

QUETTA VOICE

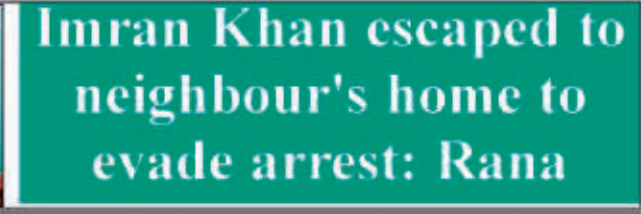
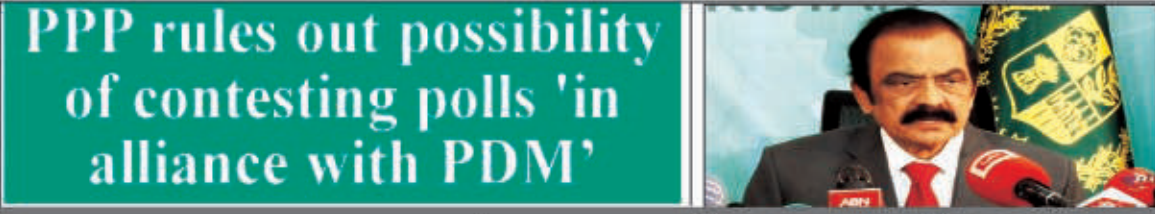
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PPP rules out possibility of contesting polls 'in alliance with PDM'

Imran Khan escaped to neighbour's home to evade arrest: Rana

9 policemen martyred and 13 injured in Bolan Balochistan attack

Imran Khan booked for hate speech against institutions in Quetta

Nashad Baloch
Syed Ali Shah

At least nine policemen were martyred and 13 injured in a blast in Balochistan's Bolan mountains on Monday. Police sources said a vehicle carrying the personnel of the Balochistan constabulary was targeted through a blast in the Kunbri area of Bolan.

"This seems to be a suicide attack", a senior security official says

"The blast seems to be a suicide attack", a senior security official told Daily Quetta Voice via telephone. He said the initial investigation suggests that the suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden motorcycle into the Balochistan Constabulary's van.

Injured of the Bolan blast being shifted to Quetta

"We are collecting evidence from the spot", he said. The target of the terrorists was the historic Sibi Mela that ended yesterday. They were unable to target the centuries-old festival and



succeeded in targeting the security personnel coming back from Sibi to Quetta, the official narrated.

Sources confirm the martyrdom of nine policemen in the attack and 13 injured. "The constabulary van was on its way back to Quetta from Sibi when an explosion occurred near the vehicle on the Kambri bridge in the area bordering the Sibi and Kachhi borders," Mehmood Notezai, the Senior Superintendent of Police said. According to the official, pre-

liminary evidence suggested that the blast was a suicide attack. However, he said the exact nature of the attack will be ascertained after investigation.

CM Bizenjo condemns the attack

Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Qaddus Bizenjo strongly condemned the terrorist attack

and said that the perpetrators of the blast would be brought to justice. In a statement after the attack, Mr. Bizenjo directed the authorities to send a special helicopter to evacuate the injured from the blast.

"Injured of the Bolan blast shifted to Quetta for medical treatment", an official of the Chief Minister's Secretariat confirmed. He said the injured would be provided medical treatment to the civil hospital

News Desk

The former Prime Minister and Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan was booked for hate speech in Quetta against institutions in Quetta on Monday evening.

A man identified as Abdul Sattar kakar a resident of Nawakili submitted an application at the Bijli Road Police Station. The police lodged First Information Report (FIR) against Imran Khan for using hate speech against the state institutions.

In his application, Mr. Kakar accused the former premier of inciting hatred against state institutions. In the petition, a copy of which is available with Dawn.com, Imran named Pemra and the authority's director (operations, broadcast media) as respondents.

The plea pointed out that the IHC had set aside a similar prohibition order in the past.

The petition said that Pemra had issued the order "in excess of the jurisdiction vested in it and without having regard to the constitutional rights guaranteed under Articles 19 and 19-A of the Constitution". It further contended that the authority was not empowered to issue a blanket prohibition order, which appears to



be "in violation of the principle of proportionality". The plea argued that according to Section 8 of the Pemra Ordinance, one-third of the total number of members were required to constitute quorum for meetings. But the meeting which passed the order against Imran comprised only the chairman and three members which made the order "coram-non-judice".

The Impugned Order in effect has prohibited all news channels from airing live speeches of Imran based on spreading hate speech and making provocative statements against state institutions and officers. It is submitted that no hate speech or any such statements were made against the state institutions during his speech which entails such penal conse-

quences as notified in the impugned order," the petition said, arguing that the ban was in violation of Article 19 of the Constitution and the Pemra Ordinance, 2002.

The petition said that Imran's speech in question had been "incorrectly" labelled as hate speech and his words were in no way "prejudicial to the maintenance of law and order". It contended that Pemra was taking the statement "out of the context and political backdrop in which it was made in order to create censorship and inhibit the 'freedom of speech'." It further said that the move to ban Imran's speeches was an "arbitrary and malafide use" of Pemra's powers to "stifle discussion regarding the torture and brutality being carried out against.

No restriction on Iran's gas export: Iranian Deputy Consul General

Syed Kaleem Shah

The Deputy Consul General of Iran Faridon Peer Lorin has said that there is no restriction on Iran's gas export, Pakistan has reached the immediate completion of the Iran gas pipeline project, making the implementation of the agreement possible.

Therefore, the people associated with the industry and commerce of Baluchistan will participate in the International Trade Expo held in Iran and give traders from all over the world the business opportunities available here.

The role of the officials and members of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Quetta Baluchistan is of key importance for the promotion of com-

merce. These views were expressed by the Deputy Consul General Iran while talking to members of the Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Monday. Agha Gul Khalji and Vice President Syed Abdul Ahad Agha were talking to the participants of the delegation meeting. On this occasion, Hosseini, the head of the visa section of the Iranian Consulate, was also present. Senior Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Haji Agha Gul Khalji, Vice President Syed Abdul Ahad Agha, and others said that the officials and members of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Quetta, from the very first day, our neighbors and around the world. Promoting friendly relations with other countries is a priority. Achieving the bilateral trade goals of Pakistan and Iran is possible



when the path of free and equal trade is paved. He also mentioned the obstacles and said that the Iranian authorities have taken measures in this regard. Due to clearance, thousands of vehicles are currently stuck on both sides of the border, which is not a good omen for bilateral trade, he said at the International Trade Expo organized by the Trade Organization of Mashhad in Iran. He expressed interest and said that in this regard the officials and members of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry will prepare. He also told about the parking of cargo vehicles in the borders of Iran, the lack of pumps for oil, etc., and expressed hope that the Iranian authorities will take measures in this regard. It is also desired that the construction of the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline will be completed and it will benefit both coun-

PTI lawyers forum protest against government

News Desk:

Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) lawyers staged a protest outside the Quetta press club on Monday. Syed Iqbal Shah Advocate of the PTI lawyers forum led the protesters.

The protesters chanted slogans against the incumbent government and that the government has launched a campaigns against Imran Khan and filed fake cases. The protesters demanded from the government to provide security to Imran Khan and remove what they called baseless or fake allegations.

