic and commercial ties with Pakistan.

Ned Price maintained "We believe that a robust trade relationship between the United States and Pakistan is more important than ever to bolster Pakistan's economic stability as it recovers from devastating floods, while at the same time also providing opportunity to Americans and to American businesses in this country, exposing them to new markets — Pakistani markets in this case."

He said the US trade relationship with Pakistan has helped both Pakistani industries and consumers. "We have long been Pakistan's largest export market, with potential for even further growth," he added.

The State Department spokesman further said that his country believed that there was great

potential to expand bilateral trade with Pakistan further, particularly in energy, agricultural equipment and products, franchising, retail trade, information and communications technology products and services.

Ned Price said America has been a leading investor in Pakistan for the past two decades, and in the past year the country's investments have increased by some 50 percent.

US investment in Pakistan is the highest it's been in over a decade, and US corporations have announced more than \$1.5 billion in investment plans in Pakistan since 2019, he said and added "US companies and their local affiliates, moreover, are among Pakistan's largest employers, with roughly 80 US companies directly employing more than 120,000 Pakistanis." Ned Price also spoke about the terror threat facing Pakistan. He said that the US engagement was rooted in the fact that terrorism is a threat that has taken many Pakistani, Afghan, other innocent lives over the course of far too many years now. He averred "The United States and Pakistan have a shared interest in ensuring the Taliban live up to the commitments that they have made, and that terrorist groups that may be active in Afghanistan — like Daesh, TTP, al-Qaida, are no longer able to threaten regional stability." INP



ISLAMABAD: MNA Chaudhary Ehsan ul Haq Bajwa, former MPAs Sufi Akram and Zahid Akram called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Default raises fears of food scarcity in Balochistan's jails

QUETTA: Fears of food scarcity loom over Balochistan's jails as the ration providers threatened to block the supply of food items to prisons due to non-payment of two years' dues amounting to Rs161.85 million.

The ration contractors demanded in their applications written to the Balochistan Prisons department to clear pending dues until Feb 28, otherwise, they would block the supply of food items to 11 jails and judicial lockups in the province.

As per the jail authorities, the department is liable to pay Rs51.1 million for 2021-22 and Rs110.75 million for the ongoing year. "The department has moved a summary for funds to the federal government, and if the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Jail Bhoro Movement eyes Balochistan, it will require more funds", the authorities added. INP

PFOWA contributes to earthquake relief efforts

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Pakistan Foreign Office Women Association (PFOWA), called on Mehmet Pacaci Ambassador of Republic of Turkey and Ramez Alraee, Ambassador of Syrian Arab Republic to handover donations for the brotherly people of Turkey and Syria affected by the frightful earthquake.

A cheque was presented by the President of PFOWA Mrs. Zunaira Asad. President PFOWA expressed heartfelt condolences on the tragic loss of lives and widespread devastation during the dreadful earthquake. She prayed for the departed souls and wished speedy recovery for the resilient brotherly people.

The donations made by PFOWA demonstrate solidarity and support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the fraternal people of Turkey and Syria in this critical time of need. PFOWA has actively participated in welfare and emergency relief efforts for the victims of natural calamities abroad and nationally including the 2005 earthquake, 2010 and 2022 Floods.

PFOWA is a registered non-governmental organization bringing together spouses of Pakistan Foreign Service officers and Pakistan's women diplomats for charitable endeavours. INP

LDA operation against encroachments in full swing

LAHORE: Continuing its campaign against illegal commercialisation, encroachments and violations against building rules, the Lahore Development Authority (LDA) sealed and demolished more than 105 properties in various city areas.

Newly appointed Chief Town Planner (CTP) Asad Zaman supervised the campaign on the directions of DG LDA Aamir Ahmed Khan. The operations were carried out under the supervision of Director Town Planning (Zone II) Salman Mahfooz, Director Town Planning (Zone III) Ali Nusrat, Director Town Planning (Zone IV) Sidra Tabassum and Director Town Planning (Zone VII) Ayesha Mutahir.

Giving details of the operations, LDA officials said an LDA team sealed 57 properties in Johar Town for non-payment of commercialisation fees and illegal land use conversion. The action was taken at J-1 Market Johar Town, Abdul Haq Road at Model Road and Southern Bypass.

The team also demolished several constructions on Khayaban Firdousi and Awaisia Road due to illegal use of land, non-provision of on-site parking and encroachment on the setback area. Moreover, LDA team took action in Allama Iqbal Town and demolished several illegal buildings for non-payment of commercialisation fee and more than 25 buildings. INP

Punjab police has political interference: CJP Bandial

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Umar Ata Bandial on Friday remarked that the Punjab police had been exposed for political interference, due to which the department is unable to perform its duties in a peaceful manner.

