

QUETTA VOICE

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ECP suspends by-elections for 37 National Assembly seats



PSO takes out rallies urges parents to enroll children in schools

Flaws in the Balochistan census

Syed Ali Shah Analysis

Flaws have been witnessed in the seventh census underway in Pakistan's Balochistan province. The census is underway amid reservations and apprehensions expressed by the Baloch and Pashtoon nationalist political parties. The census staff is yet to reach the people living in urban parts of the province. What to speak about the remote areas of the province, which covers half of the country in terms of area and houses only 6% population of entire Pakistan.

Census staff is yet to reach the population in Balochistan

Specific law and order situations, rugged mountains, long distances, plains, and administrative issues make it very difficult to make sure proper and accurate counting of all individuals in Balochistan.

As per the 2017 national census, Balochistan makes hardly 6% population of the entire country. Indeed, this is equal to salt in the flour. It is ironic fate if this meager population is not counted properly during the census of 2023.

Census also a sensitive topic in Balochistan

Like in some cities of Pakistan, census/enumeration is also con-



sidered to be one of the sensitive topics in Balochistan. Almost all political parties are skeptical about the process of the current enumeration/census. The Baloch nationalist parties are concerned about the inclusion of Afghan refugees in the census process and fear that this would bring a demographic change in Balochistan. Similarly, the Pashtoon nationalist parties fear that their (ethnic Pashtuns) population should not be ignored under the garb of Afghan refugees.

Balochistan makes up only 6% population of the entire country

The resource-rich province of Balochistan has a nominal representation in the parliament with only 19 members of the national assembly out of a total of 342. The province has no say in the formation of the federal government, and distribution of development funds under the federal public sector development program (PSDP). Even its (Balochistan) meager share of 6% percent in services is swallowed by Islamabad through fake domiciles. Balochistan is lagging behind all other provinces in terms of key social indicators including education, health, sanitation and clean drinking water. Nevertheless, its own funds are not utilized in a transparent way because of the worst governance. To be precise, all political parties should put their heads together and bury the hatchet and come up with one point agenda that a fair and transparent census should be conducted before it is already late.

Quetta Zhob highway blocked against robbery incidents

Ali Khan Mandokhail

Transporters blocked the Quetta-Zhob highway against increasing incidents of robberies.

The highway remains blocked for more than 10 hours and passengers suffered a lot because of the blockade of the highway. Passengers traveling



between Quetta and Islamabad waited for hours to reach their destinations. Protesters said that last night the bandits robbed several trucks and their drivers. 10 lakh rupees were taken away from the drivers. The truck drivers had completely closed the national highway to all types of traffic. Due to the closure of the national highway, long queues of vehicles were formed. Passengers are facing severe difficulties.

Senior administration officials reached the spot and held successful negotiations and convinced the transporters to bring an end to the protest demonstration and reopen the highway.

The highway remains blocked for 10 hours

Imran postpones PTI rally after Section 144 'illegally' imposed in Lahore

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan on Sunday postponed the party's election rally, which was scheduled to be held today, after the Punjab caretaker government imposed Section 144.

The former premier said that "it seems again Section 144 has been imposed illegally solely on PTI election campaign as all other public activities are ongoing in Lahore." He claimed that "only Zaman Park has been surrounded by containers & heavy police contingent."

Warning all PTI supporters to "not fall into this trap", Imran announced the postponement of the rally.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)'s chief has called a meeting at the ECP tomorrow to take up the PTI's plea expressing reservations against the Punjab interim government's decision to stop the party from holding a rally.

CEC Sikandar Sultan Raja will chair the

meeting at 10:30 am on Monday on PTI leaders Dr Yasmin Rashid and Babar Awan's application.

Talking to the media, the former minister said that "today, a marathon and the PSL matches are also being held in Lahore, but under the guise of Section 144, only the rally of Tehreek-e-Insaf is being stopped."

Earlier in the day, PTI chief Imran Khan directed party lawyer Babar Awan to move the ECP against the interim government's decision to impose a ban on public gatherings today.

According to the PTI, the ban is "illegal". It maintains that by imposing Section 144 in Lahore, the interim government is violating para 15 of the Supreme Court's orders, and that campaigning is a constitutional right of the party.

Further, the party has stressed that the venue and time of its rally do not clash with any other pre-scheduled events, in particular



the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) match that is to be played at the Gaddafi Stadium today.

A day earlier, Imran had again announced launching his election campaign with a rally, which he would personally lead, from Lahore on Sunday.

It may be noted here that in a late-night development on Saturday, the provincial government had imposed Section 144 in the provincial capital for a day - Sunday - warning that the restriction could be extended if the situation "went out of control".

In a news conference, Caretaker Punjab Minister for Information Amir Mir had urged the PTI chairman not to "take the law into his hands". Read Also PTI lashes out at Punjab CM, IGP for terming death of worker 'accident' He had said Section 144 was being enforced in Lahore, adding that no one would be allowed to take out a rally or hold a public gathering. Web Desk

Gwadar: Coast Guard seizes drugs worth rupees 32 billion

News Desk

Coast Guard seized drugs that have been worth rupees 32 billion near Gwadar on Saturday. Coast Guard conducted an operation near Gwadar and seized 1650 kg of Hashish and 69 kg of ice.

According to the spokesman of the Coast Guard, the drugs are approximately worth rupees 32 billion and 67 Crore. The personnel of the Coast Guard tried to stop two suspicious vehicles in the Dran area of Gwadar on which the cars tried to escape, he added.

"We captured the cars but unfortunately, the accused were successful to escape from the spot", the spokesman lamented. The seized drug is thought to be smuggled through the sea, the spokesman added.



Governor Kakar visits Wadh offers fateha for Sardar Attaullah Mengal

From Our Correspondent

Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar paid a visit to Wadh Khuzdar and offered fateha for the veteran Baloch leader Sardar Attaullah Khan Mengal. The Governor went to the grave of the late Baloch nationalist leader and offered fateha for the departed soul.