Police conducted a raid at Zaman Park to arrest PTI Chief,



Imran Khan on Sunday. However, they failed to find the former premier. PTI has threatened to

launch a country-wide protest if the authorities arrested the former prime minister.

PPP rules out possibility of contesting polls 'in alliance with PDM'

As rumours regarding differences between Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) intensify, former president Asif Ali Zardari — who is also the co-chairman of the party — ruled out the possibility of contesting the next elections for an alliance with the ruling coalition.

Addressing a press conference in Vehari, the party co-chairman made it clear that the PPP would contest the next elections on the "arrow" symbol and not for an alliance with the ruling PDM.

"We are not a part of the PDM, but we are their



partners in the government," the PPP stalwart said ahead of the general polls in Punjab — which are scheduled to be held on April 30.

The PPP is seemingly at crossheads with the PDM-led government

over governance and economic issues as the country is witnessing historic inflation and reeling from the damage caused by cataclysmic floods.

Zardari also ruled out talks with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)

Chairman Imran Khan and said that the former prime minister is not a politician. In response to a question about the police's attempt to arrest the PTI chief and whether he was consulted, Zardari said: "It is the prerogative of the interior minister... why should he consult me?" "Khan has been evading arrest attempts by law enforcement agencies and is facing charges of money laundering and illegally selling Toshakhana gifts during his tenure as prime minister. However, despite the legal issues, the PTI leadership remains undeterred and is keen to show-case. Web Desk

PPP leader likens Shehbaz-led govt to Imran's regime

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Raza Rabbani Monday likened the incumbent government to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) regime, which the sitting rulers had vehemently opposed.

According to an official statement, the former Senate chairman — whose party is in the ruling alliance — said: "It seems to be the PTI or present governments want azadi [freedom] from Parliament and the Constitution, 1973." "The PPP is seemingly at crossheads with the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government over governance and economic issues as the country sees historic inflation and reels from the damage caused by cataclysmic floods. The country is also witnessing its



worst economic turmoil, with the rupee at an all-time low, the foreign exchange reserves plunging almost every other week, and to top it off, a new wave of terrorism has also hit Pakistan. In light of ongoing issues, Rabbani has sought clarifications from the government as, according

to him, the rulers keep avoiding parliament. The senator also said parliament needs to be taken into confidence over the "dragging of the feet by the IMF [International Monetary Fund] on signing the agreement and reluctance of friendly countries, except China, to help sans the IMF". "The people have a right to know if our nuclear assets are under pressure or [if] our strategic relationship with China is under threat or [are] we being called up to play role in the region which will facilitate the military presence of a[n] Imperialist power?" he said.

It appears Pakistan is being softened up to play a role which is against its national and strategic interests, the senator went on to say, without elaborating further. Web Desk

Imran Khan escaped to neighbour's home to evade arrest: Rana

A day after Imran Khan's hide-and-seek drama, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Monday claimed that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman had jumped his residence's wall and escaped to his neighbour's home to evade arrest.

The minister's comments came after an Islamabad police team came to Lahore for arresting the PTI chief — but without the court summons. The law enforcers returned without an arrest as the party told them that he "wasn't home".

On February 28, Additional Sessions



Judge Zafar Iqbal issued the former prime minis-

ter's non-bailable arrest warrant for continuously

failing to appear before the court in the Toshakhana case.

"Yesterday, the team that went to arrest Khan faced a lot of drama. There are rumours that he [Khan] jumped into his neighbours' house [to hide]. After a while, he surfaced from somewhere and delivered a huge speech," the minister said during a press conference in Islamabad.

The minister admitted that if the police wanted to arrest the former prime minister, this wasn't an appropriate strategy. "The police went there to inform him about the court's orders. Web Desk

QUETTA VOICE

Editor Asim Khan

The Barkhan tragedy

The recovery of three mutilated dead bodies in Balochistan's Barkhan district pained every person. The way dead bodies were retrieved from a well in the Haji Kot area of Barkhan and brought to Quetta, put many questions about our justice system.

All Pakistan Marri Ittehad staged a three-day sit-in in the Red Zone of Quetta to mount pressure on the authorities to recover hostages family members of Khan Muhammad Marri in Barkhan. Marri's wife Granaz, her daughter, and four children were recovered by the levies force. No arrest was made and it was not officially announced that they (Khan Muhammad's family members) were in whose custody?

Marri accused Sardar Khetran of murdering his family members

Marri had accused Balochistan Minister Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran of murdering his family members. However, the FIR was lodged by Barkhan police against the unknown accused. The minister surrendered before the police without registration of any case against him. He is likely to get bail from court very soon since there is no evidence against the latter.

The Secretary General of the Marri Ittehad, Jehangir Marri on the first day of the protest announced that the protest would continue till the arrival of the Prime Minister and the registration of an FIR against the minister. Nevertheless, the Ittehad ended up the protest without the arrival of any provincial minister and registered of FIR against the minister on the third day of the protest.

This gives more questions than answers. Khan Muhammad Marri's sons were buried in Quetta and the latter preferred not to comment on the incident of killing his sons anymore.

The 'heirless' girl was laid to rest in Quetta

The unfortunate 'heirless' girl was laid to rest by the Edhi foundation in Quetta the other day. "No one came for the body of the teenage girl who had been raped and then shot dead and acid was thrown on the face so that she could not be identified," a volunteer of the Edhi foundation told Daily Quetta Voice.

To be precise, it is the responsibility of the provincial government to conduct a DNA test of the teenage girl and bring the killers of the triple murder to book. This will ensure rule of law and writ of the State and restore the confidence of the masses in State institutions.

Looming threat of climate change in Pakistan

Muhammad Jehangir Kakar



Pakistan is threatened with the challenges of climate change. Be it global standing or regional vulnerability caused due to climatic threats, Pakistan is on crossing the red line. This is so alarming as much as it is so interesting. Is there someone looking after climate change at the provincial or federal level in Pakistan? There is none!

Ministry of Climate Change at the federal level is downplayed to act only as a regulator and one that has the technical capacity to still maneuver only into the limitations of checking the quality of ambient air.

Similarly, at all the provincial levels, there are environmental protection agencies that look after the conformity of environmental regulations in various sectors contributing to certain types of pollutions. These provincial agencies act as regulators

and with a stick they enforce the environment

tal laws which can cater for only a limited version or a speck of what forms the big idea of climate change. At the provincial levels like at the federal level, there is no agency that is technically sound, composed of such professionals and equipped with such facilities as to counter the grand horror of climate change.

No climate change data being collected at the provincial level

As for the data and statistics, there is as much fragmentation and silos-approach as much as it is in the intergovernmental coordination mechanism. The question is not of the dearth of amplitude of data however it is how the data is made meaningful. Not at any provincial-level one could ensure that any climate-oriented data is being collected. The aforementioned agencies only ensure the quality of air by recording the various gaseous emissions in the ambient air. The Pakistan Meteorological Centers throughout the country pick up conventional weather data by various means but is hardly translated into making a meaningful statement on where we stand on climate change.

As for policies, laws, rules and regulations, we are more affluent than the developed nations. When it comes to drafting policies, rules are worth writing to our expertise but when given to see them on the ground being implemented; only darkened eulogies are symphonized at shrieks ad infinitum. The laws are being multiplied each day and have become as difficult as to remember the exact number of laws on one single sector.

