

QUETTA VOICE

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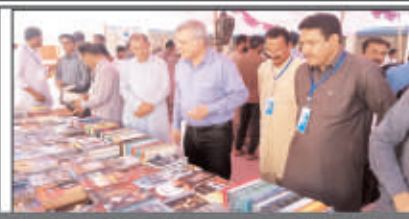
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Historic Sibi Mela to begin from March 3rd



Books worth Rs:5.4m sold in Makran in February

Elections in Punjab and KP within 90 days: Apex court rules

Davood Ahmed

The Supreme Court (SC) ruled on Wednesday that elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab should be held within 90 days.

"Parliamentary is a salient feature of the Constitution," the top court remarked.

The verdict was announced by a five-member apex court bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, and Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar.

Ahead of the verdict, Room No.1 of the court — where the much-anticipated decision was announced — was packed with journalists and lawyers. PTI's Shireen Mazari and Fawad Chaudhry and AML chief Sheikh Rashid were also in attendance.

Apex court split 3-2 in suo motu notice over Punjab, K-P polls issue after two-day proceedings

"If the governor dissolved the assembly then the governor will announce the election date," ruled the court.

Simultaneously, the apex court ruled that the president and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) should announce polls in Punjab after consultation.

"In ordinary circumstances," read the judgment, "the general



election to the Punjab Assembly ought to be held on 09.04.2023, the date announced by the president in terms of his order of 20.02.2023.

SC directs federal govt to provide EC all facilities, personnel and security for polls

"However, we are informed that on account of the delay in the emergence of the date for the holding of the general election, it may not be possible to meet the 90-day deadline stipulated by the constitution", the court stated, ordering the ECP to propose a date that is as close as possible to the one proposed by the president.

"After consultation with the ECP, the president shall announce a date for the holding of the general election to the Punjab Assembly."

Similarly, the court ordered the K-P governor to announce the date for polls after consulting with the ECP.

The verdict was split 3-2 with Justice Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail dissenting with the majority. Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar supported the ruling.

The dissenting note maintained that the suo motu was not maintainable.

The bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial concluded the two-day-long proceedings in the suo motu case on Tuesday.

Concluding the hearing, the bench reserved the verdict and said it would be announced before 11am Wednesday (today).

Justice Mandokhail and Justice Shah have dissented from majority verdict

During Tuesday's hearing, the chief justice said that they were not there to support any side but to support the

Constitution. "We cannot abandon the Constitution," he said, adding that they could not override the Constitution.

However, in their dissenting note on Wednesday, Justice Shah and Justice Mandokhail said that "the suo motu proceedings, in the facts and circumstances of the case, are wholly unjustified in the mode and manner they were taken up under Article 184(3) of the constitution, besides being initiated with undue haste."

The two judges maintained that the case was not fit for hearing while the matter was already pending in the provincial high courts of Peshawar and Lahore seeking the same relief.

Furthermore, they stated that "such like matters should best be resolved by the parliament" adding "we, therefore, agree with the orders dated 23.02.2023 passed by our learned brothers, Yahya Afridi and Athar Minallah, and dismiss the present constitution petitions and drop the suo motu proceedings."

Previously, the chief justice had formed a nine-member bench to hear the suo motu notice over the delay in the announcement of provincial elections in Punjab and K-P since their dissolution earlier this year. At the outset of the hearing on Monday, Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Sayyed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi recused themselves as questions were raised on their presence on the bench. Meanwhile, two more judges, Justice Afridi and Justice Minallah disassociated themselves from the proceedings as they expressed their opinion on the maintainability of the petitions on the matter. "Keeping in view the order dated 23.02.2023 and the additional notes attached thereto by four

Shahida Raza national hokey player dies in boat accident towards Italy

Sports Desk

National female hockey player Shahida Raza,

becoming an immigrant due to constant worries about livelihood.

The dreams of the future are painted on the



who decided to become an immigrant in search of employment, died in a boat accident on her way to Italy on Wednesday. Officials of Pakistan Hockey Federation and PHF Women's Wing Syeda Shehla Raza, Tanzeela Amir Cheema expressed their condolences on behalf of the hockey community. Shahida Raza was 27 years old and mother of one child. She was the member of Pakistan Women's Hockey team and was also a national football player. The female national hockey player come to the decision of

eyelids of the female national hockey player Shahida Raza, the boat overturned after hitting a mountain during her sea trip. The national hockey player, along with various foreigners on board the boat, could not withstand the strong waves of the sea and lost their lives. Pakistan Hockey Federation Vice President Shehla Raza and PHF Women Wing Secretary Tanzeela Amir Cheema, PHF officials and people associated with Pakistan Hockey have expressed their deep sorrow over the sudden death of a female national hockey player in an accident.

Barkhan killings: Quetta court sends Sardar Khetran to jail

Syed Muhammad Qaseem

A local court in Quetta sent the Balochistan Minister for Communication and Works (C&W), Sardar Abdul Rehman to jail on judicial remand.

Amid tight security, Sardar Khetran was produced before the judicial magistrate's court in Quetta. Police had arrested the Balochistan minister in connection with the killing of two men and a teenage girl in Balochistan's Barkhan district a few days back.

Sardar Khetran was under the custody of crimes branch police

Sardar Khetran was under the custody of crimes branch police on a 10-day remand. The police produced the minister before the court and the counsel of the minister pleaded before the court to send his client to the district jail Quetta.

The judicial magistrate however directed the police to produce Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran before the court on March 9 in his ancestral town of Barkhan with regard to the triple murder.

Khan Muhammad Marri, a local tribesman had accused the minister of killing his two sons and making the remaining family members including his wife hostage. The charge was vehemently denied by the minister. Sardar Khetran accused his son Sardarzada Inam Khetran of conspiring against him to gain the chieftain's position.

Marri Itehad had staged a three-days



sit in. The Marri Itehad Pakistan staged a protest demonstration for three days and mounted pressure on the Balochistan government, which ensured the safe recovery of Khan Muhammad Marri's four sons, a daughter, and his wife.

The Balochistan Chief Minister, Mir Qudus Bizenjo had also taken notice of the incident and formed a joint interrogation team (JIT) to probe into the incident.

Senior police officers are part of the JIT probing the killings and making Khan Muhammad Marri's family hostage in Balochistan's Barkhan district.

Khan Muhammad Marri once used to be Sardar Khetran's blue-eyed and personal private security guard in the Barkhan area of Balochistan.

Books worth Rs:5.4m sold in Makran in February

Behram Baloch

Record books of Rs:5.4 million were sold in the month of February during two separate books festivals in Makran, Balochistan. A total of two book fairs were organised in Makran in February encompassing a large number of book lovers.

Authors, literary figures, intellectuals, journalists and writers from across the country participated in book festivals.