Later, talking to the local tribesmen, the Governor stated that the present government was committed to establishing direct contact with the masses to solve issues relating to Balochistan. "Addressing the grievances of the masses is our top priority", the Governor said.

A large number of local tribesmen were present at the Mengal House Wadh where the Governor addressed the gathering. Balochistan National Party (BNP)



MPA Ahmed Nawaz, JUI F MPA, Younas Aziz Zehri, and other high-level officials were also present on the occasion. The Commissioner Kalat Division, Dawood Khilji briefed Governor Balochistan about the prevailing law and order

situation and the development projects underway in the division. "We want peace and timely completion of all development projects", the Governor directed the concerned departments and law enforcement agencies.

PSO takes out rallies urges parents to enroll children in schools

Education Desk

QUETTA: The Pashtoonkhwa Students Organization (PSO) took out rallies in various district headquarters regarding its school enrollment campaign. The rallies under the title of "every child in school", "every teacher in class", and "school in every village", etc were attended by a large number of students.

The participants of the rallies were carrying placards and banners inscribed with slogans



asking the parents to enroll their children in schools. A rally was also taken out by the PSO in

Quetta. The participants of the rally marched from the party's main office on Jinnah Road

and culminated at the Bacha Khan Chowk.

The organizers, students, and participants of the rally were chanting slogans in the support of education and schooling. The administration had taken strict security measures to avoid the occurrence of any untoward incident during the rally.

Similar rallies were taken in Killa Saifullah, Loralai, Zhob, and other district headquarters of Balochistan to mobilize the people about the importance of education.

ECP suspends by-elections for 37 National Assembly seats

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Sunday suspended the election schedule for 37 National Assembly (NA) seats which had fallen vacant after the resignation of PTI lawmakers — in light of the orders issued by the Islamabad, Peshawar, Sindh and Balochistan high courts.

On Jan 27, the ECP had announced by-elections for 33 NA seats on March 16. On February 3, the commission said by-elections for another 31 NA seats would take place on March 19.

But earlier this month, the high courts of



Peshawar, Sindh and Balochistan had suspended by-elections in their respective provinces while the Islamabad High Court (IHC) had suspended the de-notification of

three PTI leaders. In four separate notifications issued on Sunday, the electoral watchdog said that until further orders from the relevant courts, it was suspending

the election schedule for one NA seat in Balochistan, three in Islamabad, nine in Sindh and 24 in KP. The NA seats were vacated after Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf swiftly moved to accept the resignations of PTI lawmakers, pending since April 2022, in an apparent bid to scuttle the opposition's purported plan to bring a confidence motion against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

After stalling the process for eight months, the NA speaker accepted the resignations of 34 PTI MNAs on Jan 17 and 35 MNAs on Jan 20. Web Desk

QUETTA VOICE

Editor Asim Khan

Balochistan Education Sector Plan, Go beyond words

Much has been said about the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2020-25 on the official level and among the academia and international donor agencies. Undoubtedly, some officers of the education department and donor agencies deserve appreciation for preparing the Plan.

The estimated cost of the five years BESP is Rs. 72 billion as per the data shared with journalists during a function in this regard in Quetta the other day. Attractive banners, books, and brushes with the best paper quality were given to the participants of the function held at Quetta's luxury hotel. As usual, very few individuals bothered to read the information in bags given to them by organizers of the function.

The Secondary Education Department had prepared the BESP 2020-25 in collaboration with European Union, Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and UNICEF. Thanks to these organizations for extending support to the Balochistan government in improving the quality of education. Nevertheless, these international donor agencies should also go beyond words and ensure sustainable efforts to improve the state of education in Balochistan.

Most of the teachers, parents are unaware of BESP 2020-25. When educationists, academicians, bureaucrats, ministers, and representatives of donor agencies were addressing the BESP function, parents and teachers in remote remained unaware of the Plan. This daily asked some teachers and parents about the BESP 2020-25. They simply said, "What is this?"

Subsequently, the target group is unaware of the BESP 2020-25 and the multi-billion rupees spending on the Project. Most of the speakers spoke about the quality of education. In reality, speaking about the quality of education is like daydreaming in Balochistan, lagging behind other provinces of the country in terms of key social indicators.

Over 6,000 schools with one teacher in Balochistan. The education minister Naseebullah Marri lamented that 70,000 teachers and the quality still low. Palvasha Jalalzai, the education specialist of UNICEF put some critical questions about the one-teacher one-school, teachers training in Balochistan.

To be very precise, the government and donor agencies should come out of Quetta's only luxury hotel and mobile teachers, parents, political people, media, and religious scholars at the district level to improve the state of education in Balochistan.

Inflation in Pakistan is a political decision. The most recent government-released figures depict a major year-on-year increase of 31 per cent. The 31 per cent increase in prices is a political decision. The price of onions went up by 311 per cent, cigarettes 165 per cent, gas 108 per cent, diesel 94 per cent, eggs 78 per cent, rice 77 per cent, dal moong 73 per cent, bananas 73 per cent, chicken 65 per cent and tea 65 per cent. Yes, these are all political decisions.

Our government claims that inflation is a global phenomenon, which is partly true. However, the inflation rates in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and India differ significantly. Pakistan's inflation rate stands at 31 per cent, whereas Afghanistan's is 5.0 per cent, Bangladesh's is 9.0 per cent, and India's is 6.0 per cent. The real question is why Pakistan's inflation rate is much higher than that of its neighbouring countries. This is a crucial question that needs to be addressed.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) tells us that in 2018 total currency in circulation stood at Rs4,387 billion. Imagine: in the following four years our government printed an additional Rs3,135 billion. Imagine: currency in circulation shot up by an unpre-

cedented 71 per cent in a matter of four years. Imagine, we now have around Rs8,000 billion worth of currency in circulation.

There's simply too many rupees chasing too few goods. That's inflation. And, inflation in Pakistan's case is a political decision. In more technical terms, "inflation is always and everywhere a monetary phenomenon resulting from and accompanied by a rise in the quantity of money relative to output."