The National Climate Change Policy 2012 remains a document of the past being pushed to nullity though it was the vital document that elevated the Division of Climate Change to a Ministry level yet the promising implementation never has come off until this date. Though a devolved subject yet the NCCP grants the legitimacy to the Ministry of Climate Change to wreathe all the provinces together in one garland of beautiful working and legal integration to manage the national issue of climate change.

The Climate Change Act 2017 was another move towards climate consolidation that promised to establish the Pakistan Climate Change Authority, Climate Change Council, and Climate Change Fund all of which

were last time seen in 2017 when the said Act was passed. The vision 2030 remains a virgin vision thus far.

Ministry of Climate Change must realize that it is the organization at the federal level entirely responsible for catering for climate change affairs. The integration of such a central body with the provinces would be the next challenge given to over politicization of everything. Climate is something which should not be made political though globally it is something which has become an element of political decisiveness as in the Biden-Trump thaw.

Nature and nurture along with the potential of Pak-Met office and reach are to be integrated and enhanced fully at the federal and provincial levels with the climate change organizations so formed above. The data and statistics need to be enhanced and made up to the mark as being internationally acceptable with proper transcriptions and applications of data. A lot must be done to keep the generalists away from making any decisions and calling the shots and the professionals are given the entry who have both the capacity and the legitimacy.

The reforms industry

By Foqia Sadiq Khan

In Pakistan since the coalition government has got some space, there is a whole reforms industry that has crept up. Some of this sentiment is quite genuine as Pakistan has been delaying structural reforms of its economy for a long time. However, the kind of narrative coming out on political reforms appears to be quite rhetorical.

Some propose replacing the existing parliamentary form of democracy with a presidential system, while others point out that there should be proportional representation instead of the present first-past-the-post system. Some also state that mainstream political parties are being run as fiefdoms and 'monarchies', and they should be organized along ideological lines. A few sensible suggestions are also made — like implementing a cap on campaign financing etc.

My counter-question to all those coming out of their nooks and corners with political reforms ideas is whether they have reviewed developments in our Subcontinent with an analytical mind? I am not suggesting to compare Pakistan with the West, China, Southeast Asia, Cuba or any developing countries in the world. I am merely suggesting viewing Pakistan in the comparative prism of India and Bangladesh — the other two countries in the Subcontinent, our very immediate and natural regional competitors.

India has turned into a Hindu majoritarian country where discrimination against minorities is being embedded in the very fabric of state and society. Pakistan too has suffered similar crises. The BJP's divisive rule is largely being bankrolled by Big Business which is also the immediate beneficiaries of the regime. Yet, India's foreign currency reserves were over \$566 billion a few days ago according to Reuters. Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves were over \$28 billion in January 2023 according to CEIC Data. Compare it with Pakistan's close to \$4 billion foreign exchange reserves presently.

Both India and Bangladesh are parliamentary democracies with a first-past-the-post system, and both countries have high corruption. A lot of politicians in these two countries are facing court cases just like in Pakistan. So why does the parliamentary system work quite well for our natural regional partners, and not for us?

The quality of politicians is neither better nor worse all over the South Asian region. My message to the reforms lobby is that if you really want to turn things around in Pakistan, then stop coming up with lousy conjectures with every passing day and look at what it is that really puts the Pakistani state apart from India and Bangladesh. It is neither the presidential system nor proportional

representation — and nor any of other half-baked reforms narrative being sprouted. The explanation lies elsewhere and be honest enough to sift wheat from chaff.

Pakistan's history has shown that a performance-based parliamentary democracy system works best for the country. We are a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-regional country. Whenever the country has drifted away from the parliamentary system either in terms of the presidential system or in other authoritarian forms, Pakistan had to pay a big political price for such deviations. So the parliamentary system is indeed the glue that holds the country together and it should not be questioned by anyone trying to undermine the country under the pretext of so-called 'reforms'.

However, politicians also need to show performance and win elections on the basis of their performance. In the past, the PML-N did quite well in Punjab from 2008 to 2018 in terms of its service delivery. However, the PPP in Sindh is still considered a party that has not performed in service delivery in the province despite being in power from 2008 to present. Voters in rural Sindh have been voting for the PPP because they do not see an alternative to a Sindh-based national party other than the PPP, apart from other historical reasons. Yet, if the PPP continues to perform low on service delivery in

Sindh, voters in Sindh will soon look elsewhere to someone who delivers for them.

As far as proportional representation is concerned, it is indeed a fair way to reflect voters' preferences, and the power of smaller parties increases through this system. However, due to an increased role of smaller parties, proportional representation also institutes much more vulnerable coalitions as smaller parties can change their coalition preferences quite easily. In a country like Pakistan where we desperately need political stability — and need political governments and prime ministers to complete their terms — proportional representation may not work too well.

The other argument is that our political parties are being run as personal fiefdoms, dynasties, or 'monarchies' and whether it can be fixed by having parties organized along ideological lines. The PTI started as an ideological party in Pakistan pumped by the anti-corruption agenda, and it also proclaimed to be non-dynastic. But the party works as much a personal fiefdom and 'monarchy' as any other political party. It just shows that 'ideology' is a lousy explanation.

Political leaders have an overwhelming role in political parties due to structural reasons. Other countries went through capitalist transformation for hundreds of years and their structures are different.

ent; Pakistan is on a different structural trajectory. The BJP is no real comparison. It is also a populist party based on a cult following, despite some historical differences.

One good suggestion to come out of this political reforms' narrative is to focus on the campaign finance cap to cut out the role of big money in hijacking the electoral process. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) already has campaign finance monitoring guidelines that are often not implemented during elections. One way to counter is to institute a demand side corrective mechanism.

The ECP should stop the executive from disbursing development funds to MNAs and MPAs through its election laws just as it used to be in the pre-1980s period in Pakistan. MNAs and MPAs should only be elected for legislative and executive oversight. All developmental work should be carried out by local governments in collaboration with the provincial and local government bureaucracy.

When MNAs and MPAs' development funds discretion will be eliminated, the role of big money in the national and provincial assemblies' elections will automatically decrease substantially. Pakistan should follow the maxim 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it'. There is no need for a flurry of reforms' lobby activities, at least.

Road to progress

By Atta-ur-Rahman

Pakistan today faces the gravest crisis in its history after its dismemberment in 1971. Its foreign reserves are down to \$5.8 billion, which include deposits worth \$5 billion from Saudi Arabia and China with specific conditions of use.

Pakistan needs to repay loans amounting to around \$8 billion by March 2023. Rumour has it that the IMF has refused to negotiate with the present government because of its past unfulfilled commitments. Other aid agencies are also averse to helping the country further. So, what is the way forward?

First, it is a pity that despite the acute shortage of foreign exchange, we continue to import items like milk, cheese, corn flakes, chocolates, tobacco for cigarettes, and even cat food from abroad. Luxury vehicles, cosmetics and other luxury items also continue to be imported. As a result, our local industry has been badly affected. We must ban all non-essential imports immediately (or if this violates international/WTO laws, then impose a significantly high tax rate on these products) and change our policies to stimulate local industrial development and export of value-added products.