The three-member bench headed by CJP Bandial rejected the reinstatement plea of former Chief Secretary Punjab Kamran Afzal, stating that the matter was of an individual nature.

During the hearing, CJP Bandial highlighted the issue of frequent transfers of Inspector Generals (IG) of police in Punjab.

He remarked since 2018, no IG had completed even a year in office and they were removed within a few months. The Punjab police urgently needed the training to improve

their efficiency and performance, the CJP added.

In another matter, CJP Bandial mentioned that help from agencies had been taken to release a girl who had been abducted for six years.

The hearing also saw a detailed report on the appointments and transfers submitted by Punjab and Sindh police.

However, Justice Athar Minallah pointed out that there were no reasons stated in the report for the removal of the Punjab IG. He said that if transfers were based on performance, then action should be taken against poor performers.

The additional advocate general also stated that no briefing had been given so far for the change of IG.

Afterward, the court adjourned the hearing until last week of March. INP

NEPRA directs NTDC to restore wind power supply within 10 days

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric and Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on Friday directed the National Transmission & Despatch Company (NTDC) to resume wind power supply within 10 days.

The directive came after NEPRA heard a case on the request of the Pakistan Wind Energy Association regarding the closure of the Master Wind (MW) wind power plants for the past five months.

NEPRA Chairman Tauseef H Farooqi pointed out that the government was encouraging the production of alternative energy and questioned why the already existing power plants were closed.

The wind energy association responded by stating that they received capacity charges if their other power plants were shut

down. They also said that shutting down the wind power plant meant closing the entire wind industry.

NEPRA officials noted that the NTDC did not build transmission lines and grid stations as per the plan, which was causing the disruption in supply.

The chairman then directed NTDC to arrange transmission lines and resume wind power supply at the earliest. The National Power Control Center was also directed to solve the issue of electricity generation within 10 days.

In a country facing high inflation, cheap electricity generated by wind power is a crucial need for the people, Chairman Farooqi added. The directive to resume wind power supply highlights the importance of investing in renewable energy sources to ensure sustainable and affordable energy for all. INP

Pakistani brothers released from Guantanamo after 20 years and sent home

GUANTANAMO BAY: Two Pakistani brothers, Abdul and Mohammed Rabbani, have been freed from the US military prison at Guantanamo Bay after more than 20 years in detention and repatriated, the Pentagon said Thursday.

Abdul Rabbani, who was born in 1967, is believed to have been one of the oldest inmates at the facility on a US base in Cuba.

US officials accused him of working for avowed 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) and operating an Al-Qaeda safe house in Karachi, but his detainee assessment indicates he was not believed to have had "specific insight into Al-Qaeda operational plans."

Mohammed Rabbani, born in 1969, was accused of recruiting his older brother into extremist circles. He is believed to have organized travel and funds for

KSM and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, the mastermind of the October 2000 suicide bombing of the USS Cole missile destroyer, which left 17 US sailors dead.

The pair were arrested in Karachi in September 2002 by Pakistani authorities, according to a Senate intelligence committee report that also names Mohammed Rabbani as one of 17 detainees subjected to torture at overseas CIA secret prisons, known as black sites.

Both men arrived at Guantanamo Bay in 2004 and were approved for release in 2021, the Defense Department said in a statement.

Their release brings to 32 the number of detainees left at Guantanamo Bay. Of those, 18 are eligible for transfer, three are eligible for review, nine are on trial in US military commissions and two have been convicted. INP

Daily Covid tests about to hit 6,000 mark in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The daily number of Covid-19 tests has built up further as Pakistan has recorded another 42 coronavirus infections with no fatality during the last 24 hours (Thursday), showed the statistics released by the National Institute of Health (NIH) on Friday morning.

According to the NIH data, the death toll in the country remained unchanged at 30,641 whereas the number of total infections now climbed up to 1,576,837 after adding the fresh 42 cases.

During the last 24 hours (Thursday), 5,985 tests were conducted throughout Pakistan as compared to previous day's 5338 whereas the positivity ratio has also inched up to 0.67%. The number of patients in critical care stood at 16. INP

Naveed Qamar visits US think tank Atlantic Council

WASHINGTON: Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar on Friday visited renowned US think tank Atlantic Council. Detailed discussion was held on Pak-US bilateral relations, way forward especially efforts afoot to promote bilateral trade and investment.