Question: why is our government printing so much money? Answer: The government is printing money to fill its growing budget deficit that now exceeds Rs6,000 billion. Essentially, a budget deficit is a political decision where the government decides to spend more than it earns. When the government spends more than its revenues, it must borrow or print money to make up the difference. Printing more money increases the amount of currency in circulation, which in turn leads to inflation and higher prices. Therefore, the government's decision to print more money to fill its budget deficit has significant economic consequences, such as inflation.

In the 2000s, Zimbabwe resorted to

excessive money printing to finance its budget deficit, resulting in hyperinflation. More recently, Venezuela has also faced hyperinflation due to the government's excessive money printing. Similarly, countries like Argentina, Turkey, and Lebanon have resorted to printing money to finance their budget deficits, leading to high inflation and economic instability for their populations.

The current inflationary spiral in Pakistan has political factors behind it. To control inflation, the government must stop excessive printing of money. Inflation leads to poverty and inequality, reduced purchasing power, increased interest rates, economic instability, and decreased international competitiveness. To be certain, poverty in Pakistan is not an economic issue but a political decision.

Red alert: high rates of inflation often lead to political instability as citizens get frustrated with the government's inability to control rising prices. The flame of public frustration can lead to protests, strikes and other forms of unrest that can destabilize Pakistan.

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By Dr Farrukh Saleem

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Stop pretending to be the state

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

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

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

The institutions of the state have collapsed as

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The regime-change experiment has floundered disastrously, but its architects and implementers are unwilling to take note of the damage which has been done, and that which may yet be done. They show little sensitivity, even less resolve to concede their grave mistake and make amends in terms of letting the law and constitution dictate what needs to be done by binding the respective institutions and officials to perform their duties in accordance with the key constituents of their oath. Or have they made up their mind that their will must prevail irrespective of the damage it may accrue to the state, even its prospect of survival? If that be so, they should have the courage to come out from the shadows and show us what their agenda is for this hapless country. For now, an egotistical and unrepentant mindset has taken hold of the country and its affairs.

No method, no mechanism is visible to address the grave challenges it faces in the aftermath of the failure of the ill-conceived regime change operation. It is time to soothe the exceedingly bloated.

A bonfire of literary festivals

By Ghazi Salahuddin

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

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

Anyhow, we have some comforting distractions around this time of the year. Call it a bonfire of literary festivals. This weekend, we have the 14th edition of the Karachi Literature Festival – KLF – that may rightly be designated as the mother of all literary festivals of Pakistan. It is surely a big event, tilting somewhat towards an economic dimension with the theme: "People, Planet and Possibilities".

But as I write these words, I have still to fully recover from the hangover of the literary festival I attended in Lahore last weekend. Actually, a certain kind of mood that

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conditional financing

Pakistan has always been an agrarian economy. This gives it a comparative advantage in the sector. The abundance of natural resources in the country and the specialized labour force provide the country an edge over the economies of its neighbouring countries.

Data also supports the fact that a huge chunk of Pakistan's labour force (37 per cent approximately) is absorbed by the agriculture sector. It contributes roughly 22 per cent to the country GDP. This sector not only caters to domestic food demand but also contributes significantly to our exports.

It is also true that this sector is highly vulnerable to climatic change. And the nation is yet to witness a serious action plan to combat this global challenge. Be it unprecedented rains, water scarcity or adaptation issues, the country is often found short of mitigation and adaptation plans. And while we raise alarm bells when we witness the devastation caused by climate hazards, we rarely take preventive measures.

Pakistan witnessed multiple catastrophic effects caused by climate change in the last two decades. The floods of 2022 caused large-scale losses: infrastructure damage, loss of crops and livestock, deaths of 1,700 people, and displacement of thousands of people, particularly the rural population. The economic loss is estimated to be \$16 billion approximately, which jolted our

already crippling economy.

What this incident needed was a prompt response both domestically as well as from the international community, but what our policymakers did was to focus on the latter, ignoring the former. The much-celebrated pledges of approximately \$10 billion made by the international community and several financial institutions at the Geneva conference in January are a result of the efforts made by the government, but at the same time they also reflect the priorities of the government.

The pledges are yet to materialize, but the government portrayed it as a success of its foreign policy and a solution to our current economic crisis. Though these pledges are directed towards infrastructure development over a period of three years, this success could be short-lived unless coupled with dedicated efforts at the domestic level, aimed at building resilience to climate change and preserving scarce resources.

The country is about to welcome yet another monsoon season and our helpless farmers are yet to be compensated for the loss that occurred last year. Also, our infrastructure is yet to be built, crop mix is yet to be optimized and the national climate policy is yet to be implemented. Unfortunately, the present government seems to be occupied by the prevailing political instability and the exacerbating economic crisis.

The important point to highlight here is that the world sees us from a different lens. Climate financing by the international community cannot be solely used for sustainability; these finances must be coupled with a comprehensive domestic work plan and its timely implementation. The pledges made to Pakistan are conditional to our domestic strategy and actions towards combating climate change. It cannot be the case where we only look up to the international community after the damage has been done.

In the long run Pakistan will not be able to convince the international community regarding climate financing without putting in a dedicated effort at the domestic level. Unfortunately, climate change has not found any place in recent socio-economic and geopolitical debates. To implement any action plan, there has to be a consensus among all stakeholders, which in Pakistan's case is far from achieving.

The prevailing polarization in our society, particularly among decision-makers, has further suffocated the environment for dialogue. The clock is ticking and with the present fragile governance framework, Pakistan is just one rainfall or flood away from unavoidable climate-led collapse, the ultimate victim of which will be our poor farmer.

It is high time for all stakeholders to forgo their egos, put their heads together, build a national

consensus over the issue, and devise short, medium and long-term workable plans by utilizing all the resources necessary to prevent disasters before the country sinks again. It cannot be left to the international community solely to take care of our issues.