Second, we need to stop relying on foreign loans and reform our policies so that our expenditure is less than our earnings. This can help us reduce our for-

ign debt. In the short term, we should let the Pakistani rupee slide to about Rs260 or Rs300 to a dollar since this will lead to enhanced exports and reduced imports. One consequence of this policy will be a hike in the prices of fuel, electricity and imported edible oil, affecting the poor adversely. To offset this, Rs500 billion should be set aside to help the poor by providing monetary support through welfare programmes. This will partly help relieve the pain imposed by these policies.

Third, there are only 3.4 million taxpayers in a country of 220 million. We need to impose a substantial agricultural income tax based on per-acre land under cultivation, and not on declared income. This will generate a significant amount of revenue. Property tax is also based on substantially lower assessments than actual property values. They need to be reassessed based on market prices. This step alone will result in a three-fold increase in property taxes. All shops across the country must be taxed based on a flat tax according to their size and location. There are about two million retail stores in Pakistan. A mandatory retail tax of an average of Rs4,000 per month per shop can lead to an additional Rs100 billion annually.

Pakistan should also follow in the footsteps of India and ban all Rs5,000 and Rs1,000 notes in the country with no warning, and then allow people to

deposit any cash money in their bank accounts within four weeks. This would lead to a significant increase in the size of the white economy and taxation. Similarly, to preserve valuable foreign exchange, all letters of credit should be opened only against the production of foreign currency through local purchase or foreign transfer by importers. Export vouchers could be given to preferred industrial high-tech exports to compensate them for the high cost of electricity, etc.

The use of IT can provide a huge boost to national tax collection by bringing in transparency in the whole process. One important step in this connection would be to make it mandatory by law that all sales and purchases of property, shares, cars or any other assets must be placed with full details on a government website before the legal transaction is allowed. Any complaints by citizens against undervalued transactions should be independently examined, and if found to be correct, 30 per cent of the additional tax/penalties should be imposed. The amount so collected could go as a reward to the complainant. This will curb any black money transactions.

One illustration of how IT can bring transparency in tax collection is found by a project undertaken by the Knowledge Economy Task Force that worked closely with NADRA and the FBR to widen the tax net and increase.

Facing future floods safely

Dr Afreen Siddiqi

Pakistan's floods of 2022 were the latest, and most damaging yet, addition to the long history of floods in the country. As the muddy waters slowly recede, the need for speeding up action to face future floods stands clear.

Floods have been the most frequent natural disaster in Pakistan. Yet, decisions for land-use and habitation do not reflect this reality. The rising intensity of floods has been concurrent with an increasing population in the flood plains of the Indus river. It is this confluence of water and people in floodplains that creates the tragedy of lost lives and property. The flood of 2022 has led to reported losses of over 1700 lives, affected 33 million people, and incurred damages of over \$40 billion (amounting to 11.5% of the 2021 national GDP). The flood of 2010 led to a loss of over 1200 lives, loss of homes for over 14 million people, and damages of over \$43 billion. The flood of 1992 led to a loss of 2000 lives, affected more than 9.3 million people and incurred damages of over 1 billion dollars. This list continues on. Each was declared the worst flood in Pakistan's history. Each was unprecedented at its time of occurrence. There is precedent for unprecedented

floods in the country. It is time to focus on setting a different kind of precedent — one with a clear focus on elevating the safety of people in rural, flood-prone areas, and elevating the well-being of farmers who bear the most losses.

The prevailing mindset of flood management has to change. In the past, money has been poured in building levees and flood protection infrastructure, and then again on re-building higher and reinforcing more the structures to "fight" the next flood after each cycle of levee breaches, infrastructure failure, and devastation of lives and properties. Gilbert White, a prominent 20th century geographer, noted this adverse cycle, and advocated for including the role of humans in damages resulting from natural disasters. He warned about the trap of building levees, followed by eventual breaching and flooding, and then rebuilding again, with increasing level of damages in each flooding episode. The so-called "levee effect", empirically observed in several river basins around the world, points to the paradox where building higher levees has led to increasing levels of flood damages. This is due to flood protection infrastructure creating a perception of

flood security, leading to relaxation of rules for land-use and construction over time, and increasing density of habitation. This results in greater exposure to floods. It is time to see and stop this cycle. This can be done if policymakers and people recognise the role of human decisions in contributing to the disaster. When we recognise responsibility for our actions, we gain agency for change.

What are the changes needed? First, a conception of flood security as the emergent outcome arising from interactions of people with their environment. These interactions are governed by physical laws of nature and institutions (policies, rules and norms) devised by humans. There is a need to structure these interactions in particular ways in order to be able to steer emergent level of flood security towards a desirable state.

Second, a systems approach for addressing the complex challenge is needed. Establishing a 'goal-seeking' system structure to attain desired targets of flood safety is important. It entails setting clear and shared goals, having sensors for measuring the state of flood security, having accurate and timely communication of that information to relevant

actors, having a process that assesses the situation (condition) based on the information, and having decision-makers with necessary authority that take corrective action. If all of these elements are linked appropriately, to produce a feedback structure at district, provincial and federal levels and function with necessary speed and resources, then level of flood security can rise.

Presently, agencies and organisations exist that monitor and forecast weather, forecast floods, conduct disaster risk management and aid in disaster response. However, shared goals of flood safety are absent. Additionally, components that produce information at local levels at required times are absent or inadequate. Additionally, components that have the authority and resources to take corrective action are lacking. These deficiencies can be addressed.

Goals and targets for flood safety can be instituted and adopted from federal to district levels. Necessary links that connect existing agencies can be established. Sensing and monitoring, such as through periodically updated flood-risk maps, can be generated at tehsil and building lot-level. These can be shared with the public (to inform property

owners and residents of their flood risks) as well as to inform public officials in land-use planning. Local evacuation plans for people and moveable assets (such as livestock) in rural areas can be put in place, and early warning systems can be installed. Community education programmes that raise awareness about safety and evacuation procedures can be conducted. Actions for efficient drainage and storm water passage can be taken. Flood resilient designs and construction, and aid for households to live in lower risk areas can be provided. Financial solutions, such as funds in which land owners contribute towards flood loss compensation when needed, can be created. Such literal 'rainy-day funds' can be drawn up at time of need. Overall, regular processes for short-term and long-term flood risk assessment and corrective actions can affect flood security in positive ways. These actions are not as costly as some may think. High resolution, frequently updated, land imagery from earth-observing satellites has been available for free for more than a decade. National agencies and universities within Pakistan have capacity for geospatial data analysis and flood risk mapping.

Inequality and hunger

By Chuck Collins

Beginning on May 24, the World Economic Forum is gathering in Davos, Switzerland for an in-person meeting, discussing the global tax system and financial inclusion. Thanks to protests and new research, however, participants will not be able to avoid the elephant in the room: the surging inequality of wealth during the pandemic.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ECC approves Hajj Policy 2023 with foreign exchange cover of \$90 mln

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet here on Monday approved Hajj Policy and agreed to provide foreign exchange cover of US\$90 million.

The summary to this effect was presented by Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony before the cabinet committee, the meeting of which was chaired by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

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Pakistan for the year 2023 is 179,210, which would be distributed between the government and private hajj schemes at a ratio of 50:50, according to press statement issued by the finance ministry.