Recently, a 4 days RCD Council book fair ended in Gwadar. Rs: 1.9 Million books were sold



in this book fair. Prof. Dr Hoodbhoy was chief guest of the event.

"Selling of Rs:1.9M books now and 3.5M books in remembering Atta Shad Literary festival in Turbat shows that the land of Makran division are book lovers", Mr

Hood bhoy said in the conclusion.

Makran tops Balochistan in Literacy rate

Makran division has topped Balochistan in literacy rate and ranked 8th

on the national level as per the 2017 census. Overall the literacy rate as per the 2017 census stands at 43.58 percent. Out of 34 districts, 6 districts in Balochistan have made improvements in the literacy rate.

Balochistan turns to books

For last 5 years students of Balochistan has performed better in national and provincial level exams. Every year hundreds of young competent minds from Balochistan take admissions in good educational institutions throughout Pakistan.

Historic Sibi Mela to begin from March 3rd

Nashad Baloch

The historic Sibi mela would begin on March 3rd (Friday). The administration has made all necessary arrangements for the centuries-old Sibi Mela.

The famous flower show, horse and cattle show, traditional cultural dances and other historic events would take place during the mela.

Scores of people



belonging to various walks of life are expected to participate in the mela. All concerned provincial

departments have decided to establish stalls to promote agriculture, livestock, history, culture, tradi-

tions, and languages relating to Balochistan and Pakistan.

The Balochistan government has also made arrangements with regard to holding the mela and making it a successful event.

The district administration has also devised a traffic plan and security plan to make sure uninterrupted traffic and ensure peace on the eve of the mela.

Draft code of conduct finalized to prevent unethical activities on social media: Shania

By: Sheikh Razaq

Chief Minister Balochistan's Coordinator and member of Commission on Status of Women Shania Khan said that the Commission has prepared a draft code of conduct for the creation of immoral posts, comments and abusive language on social media with the aim to control them.

The completion draft has handed it over to the Parliamentary Secretary, Women Development Department which will be presented to the Balochistan Legislative Assembly for further action, she said.

She expressed these views while addressing a consultative meeting held to formulate a code of conduct related to social media and during a meeting with a representative delegation of women.

Shania Khan said that the Commission on Status of Women has been activated in Balochistan and every forum was active for the protection of women's rights,



The Chairperson of the National Commission on Status of Women, Nilofar Bakhtiar, Provincial Chairperson Fauzia Shaheen and other members and representatives of civil society, in consultation with each other, drafted the code of conduct of social media. The draft has been finalized and handed over to the Parliamentary Secretary, Women Development Department.

She hoped that the House of Balochistan would ratify it unanimously.

She said that earlier Punjab, Sindh and KP Provincial Commission on Status of Women have prepared drafts in this regard and now, this process was under process in Balochistan as well.

After the implementation of this Code of Conduct, any kind of unethical activity on social media will be punishable, she maintained.

She further said that the Commission on Status of Women would continue to play an active role in Balochistan to provide equal development opportunities to women in political, economic and social fields.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor Asim Khan

The rising deaths of coal miners in Balochistan

Shocking incidents inside the coal mines of Balochistan are almost the order of the day. Worst poverty and unemployment force people to put their lives at peril while extracting coal from mines in Balochistan. At the cost of living, poverty-hit people from Shangla, Swat areas of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, Toba Kakari area of Pishin, and people from southern Afghanistan work in killer coal mines of Balochistan.

At least six coal miners were killed after the mine was filled with methane gas in the Shahrag area of the Harnai district a few days ago. Rescue workers and fellow miners made hectic efforts to save their lives. But, they failed to do so. The officials merely issued condolence statements with no promise of taking action against the responsible people.

Sadly, such incidents make no headlines in the newspapers and tv channels

No action has been taken against the mine owner, contractor, and concerned people. The government has also not announced any compensation for the heirs of the victims. Sadly, such incidents make no headlines in the newspapers and tv channels. This is also one of the underlying reasons behind rampant incidents inside mines in Balochistan.

Hazardous working conditions have claimed thousands of precious human lives in Dukki, Quetta, Sorange, Marwar, Chamalang, Bolan, Mach, and Harnai areas of Balochistan. Despite repeated appeals on behalf of human rights organizations and labor unions, the Balochistan government has not ensured improved safety conditions inside mines of the province.

Strange: 18 inspectors posted for 3000 mines

Around 60,000 miners have been working in over 3,000 coal mines in Balochistan. For more than 3,000 coal mines, the Balochistan mines and mineral department has appointed only 18 mine inspectors. Under the 1923 mines and mineral act Balochistan, coal miners cannot enter the mine without the inspection of the mine by an inspector.

Women, children, and aged people are not allowed to enter coal mines as per the 1923 mines act. The Balochistan government and mines owners must take steps to improve working conditions for the coal miners before it is already late.

In August 1985, at a conference in Havana, Fidel Castro laid out the facts and figures and indeed the mathematical impossibility of the Third World ever being able to repay its external debts (\$335 billion at the time, close to \$11.1 trillion today).

Today, compounding interest and debt servicing payments combined with the mechanisms of unequal exchange and the peripheral economic structure of most Third World countries, ensure that for every dollar Western countries give to smaller nations (as 'aid' and investment), more than three actually goes out through interest payments, profit repatriation, and 'multinationals' accounting gymnastics.

It is in light of these facts then, that Castro advocated for the cancellation of Third World debt by building an international united front of popular classes. An audacious aim no doubt, but one based in a very sober realization of the intractability of the debt problem within the current architecture of the world economy.

Whatever one may think of Castro or the ideal of Third World unity, one need only cast a cursory glance over the commentary sparked by the IMF programme renewal in Pakistan to be struck by the general

poverty of imagination in our own economic discourse. For the most part, we have the usual chorus of voices advocating for a further liberalization of markets (an antidote apparently to breaking up 'cartels'), easing the pathways of 'Foreign Direct Investment' (FDI), and promoting export-oriented industrialisation as a means of shoring up foreign reserves and solving perennial balance-of-payments issues. In short, the aim is to shift the economy from one that is import-dependent and consumption-focussed to that which is export-oriented and production-focussed.

There are some important proposals here, of course - not least the demand to increase the state's woeful revenue generation through increased taxation, incentivizing investment in productive sectors, and taming the perennially-expanding security behemoth. Additionally, the IMF have burnished their pro-poor credentials, by advocating for targeted subsidies for the poor while increasing taxes on the rich.

Needless to say, subsidies to the poor do not alter the basic architecture of IMF prescriptions. And there is hardly a commentator in the mainstream, a couple of honourable exceptions notwithstanding, who -

even while advocating a velvet touch to the iron fist of market reforms - have questioned the programme's basic prescriptions. Here, evidence is trumped by dogma and, as Yanis Varoufakis evocatively put it, "crimes against logic" are perpetrated by the high mandarins of global financial management and neoclassical economics with their advocacy of liberalization and marketization.