Our political economy needs to be revamped, and a comprehensive plan must be chalked out to preserve crops. All political parties should sit together to deal with national issues. And building climate resilience must be prioritized. Policies must be drafted to protect small farmers; infrastructure needs to be upgraded as soon as possible or else the country which is already losing the battle at the economic front will not be able to absorb another climate-led collapse. It is also true that this sector is highly vulnerable to climatic change. And the nation is yet to witness a serious action plan to combat this global challenge. Be it unprecedented rains, water scarcity or adaptation issues, the country is often found short of mitigation and adaptation plans. And while we raise alarm bells when we witness the devastation caused by climate hazards, we rarely take preventive measures.

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Green resilience

By Zile Huma

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sindh Govt announces to increase fears of peoples bus service

KARACHI: The Sindh government has decided to increase the fare of its flagship Peoples Bus Service due to the recent increase in fuel prices.

This was announced by Sindh Information and Transport Minister, Sharjeel Inam Memon while talking to media persons after he inspected ongoing work on the Red Line corridor of the Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) in Karachi.

Talking to media, Memon said that Sindh govt has been left with

no option but to increase the fares of Peoples Bus Service. "Due to inflation in the country and increase in diesel price it's almost impossible to maintain the operational cost," he added.

The transport minister went on to say that fares will be increased in phases keeping in view the economic challenges of a common man. It is worth mentioning here that currently, there are three types of buses running under the umbrella of the Peoples Bus Service project — Red

Buses for all travellers, Pink Buses for only women and white Electric Buses.

These buses on most of the routes in Karachi charge a flat passenger fare of Rs50 for each ride except for the bus service from Merewether Tower to Gulshan-e-Hadeed which charges a maximum fare of Rs100 due to the longer route. The bus service was first launched in Karachi last year in June by PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. INP

Punjab Govt involvement in trade politics condemned

ISLAMABAD: The business community on Sunday expressed its serious concern over the involvement of Punjab caretaker government in trade politics and driving campaign for a particular group, violating the election code of conduct, as the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) rules bar a caretaker set-up from performing such acts.

The Election Act 2017 unequivocally restricts a caretaker set-up to only run everyday affairs of the incumbent government as well as assist the ECP. They said that the Punjab Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce, Investment and Skill Development S M Tanveer has started the election drive in favour of the United Business Group (UBG) in various official functions and meetings.

In a hurriedly called meeting held here today, the representatives of various trade organizations, chambers of commerce and industrial associations of all major sectors of the country,

have condemned such act of the Punjab Caretaker Minister, as he is visiting different chambers in interior Sindh along with the office-bearers of the UBG to persuade the members of his rival group of the Businessmen Panel (BMP) for voting in favour his group, which has been the loser for the last three consecutive years in FPCCI elections.

They said that Caretaker Minister of Industries has revived the Punjab Chamber of Commerce Coordination Committee, which includes the representatives of chambers, industrialists and govt officers with a view to take steps to solve the problems faced by the industry of Punjab, but actually this committee is being used to force the voters of BMP to join the UBG, which is totally unfair. They appealed the caretaker government to work only for ensuring the provision of all possible facilities to the

investors instead of indulging its ministries in political affairs of the business community.

They also criticized him to attend the UBG 41st meeting at Gohar Group of Companies head office in Karachi as a caretaker minister which was also attended by the UBG secretary general and other leadership.

The Caretaker industries minister has himself admitted on media that he had visited Sahiwal and Okara Chambers along with the chairman of the UBG to reinforce his group. He also visited different Sindh chambers, asking his office-bearers to visit all chambers in interior Sindh for the election campaign for the FPCCI elections. The minister said on media, "We are working together and jointly covering the campaign which should also be done here in Sindh. Please ensure and promise with me that from today UBG is being active now and we had to cover every chamber in Sindh." INP



QUETTA: Activities of Pashtoonkhwah Students Organization, hold protest in favor of their demands.

Government was earnestly striving to promote sports in Balochistan, Ishaque Jamali

QUETTA, March 12 (PPI) : Muhammad Ishaque Jamali, Secretary, Sports and Youth Affairs Department, has said that government of Balochistan was earnestly striving to promote sports in Balochistan. These views were expressed by him while addressing the function held in connection with "Mr. Balochistan Men's Physique", "Mr. Balochistan Men's Physique", "Mr. Junior Quetta", "Mr. Quetta Classic Physique", "Mr. Quetta Men's Physique" and "Mr. Quetta Teenage" bodybuilding competition under the auspices of Balochistan Body Building Association at Nuri Naseer Khan Complex, Spiny Road,

Quetta, said a statement issued by Israr Khan Khilji alias Jan Khilji, President, Balochistan Body Building Association here on Sunday. He said that all available resources were being utilised to provide sporting facilities to the players of the province, enabling them to bring laurels for the country and the province. Mr. Balochistan title was won by Haji Muhammad Sadiq, Junior Balochistan Zakir Hussain, Teen Balochistan, Muhammad Bilal and Quetta Division Teen, Zulfiqar Ali.

Secretary, Sports and Youth Affairs, Muhammad Ishaq Jamali distributed souvenirs amongst winners of different

titles. On the occasion, Secretary General, Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation, Haji Nisar Khan Khilji, Ejaz Ali, Deputy Secretary, Sports and Youth Affairs, Balochistan, Ejaz Ali, Assistant Director, Youth Affairs, Mustafa Khan Achakzai, tribal elder Haji Waqar Khan Khilji, Chief Executive Officer, Balochistan, Redbull, Yousaf, Muhammad Hadi Raheemi (National Game Silver Medalist), Secretary, Quetta Bodybuilding Association, officers of Balochistan Sports Board, tribal elders, representative of civil society and large number of people were also present. PR

PTI challenges imposition of section 144 in Lahore

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Sunday challenged the imposition of Section 144 in Lahore by the caretaker Punjab govt ahead of its scheduled rally. The former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan announced that he would lead a public rally on Sunday (today) in connection with the election campaign, launched for upcoming general elections in Punjab.

The plea was moved by party leader Dr Babar Awan with the ECP on the directions of former prime minister and PTI chief Imran Khan. PTI in its plea has urged the ECP to use its power and strike down the imposition of Section 144 in Lahore by

terming it 'illegal'. Caretaker Punjab govt is trying to stop PTI from election rally on 'pretext' of PSL matches, the plea said. The routes of the PTI rally and the PSL match are different, Babar Awan said in a plea and added the match will start at 7pm while the rally will end at 5:30pm.