Out of the government and private hajj schemes, a quota of 50% each would be reserved for sponsorship scheme, it said adding for the year 2023, tentative hajj package for Northern region is PKR 1,175,000/- and for the South Region is PKR 1,165,000/-. The ECC also approved Technical

Supplementary Grant (TSG) of RS. 12 billion in favour of Planning Commission for conduct of 7th Population & Housing Census and Rs. 3,244 million in favour of Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety for National Graduation Programme (NPGP).

The ECC deferred a summary presented by Ministry of National Food Security & Research on Urea Fertilizer requirement for year 2023 with direction to incorporate the recommendations of committee framed by ECC.INP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired a meeting at the establishment of Passport offices, at Finance Division.

Code of ethics to stop hate speech against women proposed

ISLAMABAD: The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) has collaborated with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations (UN) Women to propose a Code of Ethics to prohibit hate speech against women in politics.

The proposal aims to ensure that women involved in politics can fully exercise their right to participate in politics and national life in a safe and dignified manner.

The NCSW handed over the proposed Code of Ethics to prohibit hate speech against

women in politics to the Secretary, Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Omer Hamid Khan.

The Code of Ethics will apply to political parties, candidates, political workers and polling agents. The fundamental principles governing the Code of Ethics include respect for diversity, responsibility, no abusive language against women, free speech, and respectful communication online and offline.

The event was held after consultations in each province. Parliamentarians, representatives from the election com-

mission, security agencies, civil society, and media persons participated to discuss the Code of Ethics.

NCSW Chairperson Nilofar Bakhtiar thanked all the participants for their contribution towards making the country a safer place for women.

Senator Fauzia Arshad and Senator Seemi Ezdi highlighted the importance of curtailing unkind remarks towards women within the political sphere. Ms. Nabila Malik, a member of UN Women, gave a thorough presentation on the introduction and the initiative of the Code of Ethics.INP

1000 faculty members trained under HEC-British-Council project

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) in collaboration with the British Council has successfully completed a one-year-long Research Capacity Building Programme to train the full spectrum of research professionals.

An 'Outcome Dissemination Ceremony' of this series of training programs was held at HEC's Secretariat in Islamabad to mark its successful completion.

The ceremony was attended by the Chairman HEC, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed and distinguished guests, including the Head of Education, British Council Pakistan, Sarah Pervez, Deputy Vice-

Chancellor Research of Coventry University UK, Prof. Richard Dashwood, Prof. Elena Gaura, HEC Advisor, Global Engagement Division, Awaiz Ahmad and Director General R & ID Hazrat Bilal.

Under this programme, more than 1000 faculty members have been trained in research skills like Research proposal development, project management, research support mechanism, embedding impact pathways into research and application of international best practices in the peer review process.

Across the research streams, some 71 ORIC professionals, 391 Researchers, 330 Principal Investigators and

237 reviewers have received this training in 23 workshops held across Pakistan.

Chairman HEC, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, said, the 'Outcome Dissemination Ceremony' is a testament to the success of the program and the commitment of the HEC and its partners to promoting research excellence in Pakistan. He said for the last 20 years, HEC has done a lot of work in the research arena despite many financial challenges. HEC with the help of the government of Pakistan is committed to giving exposure to the researchers and making sure that continued investment is ensured for the higher education sector.INP

Punjab Culture Day to be observed on March 14

RAWALPINDI: In light of the orders of the Punjab government, Punjab Culture day will be celebrated in Rawalpindi on March 14.

According to the Deputy Commissioner's office spokesman, the district administration has organized various programmes highlighting Punjab culture.

In this regard, educational institutions will organise a walk to promote Punjab culture while Punjab traditional food stalls, tableaux and various programs will also be held in educational institutions.

He said that banners would also be displayed across the city. At the same time, an awareness campaign will be conducted through social media regarding the celebration of Punjab Culture day.INP

DC Inspects Cleanliness Campaign at Canal Road

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Ali Annan Qamar inspected the cleanliness campaign at canal road here on Monday.

He along with officers of Faisalabad Waste Management Company (FWMC) checked cleanliness on both sides of the canal road from Abdullahpur Chowk to Gatwala underpass.

The DC expressed displeasure over the heaps of rubbish/soil on some points and directed the officers concerned to get them removed immediately.

He also took notice of the slow pace of lane marking on canal road and ordered the contractor to complete it without a lapse of time.

The DC directed the officers concerned to ensure cleanliness of all main roads by taking on board departments concerned and warned that carelessness in this regard would not be tolerated.INP

Sindh announces to set up Counter Terrorism Quick Response Unit

KARACHI: Sindh police have announced to set up a Counter Terrorism Quick Response Unit following the militant attack at the Karachi police office (KPO).

According to details, Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) is considering to train as many as 100 officials for commando training as a measure in the wake of recent militant attacks across Pakistan.

The CTD officials said that Pakistan Bahria's Special Service Group (SSG) will be appointed to train the group of 25 individuals this month.INP

NHA to involve private sector in road infrastructure projects: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: The National Highway Authority has decided to encourage private investors to participate in the construction of different highway, tunnel, bridge and motorway projects.

A Public-Private Partnership Cell has been established at the NHA headquarters to encourage private sector participation in building and expanding road infrastructure in the country. Collaboration of the public and private sectors for developing highways and motorways will help foster economic activity in the country," an official of the authority told WealthPK.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the official said that one of the key components of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was the development of road infrastructure, which was critical in speeding up Pakistan's economic growth.

The official said the CPEC had already helped Pakistan spread a network of motor-

ways and highways across the country.

"The NHA is expanding the road infrastructure under CPEC to put the country on the fast track of economic development and prosperity," he added.

The official said that the NHA was currently operating 39 national highways, motorways, expressways and strategic roads, which were Pakistan's major inter-provincial road links, comprising 12,131 kilometers.

"Under the CPEC, NHA has launched different projects to provide a smooth and efficient transport system. The authority has already completed the Burhan-Havelian, Havelian-Thakot Expressway, Sukkur-Multan Motorway and 297km-long Hakla-DI Khan Motorway."

"The NHA is also working on a number of long-term projects, including the 200-kilometre Mirpur-Muzaffarabad-Mansehra Road; Maskhel-Panjgur Road, Quetta Mass Transit, and Greater Peshawar Regional Mass Transit, all of which are now in the design and feasibility stages," the official maintained.

Meanwhile, Prof. Fakhr-ul-Islam, Director Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar, while talking to WealthPK said the development of the road networks under CPEC had boosted Pakistan's economic expansion.

"CPEC's vision and mission to achieve economic development through trade linkages beyond geographical boundaries can be realised by improving transportation infrastructure," he stressed.

He stated that Pakistan would be able to accrue the full benefits of this gigantic project through an upgraded and expanded road network in order to meet the future potential increases in human and product movement.

"While expanding the road networks, innovative financing techniques, private sector participation, and environmental concerns must all be taken care of," he underscored.INP

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PESHAWAR: Advocate Shah Faisal addressing the press conference.

Sky rocketing inflation badly hitting people: Atif

ISLAMABAD: Former Vice President of FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh on Monday said inflation is increasing continuously which has made the lives of the masses a living hell.