The Minister is visiting Washington D.C. to attend Pak-US Trade & Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) ministerial meeting. INP

Poultry feed, production issues discussed

LAHORE: A special meeting of the high-level committee established by the Secretary Livestock & Dairy Development, Punjab on "Poultry nutrition—past and present scenario with future prospects & situation analyses of poultry sector" was held at University of Education (UoE).

UoE Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Talat Naseer Pasha, who is convener of the committee, and other members attended the meeting. In the meeting, the situation of poultry in the country and in Punjab during the last five years in terms of supply of feed, production of chicken and chicken meat, its supply within Punjab and supply from Punjab to other provinces was reviewed.

The participants analyzed the situation caused by the ban on the import of GMO soybeans used in poultry feed. INP

LHC scolds PTI for overburdening judiciary after voluntarily arrests

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday scolded Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for 'overburdening' the judiciary after voluntarily surrendering for the arrest during Jail Bhoro Tehreek.

Justice Shahram Sarwar passes these remarks while hearing the pleas of Ijaz Chaudhry, Zain Qureshi and others for the recovery of party leaders that voluntarily surrendered themselves to the law enforcers under 'Jail Bhoro Tehreek'.

At the outset of the hearing, the LHC judge asked what do you want from us, when PTI leaders voluntarily surrendered themselves for arrests.

Police were not arresting PTI leaders and workers but they forced themselves into prison van — the comment cracked a

laugh in the courtroom.

First, PTI leaders surrendered voluntarily for the arrest and now you are here to put pressure on the court," Justice Shahram Sarwar remarked.

The lawyers of the petitioners pleaded with the LHC to seek a report from the government on the arrest. During the hearing, Zain Qureshi said police had arrested his father. He sought orders from authorities to allow him to meet his father. At which, Justice Chaudhry said he should go to Chairing Cross — the point in Lahore city from where the movement was begun — if he wanted to meet his father.

Later, the court issued notices to the respondents and sought reply from the government till Feb 27. INP



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Kazakhstan Nauman Bashir Bhatti, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Ukraine war: Pakistan, China abstain from UN vote

UNITED NATIONALS: On the eve of the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly voted and approved a resolution demanding Russia to end the Ukraine war and "immediately" withdraw its forces.

As fighting raged on in Ukraine's east and south, its allies around the world showed their support on the first anniversary of Russia's invasion.

During the vote in the 193-member UNGA, 141 member nations voted in favour of the resolution.

While 7 opposed the resolution, 32 members, including Pakistan, China, Iran, India and others abstained from voting. Pakistan's Permanent

Representative at UN, Munir Akram said few clauses of the resolution are against Pakistan's stance.

Meanwhile, Russia's Deputy U.N. Ambassador Dmitry Polyanskiy dismissed the action at the United Nations as "useless". Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy hailed the vote.

"This resolution is a powerful signal of unflinching global support for Ukraine," he said in a post on Twitter.

Paris lit up the Eiffel Tower in the Ukrainian flag colours of blue and yellow and people draped in Ukrainian flags gathered at a vigil in London. In Brussels, European Union buildings were similarly lit up in the colours. INP

B2B cooperation under CPEC critical for sustained economic growth: official

ISLAMABAD: The second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) focuses on development of business-to-business (B2B) links as they are crucial for sustainable economic growth.

Talking to WealthPK, Syed Zafar Ali Shah, Secretary of Planning Commission, said, "Promoting B2B cooperation is now a priority of the government of Pakistan."

He said that the Board of Investment (BoI), which is a member of the CPEC's Working Group on Special Economic Zones, had developed an investor forum to facilitate ideas on launching joint ventures. "The BoI is in the process of identifying suitable and viable locations for consideration by the Joint Working Group for setting up SEZs," he added.

"The BoI has designed a policy to create a conducive environment for attracting foreign direct investment. Policies are being devised in a way to ensure business liberalisation, de-regulation,

privatisation and facilitation." He said the second phase of CPEC was meant to broaden the scope of cooperation on industrial, scientific, technological and agricultural development.

Zafar Ali Shah emphasised that the government was working to ensure policy consistency, ease of doing business, and provision of better incentives for private sector participation in development of a sustainable economic model. Meanwhile, Dr Liaqat Ali Shah, Executive Director and Head of Policy Division at the Centre of Excellence for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, told WealthPK that the flagship Belt and Road Initiative, which the CPEC is part of, had entered the 10th year, successfully transforming the societies and systems in many member countries around the globe. However, he expressed concern that investment rate in Pakistan had remained chronically low both in absolute terms and compared to other emerging and developing economies. INP



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Rana Tanveer Hussain called on Deputy Speaker National Assembly Zahid Akram Durrani.