Talking to newsmen outside the Election Commission of Pakistan, Babar Awan claimed the govt is shutting down the whole city in Imran Khan's fear. The ECP has been asked to give permission for the public rally, Babar Awan said.

It may be noted that the caretaker Punjab government imposed Section 144 in Lahore with immediate effect, while

sources claimed that Punjab Rangers have also been summoned to maintain law and order.

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Three of a family die in road accident

DADU: A man, his wife and a daughter were killed and two of his children were injured seriously when a speeding passenger van ploughed into a motorcycle on Mehran Highway near Nawabshah.

The deceased identified as Raza Mohammad Solangi, his wife Rubina Solangi and baby girl Nisa and the injured Kamran Solangi and Rani Solangi were brought to Nawabshah hospital. According to police, the family members were going to their native village in Naushahro Feroze on a motorcycle when the speeding van hit them. INP

31 police employees sacked

KARACHI: As many as 31 employees of district Central police were dismissed from services for their continued absence.

SSP-Central Maroof Usman had first issued them show-cause notices before the start of the seventh population census, asking them to resume their duty immediately. However, none of them came back. INP

Ruet body meets on March 22 for Ramadan moon sighting

ISLAMABAD: The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee will meet in Islamabad on March 22 (Wednesday) for the sighting of the crescent of Ramadan.

Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Chairman Moulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabeer Azad will preside over the meeting.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has predicted that there is a 'good chance' of sighting of Ramadan 1444 AH moon on March 22.

According to the weather department, the new moon of Ramadan, 1,444 AH, will born on the crossing conjunction point at 22-23 PST on 21-03-2023.

In case the holy month begins in line with the PMD's forecast, the first Ramadan will be on March 23, Thursday. Ramadan-ul-Mubarak, the month of fasting, is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. During the fast, Muslims must abstain from eating, drinking, gossip and cursing, and are encouraged to focus on meditative acts like prayer, recitation of the Holy Quran and charity. INP



FAISALABAD: Candidates are submitting their papers in Election Commission of Pakistan, in the City.

ECP to discuss PTI's petitions against the imposition of Section 144

ISLAMABAD: Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja has convened a meeting of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) tomorrow Monday (March 13) to discuss the PTI's petitions against the "illegal imposition" of Section 144 and ban on the party's rallies in Lahore.

Taking to Twitter, the electoral watchdog said the meeting will be held at 10:30am tomorrow. Ahead of its election rally in Lahore, the PTI approached the ECP on Sunday against the "illegal imposition" of Section 144 in Lahore by the caretaker Punjab government.

President of Central Punjab of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Dr Yasmin Rashid on Sunday wrote to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) on

the issue of stopping the PTI rally. It has been stated in the letter that the Election Commission of Pakistan has issued the election schedule in Punjab, following which PTI announced a rally and the caretaker government imposed Section 144 to stop the rally.

It was further mentioned that the rally was also brutally manhandled by the police earlier, due to which one of their activist was martyred. The PTI's rally is going to be held at 2pm while PSL match is at 7pm. In the letter, the electoral watchdog has been asked to take notice of the caretaker government's role and declare the implementation of Section 144 illegal. It should be noted that after the announcement by PTI Chairman Imran Khan to hold a rally today, the caretaker

Punjab government has summoned the Rangers by imposing Section 144 in Lahore. Taking to Twitter, the electoral watchdog said the meeting will be held at 10:30am tomorrow. Ahead of its election rally in Lahore, the PTI approached the ECP on Sunday against the "illegal imposition" of Section 144 in Lahore by the caretaker Punjab government.

President of Central Punjab of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Dr Yasmin Rashid on Sunday wrote to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) on the issue of stopping the PTI rally. It has been stated in the letter that the Election Commission of Pakistan has issued the election schedule in Punjab, following which PTI announced. INP

Submission of nomination papers for Punjab elections begins

ISLAMABAD: Candidates Sunday have started submitting nomination papers for the provincial assembly elections in Punjab.

According to the election body, candidates can submit their nomination papers to the Returning Officers (ROs) from March 12 to 14.

In a statement, the election watchdog said that the names of nominated candidates will be published on March 15 while the scrutiny process of nomination papers will continue till 22. The appeals can be filed against the rejection or acceptance of nomination papers till 27th.

The appellate tribunal will decide the appeals by 3rd of next month. The revised list of candidates will be published on 4th.

The candidates could withdraw their nomination papers up to April 05 and election symbols to candidates will be allotted on April 06, the ECP announced. INP

Punjab Culture Day to be celebrated Today

MULTAN: Punjab Culture Day will be celebrated tomorrow on March 14th under the auspice of the Information and Culture Department. Secretary Information and Culture Ali Nawaz Malik while talking about the Punjab cultural festival said that Punjab culture narrative, folk music, Sufi dance performance, Bhangra, Gidda and Arifana Kalam would be presented in the cultural festival programme.

Well-known artists Arif Lohar, Fazal Jat, Sain Zahoor, Saima Jahan will perform their art in the programme. Secretary Information and Culture Ali Nawaz Malik said that divisional commissioners in the province would organise Punjab Culture Day celebrations in their respective divisions.

This year the logo of Punjab Culture Day has been replaced by the commonly used turban instead of the tall "pug" to ensure representation of the Punjabi people. Secretary Information and Culture further apprised that the civilization and culture of Punjab was known globally due to its prominent characteristics and rich history. INP



PESHAWAR: Donkey cart holder on the way during rain in provincial capital.

Plane carrying aid from Pakistan for quake victims arrives in Turkiye

ISLAMABAD: A plane carrying humanitarian aid from Pakistan arrived in southern Turkiye early on Sunday.

The plane departed from Lahore and landed at Adana airport is loaded with 1,200 winter and fire-resistant tents. These tents have been sent by the Pakistani

government as part of a special cargo flight operation to transport 50,000 tents.