Take, for example, the advocacy by all and sundry of promoting FDI and export-focussed industrialisation. Assuming that FDI will lead to greater industrialisation (which is not guaranteed), what is not considered here is the form this is likely to take. In most developing countries, FDI has created 'enclave economies': pockets of 'development' and industry, often in untaxed and scarcely regulated "special economic zones" (SEZs), which have little upstream and downstream linkages with the wider regional or national economy. Geared towards global value chains and markets, firms in such enclaves are subject to global measures of profit and competition, and therefore bank on the 'comparative advantage' of unemployed/underemployed workers in smaller countries. Inevitably, this is a

further incentive for local employers, intermediaries, and the state that facilitates them to indulge in a veritable 'race to the bottom' when it comes to wages and labour standards.

Such restricted forms of development and industry form no productivity-enhancing linkages between different sectors of the local economy while competing at the global level through 'labour arbitrage': a regime whereby the free flow of capital leads to workers being forced to compete with each other across a global wage divide.

FDI-induced and export-focussed industrialisation also often lead to capital-intensive forms of industrialisation, which are geared towards reducing labour costs. This is even while the production of technology and ownership of patents remains firmly enclaved in core countries. While such capital-intensive forms of industrialization (and associated services sector) can absorb a layer of skilled and semi-skilled labour, it does not lead to broad-based and sustainable - labour absorption - a key requirement for a country like Pakistan with massive levels of un- and under-employment.

The case of India is instructive: its share of labour-intensive (versus

By Ayyaz Mallick

capital-intensive) merchandise exports has fallen by almost half in the last two decades while issues of low-aggregate investment, insufficient demand and employment continue to persist in the general economy. Thus, capital-intensive forms of industrialization and investment further exacerbate the problem of enclave economies - those geared towards fulfilling the needs of the global market (with all its fluctuations and pressures), while resulting in narrow forms of development nationally; few linkages between different sectors such as local agriculture, industry, and services; and large surplus populations.

Narrow forms of development thus neither solve the issue of decent employment for broad masses of labour, nor are they particularly sustainable or equitable. The travails of Bangladesh, a much-touted 'success story' of export-oriented development, are a case in point: its labour standards led to the biggest industrial disaster in history (Rana Plaza), while an economy exposed to the vagaries of global fluctuations has led this poster child of neoliberal success to yet another IMF programme last year. Similar pitfalls may be highlighted.

Tales from the Mountains

By Jamil Akhtar

The northern areas of Pakistan are amongst the most beautiful parts of our planet. Here, nature can be witnessed in all its might and glory. The remoteness of this region has added to its mystique and aided in the conservation of the environment to some extent. But this isolation has also caused more hardships for the inhabitants of this land and has hindered its development.

UNDP has been very active in the northern parts of the country, including Chitral in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and the Gilgit Baltistan province. Its interventions have focused on the environment, disaster risk reduction, environmentally friendly tourism, empowering the people, and providing them with livelihoods.

The drastic changes in the climate are wreaking devastation on glaciers the world over and Pakistan is no exception. The melting glaciers create lakes that can overflow, and cause tremendous devastation to lives and property.

To prevent this from happening a project by the name of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF-I) was initiated a few years back by the Adaptation Fund. Now, with an investment of 36.9 million dollars by the Green Climate Fund, GLOF-II is being implemented across the two provinces.

In addition to climate change, the increase in the human population has also adversely affected the environment. To reverse the effects of deforestation, thousands of poplar and fruit-



bearing trees including cherry, apple, and apricot have been planted all over the northern areas.

These interventions have been managed through the Improvement of Central Karakoram National Park (CKNP) project (funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation and Government of Italy), and the Pakistan Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programme - implemented through World

Wide Fund for Nature and Snow Leopard Foundation.

Improving the living conditions of the people has had primary importance in UNDP's efforts. The provision of clean drinking water is a very important aspect of these efforts. Numerous water treatment and purification plants and hydro-ram pumps have been installed and water supply schemes have been put into place in various villages.

These initiatives of CKNP and CCAM-II projects have been funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, the Government of Italy, and the Global Water Challenge (CocaCola Foundation).

Tales from the Mountains. The author is an international award-winning writer, and photographer, currently working as a consultant for UNDP Pakistan

Ethics and politics

By S Qaisar Shareef

Last August, the FBI raided former US president Donald Trump's resort home in Florida.

They searched for and confiscated a large number of classified documents that were in the former president's possession and that he had refused to turn over to the National Archives as required.

This was followed by the expected reactions from both political parties - Republicans condemning the unprecedented raid on a former president's home and Democrats criticizing the former president's refusal to turn over the documents.

And now it has been revealed that lawyers have found classified documents marked "top secret" in offices used by Joe Biden while serving as vice president, as well as at his home. As expected, the political brouhaha has hit very high decibels. Both matters - Trump and Biden's possession of classified documents - are under investigation by the Department of Justice. Biden claims to not have any knowledge of such documents in his former office, while Trump had asserted his authority to keep whatever he wanted "I could declassify whatever documents I wished", therefore everything I had was declassified, he has asserted. As for Biden, at a minimum this represents careless handling of sensitive material.

The Department of Justice having to investigate two presidents is quite unprecedented. It appears that in recent years adherence to laws or ethical

norms has become a disappearing commodity in US politics, as it has been in so many other countries.

Shortly after the conclusion of midterm elections last November, the country found out that George Santos, newly elected Republican Representative to the US Congress from New York, had lied about just every important aspect of his background. His education, work experience, his faith, and what his family has endured over generations were all fabricated. How he managed to lend \$700,000 to his campaign is under investigation for possible campaign finance violation.

Yet, the fact that the newly elected representative has fabricated his entire life story isn't the most shocking part of the story. What is truly shocking is that Santos' Republican Party led by the newly elected Speaker doesn't feel Mr Santos should have to resign. The Republican majority in the House of just four seats must be protected at all costs.

The last several years in American politics have shown that the super wealthy and super powerful may just be above the law, and that adherence to laws and norms of behavior are somewhat voluntary. In many cases there are simply no means of enforcing compliance.

This week Donald Trump's real-estate organization was fined \$1.6 million for tax fraud, the largest fine allowed by New York State law. Donald Trump has not been personally implicated, but his chief financial

officer has received a five-month prison sentence. Trump has brushed off the entire episode by simply calling it "politically motivated".

While these are clear acts of unethical behaviour, there are other examples of violation of laws and even the American constitution that have been allowed to slide. In 2016, then leader of the Republican majority in the Senate Mitch McConnell decided he would not allow then president Obama to fill a seat in the US Supreme Court that had become vacant. When Obama nominated a candidate to fill the seat, as stipulated by the Constitution, the Senate leader simply ignored it, leaving the Supreme Court one seat short for almost a year. Leader McConnell cited his constitutional right to not give the presidential nominee a hearing.