The prices of flour, ghee, sugar and other necessities have become beyond the reach of most of the people belonging to the lower income groups, he said. International institutions have also warned against increasing social unrest therefore inflation should be tamed, he added. Atif Ikram Sheikh who has also served as Chairman PVMA said in a statement that the devaluation of the rupee to meet IMF loan conditions and hikes in energy prices and taxes have

fuelled inflation. He said that if the situation does not improve, there is a fear of social unrest which will have unforeseen consequences.

At this time, the purchasing power of the people has been exhausted and they are struggling to fill their stomachs while investing in health, education and other necessities has become impossible. The expenses which were considered normal until now, now come under the category of luxuries. The majority of the people now have no margin and if their income is less, they have to starve.

At present, the price of a loaf of bread in Lahore is 15 rupees, while in Balochistan it

costs 30 rupees. In Lahore, a 20 kg bag of flour costs around Rs 1,750, while in most parts of Balochistan it costs double which raises the question of administration.

Apart from the wrong policies, factors fuelling inflation related to IMF conditions include a 3.39 rupee per unit surcharge of electricity that is permanent and does not end 30 June 2023, increased gas rates, maximised petroleum levy, a mini-budget envisaging 170 billion rupees in addition to IMF conditions, a 20 percent discount rate and decontrolling the interbank rate. The struggle of tens of millions of people has been reduced to two meals a day.INP

Five held for possessing illegal arms, liquor

RAWALPINDI: Police arrested five illegal arms holders and recovered arms, ammunition and liquor from their possession during a crackdown here on Monday, informed police spokesman.

Pirwadi police recovered one 30-bore pistol from an accused Ismail.

Similarly, Taxila police held Aziz and recovered 01 pistol of 30 bore from his possession.

While New Town police recovered 04 litres of liquor from Asher.

Following the operation, RA Bazar police recovered 05 litres of liquor from an accused Shehbaz.

Whereas, Dhymyal police recovered 05 litres of liquor from Nasir.

Police have registered separate cases against all accused and further investigation was in progress. SSP Operations appreciated the performance of police teams and said that crackdown against illegal arms holders, and liquor suppliers would continue.INP

LHC rejects contempt plea against Maryam Nawaz

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has rejected the contempt court plea against the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief organizer Maryam Nawaz.

As per details, the Lahore High Court declared the contempt of court plea inadmissible. The contempt court plea was filed against the PML-N senior vice president Maryam Nawaz and Federal Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar.

Earlier, the Lahore High Court reserved the verdict on the admissibility of contempt court plea against the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief organizer Maryam Nawaz.

A contempt plea was filed earlier against the senior vice president of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, Maryam Nawaz in the Lahore High Court over her negative remarks against the Supreme Court (SC) judges.INP



QUETTA: Activists of Insaq Lawyer Forum hold protest outside QPC.

Bolan Castings Ltd incurs net loss of Rs66m in 6MFY23: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Bolan Castings Limited's revenue from sales decreased by 32% to Rs930 million in the first six months of the ongoing financial year 2022-23 (6MFY23) from Rs1.4 billion in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal. Similarly, the gross profit of the company decreased by 75% to Rs26 million in 6MFY23 from Rs106.45 million recorded in 6MFY22.

The company bore a net loss of Rs66 million in the first six months of the fiscal year compared to a profit of Rs4.9 million in the corresponding period of the previous year, reports WealthPK.

Limited manufactures and sells castings for tractors and automotive parts. Its product range covers the tractor, automotive and engineering industries, among others. The company has two foundry plants. Its

foundry in Hub, Balochistan, manufactures tractor castings such as cylinder blocks, cylinder heads, centre housings, transmission cases, and truck/bus castings like brake drums and hubs.INP

TENDER NOTICE		
The Director General (AH&PE) Livestock and Dairy Development Department Quetta invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2023 based on Composite schedule rates 2018 on Percentage Rates.		
Tender fee Rs.1000/- and Bid Security 2% TSE-222303261593		
S.No	Name of Work/s	E/Cost
1	Supply & installation of solar system for Office of the 10,000,000/- DG Livestock & dairy development Deptt Quetta	
Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: Presence in Active Tax Payer List. The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan Balochistan Revenue Authority. Registration is required. The bidder must have completed 3 Assignment of similar nature of work Turn over of at least 10,000,000 PKR Amount in 2 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm. 25 Years warranty of Solar Plates 1 Year Service. 5KV Back Batteries Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Deposit at Call of 2% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the under-signed, 1,000 PKR issuance of tender Documents: From the date of publication of NIT to 21 March, 2023 during office hours on working days Last Date of bid submission: The tenders must be submitted latest by 21 March, 2023 till 01:00 PM. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under-signed at 02:00 PM Address: Director General of animal health & production extension, livestock and dairy development department spinnay road quetta		
Phone no: 0819213528 Fax no: 0819213528 Email: gtlulamasoolta25@gmail.com		
PRQ No 2747/06-3-2023		
Director General (AH&PE) Livestock and Dairy Development Department Quetta		

Pakistan, Chinese companies join hands to modernise railways: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: China and Pakistan have agreed to enhance their economic and business relationships through joint ventures.

The Pakistan Railways and two Chinese tech companies - NORINCO International Cooperation and Easyway - have signed an MoU to launch an app named "Railway Automated Booking & Travel Assistance (RABTA)" to modernise the department operations, reports WealthPK.

Speaking on the occasion, Railways Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique said the RABTA app was

one top solution for all travel needs where the passengers could reserve hotel rooms and cabs and plan their food.

The minister said the agreement with the Chinese companies was totally based on the revenue-sharing formula. Furthermore, the complaints of passengers would be resolved through the app and they could plan their travel with it.

Talking to WealthPK, research fellow at the Centre for Business and Economic Research Ijaz Ali said, "Any joint venture with a partner from

another country can be benefitted in terms of achievement of strategic goals, e.g. lower costs, entering the international market, enhancing competitiveness, or becoming familiar with the unique international environment."

"Pakistan Railways is one of the most discussed state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in the country because of its unsatisfactory performance and continues to be a burden on the country's economy. One of the major reasons for the department's decline is the lack of investment. The infra-

structure is outdated, needing significant investment for modernisation and upgradation. However, due to financial constraints, the government has not been able to provide the necessary funds for this purpose. It is imperative that we refresh our framework for national development."

"Digitisation of the railway sector requires significant investment in technology, infrastructure, and skilled human resources. It also involves the need to address improving technology infrastructure and spread-

ing digital literacy so that people are aware of how to use the technology to access the available services. Therefore, a comprehensive strategy and roadmap is the need of the hour to ensure successful implementation of digitisation in the railway sector," Ajaz said.

"To attract more foreign investment in the technology sector, the government needs to ensure stability and consistency in policy. By doing so, our nation can enhance productivity and competitiveness, leading to more opportunities for joint ventures.INP

China remains Pakistan's largest trading partner in 2022-23

BEIJING: China remains Pakistan's largest trading partner during the first quarter of the ongoing fiscal year 2022-23 and the leading investor in Pakistan in the first five months of FY 2022-23, contributing 23.83% or \$102.5 million to its FDI.

It is expected as special economic zones (SEZs) under the umbrella of CPEC are being established, they will attract more FDI for Pakistan in the near future not only from China, but also from other countries.