Three ships carrying nearly 13,600 winter tents are also headed to Turkiye and will arrive in Mersin province later this month. Pakistan was among the first countries to send search and rescue teams to Turkiye as

the government immediately dispatched a 33-member Pakistan Army Urban Search and Rescue Team immediately after last month.

More than 47,900 people were killed and over thirteen million people affected by the powerful quakes that rocked 11 provinces of Turkiye. INP



National Disaster Risk Management Fund
A company set up under section 42 of the Companies Act, 2017
Making Pakistan Resilient

IFB# 004/27/IT

INVITATION TO BIDS
PROCUREMENT OF LAPTOPS

National Disaster Risk Management Fund (hereinafter shall be termed as "Fund" & "Client") is a not-for-profit company incorporated with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, under Section 42 of the Companies Act 2017, invites sealed Bids from the Original Manufacturer/Suppliers/authorized Distributors registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments and who are on Active Taxpayers List of the Federal Board of Revenue and fulfil the eligibility & qualification requirements for supply of "Laptops (45 Nos. Lot-wise)" to NDRMF as per terms & conditions/Specifications mentioned in the Bidding Document Document under PPRA Rules, 2004. A bidder may bid for one or more "Lots"; however, bidder(s) are required to bid for entire (100%) quantity of the Lot for which he shall bid. Procurement Method will be "National Competitive Bidding" – Single Stage – One Envelop Procedure as per PPRA Rules, 2004.

2. Bidding document containing detailed terms & conditions for the aforesaid activity may be downloaded at Fund's website i.e. www.ndrmf.pk (free of cost). Further, details can be obtained from the office of the Manager Procurement, EOBI Building, 5th Floor, G-10/4, Islamabad.

3. Sealed Bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions in the Bidding document, must reach at the address below on or before **30th March, 2023 at 1000 hours**. Bids will be publicly opened on the same day at **1030 hours** in the presence of the participating companies/ their authorized representatives, who may choose to be present. This notice is also available on Fund's Website i.e. www.ndrmf.pk and PPRA website at www.ppra.org.pk.

PID (I) No. 5580/22

Manager (Procurement)
National Disaster Risk Management Fund
EOBI Building, 5th Floor, G-10/4, Islamabad
Telephone No. 92(51) 9108300-415

L A H O R E : Caretaker Punjab Cabinet has decided to cancel license of 56 salt mining companies in the province. This was decided during meeting of Caretaker Cabinet chaired by the Caretaker Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi.

The cabinet formed a committee to complete formalities for cancellation of licenses and granted approval for amended rock salt policy for making the salt mining

procedure transparent. The Caretaker Cabinet also granted permission to students for free travel in Metro Bus Service while in uniform.

The meeting directed Energy Department to take measures for power savings under Prime Minister's Energy Conservation Policy.

The cabinet also constituted a committee for the purpose. It was noted with concern that the last government by issuing

licenses to favourites without bidding and an open auction caused a loss of billions of rupees to the national exchequer. The cabinet also gave a green signal to taking steps to make issuance of licenses for mining transparent. It was decided that from now onwards licenses would be issued through open auction.

Approval was also given to the Punjab's recently amended Rock Salt Policy. Likewise, the cabinet

decided to give a big relief to the students travelling through Orange Train and metro bus. It was decided that from now onwards, students would be able to travel free of cost.

The cabinet gave instructions to the energy department to take steps to save energy in the light of prime minister's Energy Conservation Plan. CM Naqvi ordered reduction in the consumption of electricity units at government

offices. He gave instructions to all government departments to implement the save energy plan.

The cabinet approved extension in the contracts of employees of Information and Communication Technology Cell. Similarly, the decision was also taken to extend contracts of employees of Police and Strategic Planning Unit of Primary and Secondary Health. INP

Kh Saad promises swift, inexpensive justice under reformed system

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Railways and Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique has said that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) will introduce reforms in the judicial system of the country for quick and doubtless justice to people after coming to power.

Addressing an organisational meeting of the PML-N in his constituency here on Sunday, he said that it was a responsibility of the parliament to provide swift justice to the common man. He said that if the PML-N got an opportunity, such a judicial system would be introduced through legislation in which favoritism would not have any place.

The minister said that the PML-N would also introduce a revolutionary economic framework for which the PML-N was needed the support of people

and it was not possible in just six months. In the new economic framework, tax-net would be expanded without putting burden on the poor and deprived citizens of the country. The government structure would be reduced and expenditures of all government institutions would be decreased, he promised.

He said that the PML-N would work for the common man instead of the rich, adding that he was part of the current democratic system for changing the system. "This democratic system of billionaires cannot run the country progressively," he added.

The minister said that the election had become a commercial activity, as political parties did not give tickets to political workers if they did not have resources to contest elections. He said that the political parties were.



LAHORE: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs, National Heritage and Culture Engineer Ameer Maqam calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Punjab govt deploys Rangers in Lahore to obstruct PTI rally

LAHORE: The caretaker Punjab government has deployed Rangers ahead of the PTI rally in Lahore.

According to media reports, Rangers will be deployed near Zaman Park and at sensitive areas to maintain law and order situation in the provincial capital. PTI is set to carry out a rally to start their election campaign after PTI Chairman Imran Khan announced yesterday of carrying out the rally.

Imran had announced that he would himself lead the rally at 2 pm. The Punjab government has already imposed Section 144 in the city for one day. Provincial Minister for Information Amir Mir announced in a press conference that Section 144 was imposed for today. He said the Section 144 had been imposed due to the Pakistan Super League (PSL match) and a marathon rally. He had advised the PTI not to carry out their rally. INP

Police arrest PTI MPA Arsalan Taj

KARACHI: The Karachi police on Sunday arrested Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MPA and the general secretary of PTI Karachi chapter Arsalan Taj. According to a PTI spokesperson, Taj was taken into custody by plainclothes officials from his Gulshan Iqbal residence. Police also raided the residential property of Sindh MPA Raja Azhar at dawn and reportedly harassed his family. The spokesperson further said Azhar was not present at the house at the time the Karachi police raided his house. INP

Policemen abducted near Khandkot

KANDHKOT: Dacoits attacked a police check-post and kidnapped almost two policemen in Katcha area of Durrani Mehr near Sindh's Kandhkot tehsil. According to details, two policemen Sajjad Jakhri and Ghaffar were kidnapped on Saturday when dacoits attacked a police check-post in Katcha area of Durrani Mehr. The dacoits had uploaded a video showing the two men in their custody, demanding release of a 13-year-old suspect Wajid who was earlier arrested by police.