Article II, Section 2 of the US constitution states that the president shall appoint justices to the Supreme Court "with advice and consent of the Senate." Whether such "advice and consent" could include the right to simply refuse to consider a duly nominated justice is for legal scholars to argue.

Last but not least, the former president tried to overturn the results of the 2020 election by coming up with a twisted theory of election fraud. He wrongly asserted the vice president had powers to refuse to certify the results. Even his instigation of a riot that resulted in several deaths and the sacking of Capitol Hill in January 2021 has so far not resulted in any consequences for him.

Life after abrogation of IIOJK's autonomy

In 2019, BJP revoked the special status of then Jammu and Kashmir, and illegally integrated it with India. I was studying in India at the time while my family was in Kashmir. Due to the communication blockade, I was not able to connect with them for a very long time. I still remember how difficult it was for me to live far from home and not hearing back from my family. The history of India, Pakistan and Kashmir may be intertwined but such stories remain at the very heart of it.

It all started after partition. The British did not divide the princely states since they were ruled by princes. In fact, they never had proper control over these states to begin with. To solve this issue, India created the 'Instrument of Accession' that allowed the princely states to accede to India. Most of the princely states acceded except Jammu and Kashmir. The region was different from other princely states as it was Muslim majority by population, most of whom wanted to accede to Pakistan but was ruled by a Hindu king named Maharaja Hari Singh. The king

neither acceded to India nor Pakistan and decided to remain independent. After doing so, Pakistan tried to enter its territory to take control. In order to defend his state, the Maharaja asked India for military help but India only agreed to help if Jammu and Kashmir acceded to India. The Maharaja signed the 'Instrument of Accession' on 26th October, 1947. This day is considered as a 'Black Day' for the Kashmiris.

Resultantly, the war led to the division of the state into two regions. Around one-third of the territory was taken by Pakistan and the rest acceded to India. Later in 1962, China took the Aksai-Chin area of Jammu and Kashmir thereby making it a tripolar dispute between India, Pakistan and China.

Since the accession of Jammu and Kashmir was not acceptable by the people, the Indian government gave it special status. In the Presidential order of 1954, Article 370 and 35(a) were drafted in the Constitution of India to guarantee this special status. Article 370 was drafted in

Part XXI of the Indian Constitution with the title of "Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions." It guaranteed special status and power to Jammu and Kashmir to have their separate Constitution, a state flag, and autonomy of internal administration, defence and communication. Article 35(a) of the Indian Constitution, allowed the state legislature of Jammu and Kashmir to define their people as the states "permanent residents." All the residents had a state subject or a resident proof which gave them fundamental rights, citizenship, right to own and buy a property in the state. As a result of this article, anyone outside the region couldn't purchase property in the state. On 31st October 2019, the parliament of India gave the order of reorganising Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories - Jammu and Kashmir was one and Ladakh was the other.

In their 2019 election manifesto, BJP promised to remove the Articles 370 and 35(a) to end terrorism and integrate Jammu and Kashmir with India. Many scholars claim that the removal

of these Articles happened with the intention to change the demography of the region.

Since the removal of these articles, the legislative framework of the region has started to change. For example, in colleges 50% of seats are reserved just for Indians. Such changes have angered the locals as they feel neglected in their own land. Post 2019, the Indian government claims that everything is 'normal' in the region and since then large number of Indians have started visiting. However, despite the changes, insurgency still exists. Almost every day we hear about encounters and attacks in various parts of the region. The vicious cycle still continues. Since the accession of Jammu and Kashmir was not acceptable by the people, the Indian government gave it special status. In the Presidential order of 1954, Article 370 and 35(a) were drafted in the Constitution of India to guarantee this special status. Article 370 was drafted in

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In their 2019 election manifesto, BJP promised to remove the Articles 370 and 35(a) to end terrorism and integrate Jammu and Kashmir with India. Many scholars claim that the removal of these Articles happened with the intention to change the demography of the region.

Double standard?

By S Qaisar Shareef

On January 24, Twitter took down links to a two-part BBC documentary titled 'India: the Modi Question', at the behest of the Indian government. The documentary presented the role Narendra Modi - the then chief minister of Gujarat - played in the 2002 massacres in his state. About 2000 people, mostly Muslims, were reportedly killed.

Coming from the BBC, it was a well-researched production. YouTube also quickly followed suit, making it difficult - though not impossible - to access the films. The BBC documentary tracks "Mr Modi's career-long efforts to demonize India's 200 million-odd Muslim minority, reported 'The Economist'.

It appears that Elon Musk's free speech absolutism only goes so far. The BBC is not exactly known to be some extremist fringe outfit, and yet it was effectively silenced with cooperation from US social media sites. Just a few days later, BBC offices in India were raided by Indian tax authorities, pursuing alleged tax law violations - an often-used tactic to silence unwanted opposition. "After silencing critics at home, Narendra Modi goes after foreign media", read the headline from a recent editorial, also in 'The Economist'.

In a similar move in 2020, Amnesty International, a highly respected human rights organization, was forced to close its operations in

India after its bank accounts were frozen. While media and civil rights organizations critical of autocratic governments often find themselves under pressure from authorities, such actions are hardly expected from democracies, certainly not one that is often held up as sharing values of freedom and free speech with the democratic nations of the West.

Yet, it is the total silence and lack of criticism by the world's leading democracies including the US that raises disturbing questions. Do democratic countries really operate with a double standard when it comes to adhering to principles of civil rights and free speech?

As we reach the one-year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, opposition to Russian actions continues to be loudly led by the US and our Western allies. "This is a fight between democracy and autocracy," US President Biden has often said. It is estimated that this year Ukraine has received well-deserved and sorely needed military aid close to \$100 billion.

A February 24 vote in the UN General Assembly called on Russia to immediately withdraw from all occupied territories in Ukraine. While the vote was nonbinding, it forced every UN member country to take a stand on this unjust and cruel war.

And once again many large countries such as India, South Africa, China, Pakistan and others abstained from voting

against Russia. In all, 39 countries abstained or voted against the resolution. Over the past year, countries representing over half the world's population have been reluctant to openly condemn the Russian invasion.

People in the US often ask the question: why would any of these countries refrain from condemning open aggression against a UN member country?

The answers, of course, are complex. Countries are trying to look out for their economic interests or are compelled out of necessity to not antagonize Russia as the country has vast amounts of oil, gas and grains to sell. But a deeper answer could be that there is a feeling among many of seeing a double standard at play. Many wars and calamities have been barely noticed, but a war in Europe is expected to get sympathy from across the world.

While atrocities committed by the Russian forces in Ukraine are condemned - as they should be and as has been documented by organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International - reports by these same organizations about human rights violations against Palestinians living under occupation have been largely ignored. This war, one hopes, will end in the not-too-distant future and the suffering of the Ukrainian people will ease. The people and the government of Ukraine will receive much-needed assistance to rebuild their shattered country.