"From 2013 to 2022, the volume of trade in goods between China and BRI countries has doubled from US \$1.04 trillion to US \$2.07 trillion, with an average annual growth rate of 8%", said Chen Chunjiang, Assistant Minister of Commerce, China said in a press conference held here, according to Gwadar Pro.

In the same period, China's cumulative bilateral investment in BRI countries exceeded US \$270 billion, he added.

He briefed the audience that fruitful results have been achieved since BRI was put forward ten years ago. By the end of 2022, Chinese companies had invested a total of \$57.13 billion in overseas economic and trade cooperation zones in BRI countries, creating 421,000 jobs.

From 2013 to 2022, over half of China's contracted projects abroad are in BRI countries, with the total value

of new contracts signed and the total turnover of completed projects in BRI countries exceeding US \$1.2 trillion and US \$800 billion respectively.

Mr. Chen said in the next step China will continue to deepen and consolidate economic and trade cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative.

The government will deepen its involvement in international industrial cooperation and optimize two-way investment structures. China aims to promote the signing of free trade agreements with more countries and accelerate the development of a free trade zone network covering the entire BRI-related region, he said.

Green development, digital economy, and blue economy will be put high on the agenda of China's cooperation with BRI countries, he shared. China will make cooperation greener in infrastructure, energy, industry, and trade.

"Silk Road E-commerce" pilot zones will be set up to foster a new mode of business.

Data shows that despite the pandemic restrictions, trade volume has been on an upward trajectory in the past 3 years. In 2022, Pakistan's exports of seafood to China increased by 42%, rice by 53%.

In the first nine months of 2022, Pakistan's exports to China were nearly 20% higher than in the entire year of 2018, showcasing the catalyzing effect of the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (CPFTA).INP

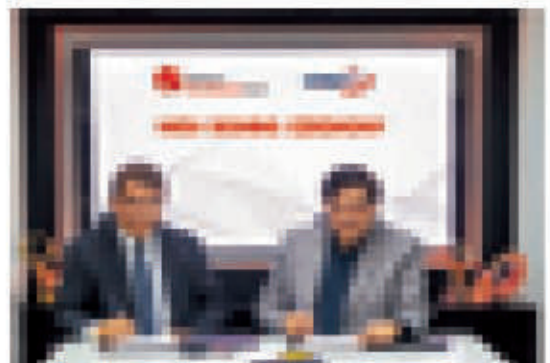
MMBL and CASH1 join hands to boost Financial Inclusion in remote areas

Islamabad: Mobilink Microfinance Bank Ltd. (MMBL) has taken another step towards expanding its reach across Pakistan by partnering with CASH1 - owned by Webdnaworks Private Limited. Webdnaworks is the pioneer of Independent ATM deployment and operations in Pakistan and is the first non-banking entity to get the State Bank of Pakistan's license of Payment Service Operator (PSO) and Payment Service Provider (PSP) for the deployment of Off-Site ATMs under the brand CASH1.

As part of this joint initiative, CASH1 will be providing Off-site ATM deployment services to MMBL, enabling the Bank to broaden its outreach and enhance its service in far-flung areas where customers lack adequate access to basic facilities and infrastructure, thereby increasing access to financial services for those who have been traditionally underserved and underserved.

The deployment of Off-Site ATMs will provide greater convenience and accessibility to customers, allowing them to access their accounts and conduct transactions at any time. This is an important step towards increasing financial inclusion. It will allow MMBL to serve a larger number of customers, particularly those in remote and hard-to-reach areas across the country, and implement the State Bank of Pakistan's National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS).

Sharing his thoughts at the signing ceremony, Ghazanfar Azzam, President, and CEO MMBL said, "We are excited about this partnership with CASH1, as it will enable us to extend our reach even further and provide greater convenience and accessibility to our customers. Deploying CASH1's ATM services is critical to MMBL's mission to improve financial inclusion in Pakistan. Under this partnership, the Bank strives to offer flexible banking services to previously underserved communities and is confident that it will pro-



vide reliable and efficient ATM services to all its customers while bridging the gap between the formal banking sector and the unbanked population."

On the occasion of the signing ceremony, Qamar Abbas, Executive Director of Webdnaworks Private Ltd. said, "We are delighted to roll out our 'bank in the box' business model that will go some way to digitize cash-out payment to the general public, not only in the major cities but also in the rural areas of Pakistan through this partnership with MMBL."

As part of its unwavering commitment to expanding financial inclusion and addressing the banking needs of underserved communities, MMBL has also launched several other offerings, including the DOST App making its services more accessible to customers across the country. By teaming up with CASH1, MMBL has yet again demonstrated its dedication to increasing its services' speed and flexibility while extending its reach to previously inaccessible areas. PR



KACHHI (Balochistan): A view of injured personnel shifted to hospital after an attack near Dhadar, the main town of Kachhi district.

Five held for possessing illegal arms, liquor

RAWALPINDI: Police arrested five illegal arms holders and recovered arms, ammunition and liquor from their possession during a crackdown here on Monday, informed police spokesman.

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While New Town police recovered 04 litres of liquor from Asher.

Following the operation, RA Bazar police recovered 05 litres of liquor from an accused Shehbaz Whereas, Dharmyal police recovered 05 litres of liquor from Nasir. Police have registered separate cases against all accused and further investigation was in progress. SSP Operations appreciated the performance of police teams and said that crackdown against illegal arms holders, and liquor suppliers would continue. INP

NAB team visits Imran Khan's residence to serve summon notices

LAHORE: A team of National Accountability Bureau (NAB) officials on Monday visited Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's residence to serve summon notices in prohibited funding case.

According to details, a two-member NAB team visited the former premier's Zaman Park residence to serve summon notices in prohibited funding case.

After serving the notice, the bureau team left the residence and denied answering questions from journalists. INP

Tarar reiterates call for former judges to avoid politics

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Interior, Attaullah Tarar emphasized that former judges should stay out of politics and let the politicians handle the political affairs of the country.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, he said that false cases were registered against the government of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz in past.

He cited that the undue delays in judicial orders during the tenure of Imran Khan had prolonged various projects that ultimately lead to increased costs.

Furthermore, Tarar said that Imran Khan had received undue facilitation to disqualify the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. He said that Imran Khan was using all possible means to clear himself of the cases against him. Tarar also expressed disappointment about the delays in the important public interest project of the Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI) and other important projects. INP

WB, ADB to continue support projects in KP

PESHAWAR: The representatives from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Monday expressed their commitment to supporting the projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and ensuring their successful completion.

This resolve was expressed in a joint review meeting held here to assess the progress of foreign-funded projects and pipeline projects in the region.

The meeting was co-chaired by Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs Division, and Iqramullah Khan, Additional Chief Secretary of the province. Secretaries of line departments were also present.

During the meeting, various activities under the ongoing projects were reviewed, and the overall progress and status of the pipeline projects were discussed. The attendees were instructed to expedite the ongoing projects and improve the execution process of the committed pipeline projects. The meeting provided an opportunity to evaluate the status of the projects and identify areas where progress could be accelerated. INP

ECC approves Hajj Policy 2023 with foreign exchange cover of \$90 mln

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Technical Supplementary Grant (TSG) of RS. 12 billion in favour of Planning Commission for conduct of 7th Population & Housing Census and Rs. 3,244 million in favour of Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety for National Poverty Graduation Programme (NPGP).