Earlier in March, Sindh Cabinet approved funds for military-grade weapons to launch an anti-bandit operation in Katcha area.

Secretary home department and the I.G. Police Sindh in a briefing to the cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister of Sindh Murad Ali Shah, said that the police will require military-grade arms to launch an effective operation against bandits in Katcha area (riverine forest along the Indus River).

The cabinet session was briefed that the January 05 session of the apex committee had recommended procurement of military-grade weapons, which requires 2.7 billion rupees funds. INP

Senator Farooq Naek elected unopposed as member of IPU's Committee

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Senator Farooq H. Naek has been elected unopposed as a Member of Inter-Parliamentary Union's Standing Committee on Human Rights and Democracy. The election took place during a meeting of the Asia-Pacific Group of Inter-Parliamentary Union in Bahrain's capital Manama.

In his speech to the Parliamentarians from the Asia-Pacific Group Member countries, Senator Farooq H. Naek expressed his gratitude to them for supporting his candidacy. He assured that he would represent the Asia-Pacific Group effectively.

The IPU is a global organization of National Parliaments based in Geneva, Switzerland, dedicated to promoting peace through parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue. It currently has 178 members and 14 Associate Members. INP

National games definitely boost the soft image of Balochistan, Abdul Khaliq Hazara

QUETTA: Abdul Khaliq Hazara, Minister for Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs, has said that the arrangement of National games in Quetta after 19 years will definitely boost the soft image of Balochistan province nationally and internationally.

These views were expressed by him while addressing a function held in connected with the opening ceremony of the second phase of first Balochistan Games at Football ground of Ayub Stadium, Quetta here on Sunday. He said that the proposal of declaring "Balochistan Games" as a permanent event to be held every year had been brought into the notice of competent authority for consideration. Minister for Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs, Abdul Khaliq Hazara inaugurated second phase of the game by kicking football. About 3000 players of 40 different disciplines from different divisions of the province includ-

ing, Quetta, Naseerabad, Mekran, Zhob, Sibi and Loralai division, attended the opening ceremony of the second phase of Balochistan Games.

On the occasion, Secretary, Sports and Youth Affairs, Muhammad Ishaque Jamali, Assistant Director Sports, Muhammad Asif Langove, Assistant Director Youth Affairs, Muhammad Mustafa Khan Achakzai, Haji Muhammad Ibrahim Khan Nurzi, President, Balochistan Darts Association/representative of Darts discipline, Raees Saddam Khan, representative of Archery, Rehmatullah Nurzi, representative of Martial Arts, Qaiser Mehmood, representative of athletics, Mubarak Ali Shan, Muhammad Qasim, representative of Fencing, Ghulam Farooq, Senior Auditor office of the Accountant General Balochistan and others were also present. PR

PIA adds 11 new destinations

KARACHI: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has added 11 new destinations to its network by signing a code-share arrangement with Malaysian Airlines.

According to the PIA spokesman, the national flag carrier had entered into a commercial arrangement - Special Prorate Agreement (SPA) - with Malaysia Airlines for destinations in Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, and Vietnam.

This partnership between Pakistan International Airlines and Malaysian Airlines allows national flag carrier to access 11 destinations through its counterpart's hub in Kuala Lumpur, he said. Under the agreement, the 11 additional destinations added to PIA network include Sydney, Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide, Auckland, Singapore, Bangkok,

Phuket, Jakarta, Manila and Ho Chi Minh City.

The spokesman said the arrangement fulfilled the long-standing demand of Pakistani expatriates in Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland.

Passengers can book their flights through PIA call centre and the airlines' travel partners, he added.

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Revolutionary poet Jalib was remembered on 30th death anniversary

ISLAMABAD: The 30th death anniversary of revolutionary poet Habib Jalib was observed on Sunday to pay glowing tributes to him for his notable services in the field of literature.

Habib Jalib was born on 24 March 1928 in Hoshiarpur of Indian Punjab. He was titled as the poet of the people by his followers. Habib Jalib migrated to Pakistan after the partition and worked with a newspaper as a proofreader.

His simple and attractive style touched the hearts of people and remained loyal to his progressive school of thought despite being jailed for several times but also remained resilient when it comes to his poetry.

He is among the most influential Urdu poets in Pakistan, who

supported democratic ideals and expressively opposed martial laws and authoritarian rule.

Some of his famous literary works of the great political and social activist of his time include "Zulmat Ko Zia", "Watan ko Kuch Nahi Khatra", "Main Ne Uss Se Yeh Kaha" and "Aisay Dastoor Ko".

His famous poetry books are Sir-e-Maqtal, Zikr Behte Khoon Ka, Gumbad-e-Bedar, Kulyaat e Habib Jalib, Is Shehar-e-Kharabi Main, Goshay Main Qafas K, Harf-e-Haq, Harf-e-Sar-e-Daar and Ehad-e-Sitam.

He was awarded Nishan-i-Imtiaz and Nigar Awards by the government of Pakistan for his services in the field of literature.

A greatest poet of his era Habib Jalib died on March 12, 1993. INP



KARACHI: Women are dancing in the Aurat March at Business Road, in Provincial capital.

Blast targets Sardar Khan Rind convoy in Bolan casualties feared

From Our Correspondent

A landmine explosion targeted the convoy of Sardar Khan Rind, the son of Pakistan Tehrik e Insaf (PTI) leader Sardar Yar Muhammad Rind on Saturday evening. Initial information confirms the death of two security guards of Sardar Khan Rind. Sardar is unhurt in the attack, levies sources said. "Two guards of Sardar Rind were killed in the attack", Fahad Shah Rashdi, the assistant commissioner Dhadar said. He said the convoy of Sardar Rind was targeted in the Noshman area of Dhadar. The dead bodies were shifted to a nearby hospital and the injured were provided medical treatment. Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Qudus Bizenjo strongly condemned the blast and directed the administration to submit a report and arrest the culprits involved in the incident. The CM asked the administration to tighten security and arrest the culprits behind



the attack, an official handout issued here on Saturday evening said. Home Minister Balochistan, Mir Ziaullah Langove strongly condemned the incident and asked deputy commissioner Kachhi to apprehend the culprits behind the attack.

Saudi-Iran relations to yield positive results in region: Ashrafi

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Special Representative for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Sunday said the revival of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran would yield positive results in the region.

He, in an exclusive talk with APP, said the ease of diplomatic row between two brotherly countries would help to reduce the problems and sufferings of Islamic world.

Ashrafi who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council appreciated the efforts of Chinese President Xi Jinping to bring Saudi Arabia and Iran closer. As per reports, the Iran and Saudi Arabia had agreed to re-establish diplomatic relations and reopen their embassies within two months, he added.

He said both of the countries had agreed to revive agreements made in 2001 and 1998 regarding security and trade.

"The most important thing is that the two countries would not interfere in the internal affairs of one other," he maintained.

He said this news had spurred a wave of happiness in the Muslim Ummah as it would help dismantle the nefarious designs of enemies who tried to create conflict between the Muslim countries on the basis of sectarianism.

Shedding light on the background of this new development, he asserted that during the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Saudi Arabia a couple of months ago, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman

requested the former to bridge the gap with Iran.

Ashrafi said the Arab world had termed the crown prince the 'leader of peace' due to his peace-building measures between the two brotherly countries.

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Ashrafi said the Arab world had termed the crown prince the 'leader of peace' due to his peace-building measures between the two brotherly countries. INP

Salik demands national referendum to allow old embassy building US for loan campaign

ISLAMABAD: Convener World Minorities Alliance (WMA) and former Federal Minister for Population Welfare, J Salik on Sunday demanded a national referendum on allowing old embassy building of Pakistan in Washington to start worldwide campaign to write off International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans of the developing countries.

In a statement issued from Washington DC, J Salik said the government was going to sale the old embassy building in Washington DC as it no more enjoyed diplomatic status and was costing hefty amount of taxes in dollars to the national exchequer. Salik said the country was facing serious risk of default and there was need to have an urgent remedy for its economic revival.

He said he was working to initiate global campaign of writing off IMF loans from old Pakistani embassy building that the Pakistani government wants to sell, where the flag of Pakistan was still hoisting. He queried, "Today, if it is sold, will it improve the economic conditions of Pakistan?"

"I strongly request the President, Prime Minister of Pakistan and members of the Federal Cabinet that instead of selling this old embassy, ??it should be given to the World Minorities Alliance as an office for campaign to pay off all the debts of all the poor countries," Salik said. He said still, he was running this campaign in United States of America (USA), and was meeting with influential international personalities, writing letters to the heads of international institutions and organizations. INP

Spring tree plantation campaign begins in Baltistan division

GILGIT: The spring tree plantation campaign has begun in Baltistan division. Forest Minister Raja Zakaria Maqpoon inaugurated the campaign by planting a sapling in Skardu.

The forest department Baltistan division has fixed a target to plant three lac trees in the division. INP

PML-N to start issuing tickets for Punjab elections from Mar 15

ISLAMABAD: The Parliamentary Board of Pakistan Muslim League -Nawaz (PML-N) will start issuing tickets to suitable candidates in Punjab for the provincial election from March 15.

PML-N Punjab President Rana Sanaullah Khan has directed all divisional and district organizations of the party to ensure active interaction with the public.

He said that all regional organizations should ensure the submission of nomination papers of the best,

most competent and people-friendly candidates in provincial constituencies.

He said that candidates aspiring for party tickets should submit their applications to the party office.

He asked all regional organizations to make public communication campaigns more active.

Being a popular party, PML-N is always ready to go to the people, he said, adding that the politics of 'fitna Khan' will be eliminated through the power of the vote. INP



KARACHI: A view of fire at Portway Trade Center, a Commercial building near Nursery at Shahrah-e-Faisal, in Provincial capital.

CDA plants over 150,000 trees in federal capital

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has so far planted more than 150,000 saplings in the ongoing tree plantation campaign in the federal capital and surrounding areas with the help of residents since last two weeks. "The campaign is in full swing on the directives of Chairman CDA Noor ul Amin Mengal and the children were engaged in planting saplings in different parks and free-of-cost fruit trees also distributed among citizens," an official told APP here Sunday. He said that the CDA chief has given a target to officials concerned to plant around 500,000 saplings during the spring season and the plantation drive had already kicked off at the F-9 Park. The official said that the Authority was involving children to make the campaign a success, adding that, while the CDA, the private sector and civil society had an important role to make the tree plantation drive a success. Last year, he said the Environment Wing of the CDA planted 250,000 plants and this year the target has been doubled.

The official said the fruit plants were being distributed among citizens for planting in their homes. Among them are peaches, apricots, pomegranates and other fruit saplings that are compatible with the local climate and environment.

He said that 5,000 plants have been distributed free of cost during the week and about 20,000 plants during the next 15 days. Moreover, on the instructions of the CDA chairman, the authority would try its level best to meet the target of planting 500,000 saplings this year.

The official said the CDA has also decided to increase the city's green cover by planting saplings on billions of rupees of land it recovered from illegal occupants under the anti-encroachment drive. INP

IRSA releases 81,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 81,900 cusecs of water from various rim stations with the inflow of 56,600 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1435.24 feet and was 37.24 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. The water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 21,900 cusecs while outflow as 43,000 cusecs.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1102.80 feet, which was 52.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 17,800 cusecs and 22,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 49,900, 38,000, 30,600 and 7,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 7,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at

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