Three Pakistanis die in another boat wreck off Libya

ISLAMABAD: The dust has not yet settled about the tragic boat wreck in Italy, as another three Pakistanis have lost their lives in a boat wreck near Libya's Benghazi city, the Pakistani Foreign Ministry confirmed.

In a brief statement on Twitter, the Foreign Office said "In a separate tragic incident, three Pakistani nationals have perished in a boat wreck near Benghazi in Libya."

The Foreign Ministry also said that the Embassy of Pakistan in Tripoli was facilitating the process of transporta-

tion of the mortal remains to the country.

The minister also shared an update on the tragic boat incident in Italy on February 26.

In another tweet, the ministry said "With great sorrow we can confirm that two Pakistanis have lost their lives in the tragic incident of the boat capsized off the coast of Italy, as identified by their families."

The minister further said that another Pakistani national — who was also aboard the ill-fated boat — has been found among survivors,

bringing the total number of Pakistani survivors to 17. "[Pakistan Embassy Italy] remains engaged to assist in the matter," the ministry tweeted and added that the embassy officials have met the survivors and are also in contact with Italian authorities.

Earlier, two Pakistanis and one Turk national were arrested on suspicion of trafficking up to 200 migrants aboard a wooden boat that smashed apart on rocks off southern Italy on Sunday, killing at least 64 people, the local police said. INP

Pak young scientists develop local intercropping techs with Sino experience

ISLAMABAD: A team of young Pakistani agricultural scientists at the National Research Center of Intercropping (NRCI), the Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB) are researching on strip intercropping technologies with the hope to help their country shrink the import bill of food commodities especially soybean, which already is a huge burden on Pakistan's economy.

It's remarkable that the ongoing work there originated from their collaboration with China, but has been optimized specially for Pakistan based on the country's realities, which has been a shining model of Sino-Pak cooperation in both scientific research and educational exchange.

According to Gwadar Pro on Wednesday, since 2018, Dr. Muhammad Ali Raza, a post-doc who is graduated from Sichuan Agricultural University (SAU), China, has started to promote China's maize-soybean strip intercropping technology in Pakistan with his professor Yang Wenyu's support and guidance, which has received good response particularly from local industrialists and progressive farmers in the recent years.

After years of hard work, he has become a productive agronomist and expert in intercropping research in Pakistan.

Under the vision of the IUB Vice Chancellor Prof. Athar Mahboob, the National Research Center of Intercropping was inaugurated on August 11, 2021 to introduce strip intercropping technologies in Pakistan's agriculture to improve crop yields and soil productivity.

Now, Dr. Muhammad Ali Raza acts as the Director of the center, leading intercropping technology's popularization in Pakistan.

To date, the center has already developed and optimized the Chinese maize-soybean strip intercropping technology according to local conditions, and conducted trials on the wheat-soybean strip intercropping.

Moreover, to further enhance resource use efficiency and land productivity from the sugar belt of Pakistan, the center is working on developing sugarcane-based intercropping systems.

Recently, the center conducted trials of sugarcane- and wheat-based strip intercropping systems including rapeseed, soybean, clover, and

chickpea as secondary crops, with developing the intercropping-specific varieties of these crops.

The center is also conducting research on the different row configurations, particularly the wider strips, with an objective to encourage the mechanization of strip intercropping systems with existing farm machinery in Pakistan.

Following the slogan of "Think Globally, Act Locally", Sino-Pak cooperation is a special feature of NRCI. The center has signed multi-dimensional MoUs with Sichuan Agricultural University (SAU), Gansu Academy of Agricultural Sciences (GAAS), and Shandong Academy of Agricultural Sciences (SAAS) to exchange resources, researchers and students, and also has initiated collaboration with the National Soybean Center (NSC), Agro-ecology and Conservation Lab, and Molecular Biology Lab at Nanjing Agricultural University (NAU).

It's learned that the research at NRCI on the development and optimization of maize-soybean strip intercropping technology using water-saving technologies like drip irrigation is sponsored entirely. INP



ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber Ahsan Bakhtarvi, Dean of Diplomatic Crops and Ambassador of Turkmenistan Atadjan Movlamov along with Ambassadors of central Asian countries and members of Islamabad chamber pose for a group photo during inauguration of CARs and Azerbaijan Facilitation Desk in Islamabad Chamber office.

Govt not to challenge SC verdict on Punjab, KP polls

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Wednesday decided not to file a review plea against the Supreme Court (SC) verdict regarding elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within 90 days.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a meeting of PML-N leaders in which the party president decided not to challenge the apex court verdict.

PM Sharif also consulted party supreme Nawaz Sharif on the SC verdict in the suo motu notice.

Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar and Attorney General for Pakistan Shehzad Ata Elahi briefed the meeting that the SC gave a 4-3 verdict and disposed of the petitions.

The prime minister agreed with the party's legal team that advised against challenging the

apex court verdict.

It was suggested that instead of the Supreme Court, the decisions of the high courts will be awaited.

The PM will also establish contact with heads of the coalition parties on the SC verdict, and discuss the further course of action.

PML-N's strategy on elections

The PML-N legal team devised a strategy and decided to wait for the verdict of the Lahore High Court (LHC) on the general elections in the two provinces.

The Election Commission of Pakistan and the Punjab governor had moved the high court against an order of a single bench regarding fixation of date for holding elections in Punjab. Prime Minister Shehbaz

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Ban on new gas connections to be lifted soon

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Noor Alam Khan on Wednesday directed the gas companies to immediately withdraw the ban on new gas connections across the country.

The PAC meeting was chaired by MNA Noor Alam Khan in which he directed the gas companies to immediately lift the ban on new gas connections and start the installation of gas meters to cope with gas theft across the country.

Noor Alam Khan ordered the gas companies to take legal action against the housing schemes involved in gas theft.

In reply to the chairman PAC's concerns, Secretary Petroleum stated that the stake-

holders were facing issues due to the governance and management. He assured the PAC chairman that the gas companies will control the illegal gas connection and gas theft by December 2023.

The PAC chairman also directed that the ban on new sites of petrol pumps in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Hazara and Peshawar should be lifted.

"There is no ban on pump sites in Punjab and Sindh, so why in other provinces?" Khan questioned Chairman OGRA.

Noor Alam stated that Pakistan State Oil (PSO) — which is a government entity — should be promoted across the country, adding that the move

will discourage the 'defaulting' private companies. Noor Alam Khan ordered the gas companies to take legal action against the housing schemes involved in gas theft.

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HYDERABAD: Workers of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics going door to door to collect data during Digital Census in Hyderabad.

Federal Govt jacks up power tariff for export industry

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has jacked up power tariff for the export industry by Rs 12.13 per unit on Wednesday.

As per details, the increase in power tariff is made to implement the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions.

The government also has ended the subsidy on power for the export industry.

The power supply to the export industry at Rs 19.99 per unit has been withdrawn and the notification will be effective from today.

The power division has written a letter to K-electric and all the power distributing companies for the implementation of this decision.

The decision to withdraw subsidy on electrici-

ty for exporters will generate Rs 51 billion.

Earlier, the federal government agreed to raise prices of electricity and gas as Pakistan and International Monetary Fund (IMF) moved closer to the revival of \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) stalled for months.

The Fund and Pakistan had moved closer to the revival of their loan package as Islamabad agreed to several conditions including increasing energy prices and improve tax collection, as demanded by the IMF.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) has asked Pakistan to impose roughly Rs600-800 billion in additional taxes in the second round of talks to revive \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) stalled for months. INP

During the meeting, the Fund set tough conditions for additional measures that included imposing roughly Rs600-800 billion in additional taxes.

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Construction of Fish Processing Factory begins in Gwadar

ISLAMABAD: As various projects gain traction in Gwadar, a Chinese company, Haixintian Pelagic Fishery Overseas Base Company, begins full-scale construction of its fish processing factory in Gwadar Free Zone South (phase 1).

Last month, Haixintian Pelagic Fishery Overseas Base Company commenced the importation of its industrial units from China, and construction is now underway for the cold storage and other facilities necessary for the fish industry.

To facilitate this, the company has secured a warehouse spanning 5,911 square meters in the Gwadar Free Zone (Phase 1).

The warehouse comprises 2,000 square meters of standard workshop space, which will be constructed according to the design of the subcontractor.

It will be the Gwadar Free Zone's first fishing and fishing-related factory. All legal and documentation procedures for operating in Pakistan have already been completed by the company.

Because the industry is linked to the expertise of the local workforce, it has the potential to benefit the community in terms of both job and business opportunities. INP

US dollar delivers another heavy blow to Pakistani rupee

ISLAMABAD: The US dollar delivered another hard punch to the Pakistani rupee in the inter-bank trading on Wednesday, going up by a healthy margin of Rs1.25.

According to the information received from the forex dealers, the Pakistani rupee was under pressure and cleared the way for the greenback to flex its muscles by gaining Rs1.25 and was currently being traded at Rs252.75.

Within two days the dollar has surged by Rs2.83 against the Pakistani rupee.

On Tuesday, the local currency ended its four-session gaining spree against the US dollar after the currency registered a depreciation of 0.6%. As per the State Bank of Pakistan, the rupee settled at 261.50 against the greenback, a decline of Rs1.58 in the inter-bank market.

In a key development, the SBP decided to convene an emergency meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) on Thursday, March 2, to deal with emerging risks to the economy. INP



QUETTA: People buying and purchasing crockery along roadside vendor stall.

CM Naqvi orders crackdown against violators of Kite Flying Act

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Syed Moin Naqvi has ordered crackdown against violators of Kite Flying Act.

The chief minister chaired a meeting on Wednesday to review measures taken to ensure compliance of Kite Flying Act.

Moin Naqvi said that indiscriminate action must be taken against violators of Kite Flying Act and those who indulge in kite flying.

The chief minister expressed his anger over kite flying incidents in some cities of the province. Section 144 has been imposed across Punjab to stop incidents of kite flying. The chief minister said that the DPO concerned will be held responsible if any incident of kite flying occurs anywhere.

CM Naqvi said that law must be abided by citizens at every cost. The chief minister said that he will not tolerate loss of any life due to kite flying. He said police must ensure prompt action against aerial firing incidents. The CM said that drone and other modern technology should be used to monitor kite flying. He said that steps in advance must be taken to check possible kite flying incidents in Kasur and other districts. The chief secretary, inspector general of police, additional home chief secretary, the additional chief secretary operations, com-

missioner Lahore Division, CCPO Lahore, and other high-ups attended the meeting.

Commissioners of Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Sargodha, Multan and Faisalabad Divisions, besides RPOs, deputy commissioners and DPOs also attended the meeting through video link.

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against violators of Kite Flying Act and those who indulge in aerial firing.

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NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Executive Engineer Roads CWPPP&H Department District Kalat invites sealed bids from eligible bidders who can prove their eligibility and qualification as mention in the bidding documents for the works mentioned below. The estimated cost and other information of works are as under: percentage tender based on Composite Schedule of Rates 2018. Government of Baluchistan amended up-to-date from interested contractors/firms for the work listed below under BPPRA Rules & Tender complete details please visit <http://www.bppra.gov.pk>

S.No	Name of Work	E/Cost
1.	CONSTRUCTION OF BTKILI HAMKEEM ABDUL MAJEED TO AZEEMABAD KALAT PSDP NO. 1208 YEAR 2022-23 22022.2945 TSE-222302255493	19,047,620.00

DEADLINE OF SUBMISSION: Technical and financial proposals from intending contractors/firms sealed in two separate envelopes clearly marked with Work title & type of proposal must be delivered by hand or through registered mail to the address mentioned below on before procurement committee in the presence of bidders or their authorized representatives who choose to attend. The Second sealed envelope containing "financial bids" of technically responsive /qualified bidders will be opened on the same date. **Bids Validity: Ninety days** Place: The place of issuance, submission, inquiries and opening will be - The office of the Executive Engineer Roads CWPPP&H Department District Kalat & Submission Time deadline 09:30 A.m Date 22 March 2023 & Opening Time deadline 10:30 A.m Date 22 March 2023.

Executive Engineer (Roads) CWPPP&H Department Kalat
PRQ No 2650/1-3-2023
www.bppra.gov.pk | info@bppra.gov.pk | info@bppra.gov.pk | info@bppra.gov.pk

Women empowerment interlinked with their economic independence: NA Speaker

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly (NA) Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Wednesday said women were part and parcel for socio-economic development of the country. He said the constitution guaranteed the provision of all fundamental rights to each Pakistani woman. He also said women-inclusive economic policies would ensure women's empowerment in the country. He expressed these views during his meeting with United Nations Women's Country Representative Sharmeela Rasool in Parliament House. Ashraf also stressed the need to provide education, health and economic opportunities to all women. He said CNIC was the basic right of identity and he would meet the chairman of NADRA to eliminate all hurdles for issuing CNIC for women, especially those who belonged to far-flung areas. Member of National Assembly Wajaha Qamar was also present in the meeting. She said Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) was playing an important role in ensuring women-friendly legislation. She also said the WPC would issue a consensus-based Manifesto for ensuring the provision of basic fundamental rights to all women. The UN Women's country representative appreciated the NA speaker's vision for ensuring women-inclusive policies.

She also appreciated the role played by WPC for ensuring women-friendly legislation. She said the UN in Pakistan would keep on supporting Pakistani women specifically in the domain of employment and economic independence. He said the constitution guaranteed the provision of all fundamental rights to each Pakistani woman. He also said women-inclusive economic policies would ensure women's empowerment in the country. He expressed these views during his meeting with United Nations Women's Country Representative Sharmeela Rasool in Parliament House. Ashraf also stressed the need to provide education, health and economic opportunities to all women. He said CNIC was the basic right of identity and he would meet the chairman of NADRA to eliminate all hurdles for issuing CNIC for women, especially those who belonged to far-flung areas. Member of National Assembly Wajaha Qamar was also present in the meeting. She said Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) was playing an important role in ensuring women-friendly legislation. She also said the WPC would issue a consensus-based Manifesto for ensuring the provision of basic fundamental rights to all women. The UN Women's country representative appreciated the NA speaker's vision for ensuring women-inclusive policies. She also appreciated the role played by WPC for ensuring women-friendly legislation. INP



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday administered oath of office to Fauzia Vihar as Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment at Workplace.

ANF recovers 239 kg drugs in six operations; arrests five

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) recovered 239 kg narcotics in six operations and arrested five accused allegedly involved in drug smuggling, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He said ANF conducted a raid near Khuzdar Highway Karachi Road and recovered 170.4 kg charras besides netting two accused.

In another raid conducted near the Chaman check post, 3.8 kg morphine and over two kg ice drug was recovered. He informed that in the third operation at Islamabad International Airport, 38 grams of charras was recovered from the possession of a Manchester-bound passenger resident of Gujrat.

In an operation at Multan International Airport, 144 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of two Bahrain-bound passengers, residents of Haripur and Attock, going on flight no GF-789.

He informed separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process. INP

Govt accepts MQM-P's demand to extend deadline for 'self-enumeration'

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has accepted the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan's (MQM-P) demand, seeking an extension in deadline for registration of families in the digital census through "self-enumeration."

The demand was accepted after a delegation of Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) met Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif today.

Sources told ARY News that the government accepted the party's demand to extend deadline for self-enumeration by at least 10 days. The meeting also decided that every single flat will be marked instead of main entrance of multi-storey buildings.

Party's convener Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui also expressed reservations over the non-fulfilment of agreement signed with Pakistan People's Party (PPP). INP

Govt finalises Ramazan relief package

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Wednesday finalized the relief package for Ramazan.

As per details, the government will provide Rs 5 billion subsidy on 19 necessary items in Ramazan.

The subsidy is allocated to people who are registered in the Benazir Income support program in Utility stores.

Sources within the Ministry of Industries & Production said that the subsidised items include flour, ghee, pulses, sugar etc.

The decision to provide subsidy was made to provide relief to people from the lower class who cannot afford basic necessary items. INP

APHC-AJK pays homage to martyrs of Zakura and Tengpora massacres

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter has paid homage to the martyrs of Zakura and Tengpora massacres on their 33rd martyrdom anniversary today.

Over 50 innocent people were martyred and dozens others injured when Indian troops opened fire on peaceful protesters in Zukoora and Tengpora areas of Srinagar in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir on this day in 1990. The APHC-AJK leaders at a meeting presided over by the Convener, Mehmood Ahmed Saghar, said the Kashmiri people will not allow the sacrifices of their martyrs to go waste. They said that it was due to these sacrifices that the Kashmir dispute was echoing in every forum of the world. The APHC-AJK leaders urged India to stop its state terrorism in JIOJK. INP

NITB developed over 31 portals, 15 mobile applications in four years

ISLAMABAD: The National Information Technology Board (NITB) is playing an active role in implementing e-governance programs and during the last 4 years, the NITB developed and launched more than 31 portals and over 15 mobile applications.

An official of IT said that under the paperless track program, NITB ensured the implementation of e-office in 40 ministries and over 100 departments.

He said Ignite's eight incubation centers have created an entrepreneurial vibe in the country which is helping in establishing new startups in almost every sector. He said start-ups of the National Incubation Centers established in the country, received an investment of \$20 million from various sources last year. Under the National Freelance Training Program initiated and funded by the Ministry of IT, as many as 20 training centres were established across the country.

As many 8,647 graduates, he

said, were trained through international standard IT courses, and these students contributed to the country's economy by earning \$23 million through freelancing after training.

During the year 2022, around 1,638 new IT companies got registered with Pakistan Software Export Board, while 761 call centres and 1463 freelancers were also registered with the PSEB.

He said that about 33 million people registered themselves for freelancing courses under the DG Skills Programs of Ignite, which is 75% more than the target. By June 2022, the freelancers trained with DG Skills have earned a whopping \$290 million, adding to the country's foreign exchange reserve. Replying to a question, he said, foreign direct investment in the telecom sector had exceeded 1.2 billion dollars. While the Telecom revenue was Rs 605 billion in August 2018, which reached Rs 694 billion by December 2022. INP

Tribute paid to Zakoora, Taingpura martyrs, Srinagar

MUZAFFARABAD: Chairman Pasban-e-Hurriyat Uzair Ahmad Ghazali denounced on not bringing the Indian army soldiers to justice involved in Zakoora and Taingpura on 1st March 1990.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, he said that the Indian army soldiers brutally killed more than 50 innocent civilians in Zakoora and Taingpura areas of Srinagar 33 years before.

He lamented that despite the passage of three decades, those involved in Zakoora and Taingpura massacres have not been brought to justice.

Ghazali said that since 1990, the Indian government and its brutal forces have massacred innocent citizens in Jammu and Kashmir, in which hundreds of Kashmiri citizens were martyred.

"The continuous silence of the

countries, organizations and forums claiming human rights around the world on these brutal actions that took place in the occupied state has badly affected the confidence of the Kashmiri people", he asserted.

He said that the memories of the massacre of Zakoora and Taingpura on March 1, 1990 are still present in minds of the Kashmiri people.

"Dozens of other bloody incidents like Zakoora and Taingpura have exposed the brutal face of the Indian government and its army", he stated. Uzair said that the international community, United Nations and human rights organizations should take notice of the genocide of Kashmiris by Indian armed forces for the last 34 years. He also demanded the United Nations INP

UN's FAO, GOP sign \$5 million funding agreement for flood victims

ISLAMABAD: The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Government of Pakistan have signed a \$ 5 million funding agreement for a project to recover from the devastating floods that hit the country and Balochistan in particular, in 2022.

The collaboration between FAO and the Balochistan Agriculture & Cooperatives Department (BACD) represents the first time that FAO has received funds through a government in its role as a recipient of funding from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), said a press release issued here by FAO.

A grant signing ceremony was held at the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) between the Government of Pakistan and ADB. Federal Secretary for Economic Affairs Kazim Niaz and Executive Director of Japan to ADB Takahiro Yashi, representa-

tive of the Japanese Embassy in Pakistan were also present on the occasion.

The project follows ADB's approval of a USD 5 million grant to provide emergency flood assistance and strengthen the country's disaster and climate resilience, and food security. The ADB Grant was in turn financed by the Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific (JFPR) and is part of the larger USD 475 million Emergency Assistance Loan (EAL) and USD 3 million technical assistance grant approved by ADB in December 2022.

The assistance responds to the Government of Pakistan's request to support its post-flood recovery and reconstruction efforts and is aimed at supporting the restoration of irrigation, drainage, flood risk management, and on-farm water management, and transport infrastructure in the flood-hit provinces of Balochistan. INP



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf in a meeting with UN Women delegation led by Country Representative Sharmeela Rasool at Parliament House.

All problems of GB to be addressed on priority basis: Kaira

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira, and the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Khalid Khurshid discussed the constitutional issues of Gilgit-Baltistan and the plan of mutual consultation regarding the determination and supply of wheat price.

According to a statement issued on Wednesday, a detailed exchange was held during the meeting about the security situation in Gilgit-Baltistan, development projects, budget issues, and wheat supply.

Qamar Zaman Kaira said he had met the Prime Minister regarding salaries, development projects, and wheat supply in Gilgit-Baltistan.

He said he will continue to solve the problems of Gilgit-Baltistan regardless of any political affiliation.

He said the whole country was facing problems due to the prevailing economic crisis, however, relevant forums would be approached to solve the economic problems of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Last year, Kaira added, the budgets of all the provinces were cut, but the annual budget of Gilgit-Baltistan was maintained.

In the meeting, wheat supply and prices were also discussed in detail. It was also agreed upon to set up a plan of action regarding wheat price determination and supply with mutual consultation of all political parties.

Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Khalid Khurshid said

budget problems were faced with reference to PSDP projects, ADP projects, and salaries. "Reforms are being introduced in the fields of education, health, and agriculture."

The GB Orders of 2018 and 2019 of Gilgit-Baltistan and the case in the Supreme Court over the matter were also discussed in the meeting.

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Islamabad administration launches doorstep services initiative

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has initiated doorstep services to ease citizens of the federal capital city.

Initially six facilities have been included in the doorstep services initiative, officials said. It includes facilities like domicile certificates, birth and death certificates, issuance of power of attorney for land dealing, international driving permit, fuel permit and vehicle registrations, DC Islamabad has stated.

The citizens will be able to fix an appointment, time and get the required details from the administration's representative through it.

The doorstep mobile van will reach the doorstep of citizens within a given time. INP

Imran Khan suspends 'jail bharo tehreek' after SC verdict

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan on Wednesday welcomed the Supreme Court (SC) verdict on Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) polls and announced the suspension of the "Jail Bharo Tehreek", ARY News reported.

Taking to Twitter, the former premier said the party was suspending its "Jail Bharo Tehreek" and moving forward with election campaigns in KP and Punjab.

It was the responsibility of the Supreme Court to uphold the Constitution and they have valiantly done that through their judgment today. It is an assertion of Rule of Law in Pakistan," the PTI chairman wrote in a tweet.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership on Wednesday hailed the SC verdict and termed it a "victory for the Constitution of Pakistan".

Speaking to media outside the court, PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry said that two SC judges had objected to the decision but "all five judges in bench agree that polls must be held within 90 days."

AML Sheikh Rashid congratulated the nation over the verdict and termed it a "victory for Imran Khan". He also asked the country to "prepare for the elections". INP

Ministry renovates 2,093 houses, flats in Islamabad during last five years

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Works Department (PWD), Ministry of Housing and Works has upgraded and renovated as many as 2,093 houses and flats in various sectors of Islamabad, during the last five years.

"The PWD has carried out EM works of as many as 1,114 flats and houses, while civil work is executed on around 979 of different categories, an official in the ministry told APP.

The official said the ministry owned as many as 5,253 houses and flats of categories-I to categories-V located in various sectors in the federal capital.

To a question, he said the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was responsible for the maintenance and renovation of Pak Secretariat, Islamabad,

therefore, no fund had been spent on ministry's renovation.

He said the Finance Division had already slashed the budget while making allocations. Hence, no funds had been surrendered to Finance Division, and all the funds allocated during 2021-22 in relevant heads were utilized by the general section, he added.

The official said the PWD had started sending notices to the allottees of government accommodation in Sector I-9/4 about payment of electric meter bills for water motors installed at residential blocks. He said the Finance Division had allocated funds for payment of utilities in the relevant heads of accounts of the users while utility bills of the residential accommodation, including hostels. INP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah addressing a press conference.

Prime responsibility to protect life, property of people: Shahzad

ISLAMABAD: Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) CPO Operations Islamabad has stated that it is our prime responsibility to protect the lives and property of the people without any discrimination. In an important meeting regarding law and order here on Wednesday, Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari made it clear to personnel that any kind of negligence during duty timing will not be tolerated at all. While addressing the meeting he stated that those who take the law into their hands will not be pardoned under any circumstances.

During the meeting CPO/DIG issued instructions to the police officers and cleaned them that any kind of negligence or misconduct during duty timing will not be tolerated. He said that protection of the property and the lives of the people is our primary responsibility.

Moreover, he stated that people who

break the law and challenge the writ of the state would be brought into the grip of the law. He directed officers to take all sort of necessary steps for the protection of government and private properties and to further tighten the security of federal capital. "Self-check all duty points, deploy personnel on duty with complete equipment" he directed. On the occasion CPO/DIG operations also announced to award appreciation certificates and cash prizes to those police personnel who performing good duties. SSPA Operations, Malik Jameel Zafar, S. SPCTD, SP Planning and Planning, Zonal DPOs, SDPOs and SHO's and other officers attended the meeting. During the meeting CPO/DIG issued instructions to the police officers and cleaned them that any kind of negligence or misconduct during duty timing will not be tolerated. He said that protection of the property and the lives of the people is our primary responsibility. INP

SC bars PM Shehbaz Sharif from judges appointment in Gilgit Baltistan

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan (SC) has barred Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif from judges appointment in Gilgit Baltistan on Wednesday.

As per details, the judge's appointment in the Gilgit Baltistan case was heard by a two-member bench of the Supreme Court headed by justice Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan.

The Supreme Court also issued a stay order until the final verdict of this case. The chief minister Gilgit Baltistan has approached the Supreme Court on the matter of judges' appointment.

The federal government has asked the court to give them some time. The additional attorney general (AIG) asked for one week time from the

court but the CM Gilgit Baltistan's counsel Makhdoom Ali Khan opposed the AIG request.

He said that this case has been in court for one year and despite the case being in court the judge's appointment has not been stopped.

Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan said that nothing will happen if the appointment is stopped for two weeks. The judges have already been appointed so the constitutional aspect of issuing notice will be decided at the next hearing.

He asked who appoints judges in Gilgit Baltistan. The AIG responded that the Prime Minister of Pakistan appoints judges in Gilgit Baltistan.

At this the Supreme Court adjourned further hearing till March 15. INP