The ECC deferred a summary presented by Ministry of National Food Security & Research on Urea Fertilizer requirement for year 2023 with direction to incorporate the recommendations of committee framed by ECC on gas distribution plan headed by Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

The ECC also deferred another summary submitted by Ministry of Industries and Production on Solar Panel & Allied Equipment Manufacturing Policy-2023 with direction to review and revise the proposed policy considering inputs from all stakeholders.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Power, Khurram Dastgir Khan; Federal Minister for Industries and Production. INP

Cleanliness Drive Begins In Sargodha Division

SARGODHA: A 15-day special cleanliness drive titled "Cleanliness is half the faith" began in the division on Monday.

In this regard, an awareness walk led by Commissioner Sargodha Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti was held in which Deputy Commissioner Sargodha Capt (ret'd) Shoaib Ali, heads of various departments and a large number of people from all walk of life participated.

The walk started from the commissioner's office and concluded at the same venue after passing through various locations.

The participants of the walk were carrying banners and panaflexes inscribed with slogans regarding "Cleanliness is half faith" among the citizens.

Later, talking to the media, Commissioner Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti said that a special cleaning campaign had been started in all four districts.

He said the main objective of zero waste campaign was to remove garbage heaps that had been lying there for a long time. The campaign has been launched in urban and rural areas alike, he added. INP

Kashmiri women will protest on International Women's Day

MUZAFFARABAD: Representative of Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir Female wing Mehnaiz Qureshi has said that Kashmiri women will stage protest procession on International Women's Day to seek world conscience attention towards deteriorating situation in Occupied Kashmir.

In a statement issued here on Monday, she said that Narendra Modi government in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir is flouting international laws related to women's rights through the worst state oppression and violence against women.

She said that an anti-India rally at Burhan Wani Chowk on March 8th to seek the United Nations, European Union and other international human rights organizations attention towards Indian mil-

itary atrocities on Kashmiri women.

Mehnaiz Qureshi maintained that the brutal government of Bharatiya Janata Party in Jammu and Kashmir is openly violating women's rights by using oppression and violence against Kashmiri women as a weapon of war. She said that due to the presence of millions of brutal soldiers in the small region of Kashmir, Kashmiri women and girls are forced to live in the shadow of terror. "Whole world celebrates the day for the protection of women's rights, but India's violence and brutality against women in occupied Jammu and Kashmir is openly destroying international norms and laws", she added. She said that Kashmiri women who have been oppressed for more than three decades are continuously. INP

President, PM vow to eradicate terrorism

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday expressed their resolve to free the country from the menace of terrorism.

In their separate statements, both strongly condemned the suicide attack on the personnel of the Balochistan Constabulary in Sibbi that led to their martyrdom.

President Alvi said terrorists would not be successful in carrying out their nefarious agenda.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said terrorism in Balochistan was part of the nefarious designs to create instability in the country.

The President and the prime minister paid tribute to the valour of the country's martyred troops.

They prayed to Allah Almighty to grant elevated ranks to the souls of martyrs in heaven and to grant patience to their families. INP

Two robbers arrested in injured condition

KASUR: Two robbers arrested in injured condition after police encounter here in limits of Mustafabad police.

Police said here on Monday that Imran reported that some eight robbers snatched cash, motorcycle and mobile phone from him and fled.

The team on information set up a pickets near Wahegul village while the bandits opened fire on the police party. The team retaliated and during the gunfight, two dacoits suffered injuries and fell on the ground, whereas other accomplices managed to escape.

Police arrested the accused and recovered the motorbike, cash, weapons from them.

The dacoits, identified as Abdul Hameed and Asif, were involved in over a dozen of robberies.

Further investigation was underway. INP

Immoral activities at educational institutes not to be tolerated: Commissioner

MULTAN: Commissioner of Multan Division Engineer Amir Khattak said that immoral activities in educational institutions would not be tolerated and directed district administrations to ensure strict monitoring of schools and colleges across the region.

Presiding over a meeting here on Monday, the commissioner directed deputy commissioners of all districts to adopt a zero-tolerance policy against the people involved in artificial inflation, profiteering and black marketing.

He urged the masses to purchase commodities as per the official rates lists of the district administrations.

He said that a crackdown was being launched on daily basis to prevent price

hikes and to discourage profiteering.

He said that 1565 inspections have been conducted during the last 24 hours by the price control magistrates during which FIR has been registered against one profiteer, five were arrested while a fine of Rs 60,000 was imposed on many others over violations.

During the meeting, the commissioner was briefed that the house listing process of the Census would be completed by March 10 and then the next process would be started.

Deputy Commissioners of all districts of the region, additional commissioners, assistant commissioners, and officers of other concerned departments were also present in the meeting. INP



LAHORE: President Dr Arif Alvi and Begum Samina Alvi being brief about various project of the differently abled students at Department of Special Needs University of Management & Technology.

Sindh govt initiates farmers support project

KARACHI: Sindh government has initiated the farmers support project and fulfilled its promises, government spokesperson Murtaza Wahab has said.

"Farmers being provided cash for purchase of wheat seed," Wahab said. "Agriculture cash being issued to farmers by the Sindh government," provincial adviser said in a statement.

"We are standing with the people in their time of hardship," he said. "The government is building two million houses affected in floods," he said. "Cash amount being provided for construction of houses," Murtaza Wahab said.

He said the country facing political, economic and social problems. Intolerance has reached to an extent where people avoid to talk," Wahab

said. "There is no debate over the challenges faced by the country and problems of common man but Imran Khan's escape and his bail being discussed," PPP leader said. "If he is more important than 220 million people of the county? he questioned."

He said, Imran Khan is working on the agenda of harming the country for his personal gain and to grab the power. "Sindh government is serving the people, while he is working to inflict harm to the people," he alleged.

"We have cultivated record wheat crop this year despite floods," he said. "We have a vision of constructive development, while Imran Khan walking on the path of destruction," he said. INP

Prudent steps needed to overcome low productivity issue: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is witnessing low productivity mainly due to unskilled workers, lack of technological adaptations, complex regulatory procedures, and low level of trade openness, says Dr. Nadeem ul Haque, Vice-Chancellor of Pakistan's Institute of Development Economics (PIDE).

Talking to INP-WealthPK, Dr. Nadeem said the negative trend of productivity was affecting the output of all sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, and services.

Low productivity causes an increase in production cost which in turn results in price escalation and loss of competitiveness in the international market, he added.

"Given various reasons for the low productivity, there is a need to adopt a set of prudent measures, including investing in human capital, improving regional and global integration, rethinking the export strategy, and adopting technological advancements. Reforming

and strengthening the financial sector and relevant government departments is also a must for overcoming the issue," he added.

Referring to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, he said the project completion will create favourable opportunities.

Labor productivity represents the total volume of output produced per unit of labor during a given time period. As per the International Labour Organization (ILO), Pakistan's labor productivity is \$7.64, while Luxembourg has the highest labour productivity of \$136.45.

Talking to WealthPK, Dr. Mehmood Khalid, a senior research economist at the PIDE, said investment in human capital was required to boost productivity. Better health conditions, access to quality education, a strong academia-industry linkage, and strengthening technical education and vocational training authority will help boost creativity, he added. INP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar presided over the meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet.