

# QUETTA VOICE

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## Husband Wife shot dead in Sibi Balochistan



## UoB employees protest against non payment of salaries

# SC to announce all-important verdict on PTI petition challenging delay in Punjab polls Today

The Supreme Court will announce its verdict on the PTI's petition challenging the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to postpone polls to the Punjab Assembly till Oct 8 on Tuesday (tomorrow).

A three-member bench — comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar — reserved the judgment today after hearing all the parties, including the government, the PTI, the ECP and others. However, it did not hear the counsels of the coalition parties.



### Govt submits "concise statement" requesting formation of full court

CJP says harmony among judges crucial for top court, while judicial proceedings are made public, consultations among judges considered internal matters.

Court stops PPP, PML-N lawyers from presenting arguments on the basis of the coalition government expressing no-confidence in the bench hearing the case.

PTI says govt failed to present constitutional argument for delaying polls.

The hearings in the case, which lasted over a week, witnessed high drama after two

judges of the original five-member bench — Justices Jamal Khan Mandokhail and Aminuddin Khan — recused themselves from hearing the case. Thereafter, the CJP constituted a bench comprising himself, Justice Ahsan and Justice Akhtar to proceed with the PTI petition.

Earlier today, the government submitted a statement through Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Awan, requesting the formation of a full court to hear the case. It also sought the dismissal of the PTI petition in the light of what it interpreted as a "4-3" order issued by the apex court on March 1.

The apex court, had in a 3-2 verdict, ruled on March 1 that

elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab — both of which have been under caretaker governments since the provincial assemblies were dissolved in January — should be held within 90 days.

The government, however, had disputed with the court directions, calling the verdict 4-3 instead after Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail and Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah — who were among the four judges who had written additional notes in the Feb 23 order — raised objections on the constitution of the bench as well as the invocation of the apex court's suo motu jurisdiction by the chief justice.

However, the CJP rejected the government's request for a

full court and instead suggested that a larger bench could be sought.

During the hearing today, the secretaries of the finance and defence ministries briefed the court and submitted their respective reports.

### 'Government cannot boycott proceedings'

AGP Awan, ECP lawyers Irfan Qadir and Sajeeb Swati, PTI lawyer Ali Zafar, and PPP counsel Farooq H. Naek were present in the courtroom as the hearing commenced today.

The secretaries of finance

and interior ministries were also in attendance.

At the outset of the hearing, Naek came to the rostrum. Justice Bandial asked the lawyer if PPP had ended its boycott against the court hearing to which the latter replied that he had not boycotted the proceedings.

"How can you boycott [the hearing] on one side and also attend the hearing on the other hand," Justice Akhtar wondered. "For the last 48 hours, the media has been saying that political parties have expressed no confidence in the bench."

"How will you present your arguments if you don't have confidence in us?" the judge asked and then stated that the court would only hear Naek if he withdrew the statement — jointly issued by coalition leaders last week expressing "complete no-confidence" in the bench.

### 'Only court has authority to delay polls'

Subsequently, AGP Awan began presenting his arguments. The lawyer highlighted that the PTI petition was based on the SC's March 1 verdict, in which the apex court had instructed the president to select a date for elections in Punjab and the governor to pick a date for polls in KP. "But the KP governor never selected a date until the petition was filed," he pointed out. "The question is how can the ECP give the date of Oct 8 for polls," the CJP said here. Web Desk

# Hirak bridge construction to be completed by April 15: DS Railway

**Mir Salam Jogeza**

QUETTA: The construction of the ancient Hirak bridge located in the rugged mountains of Bolan would be completed by April 15. This was revealed by the



Divisional Superintendent (DS) of Railways, Fareed Ahmed while talking to reporters.

"Direct train service from Balochistan to the rest of the country would be restored very soon", Mr. Ahmed said. The process of reconstruction of the Hirak bridge would be completed by April 15 this month. "Our technical team made hectic efforts to ensure timely reconstruction of the bridge", the DS Railway mentioned.

2022. The collapse of the ancient bridge built by English Rulers in the 1880s caused the suspension of train service between Balochistan and other parts of the country. Passengers suffered a lot because of the collapse of the British-built bridge in the Bolan district of Balochistan. The Pakistan Railways was operating train service from Mach to the rest of the country to facilitate the passengers.

# UoB employees protest against non payment of salaries

**Our Reporter**

QUETTA: Employees and faculty members of the University of Balochistan (UoB) staged a protest demonstration against the non-payment of salaries on Monday. The employees staged a protest demonstration inside the university and demanded immediate payment of salaries.



### Teaching Staff and faculty members of Law college protesting

The protesters raised slogans in favor of ending the financial crisis of the university and the payment of salaries. They criticized the provincial government and raised slogans to provide the employees with the right to live.

### Boycott will continue till a solution to the issue: Kaleem Bareech

Employees demanded immediate resolution of the financial crisis of UoB. The Joint Action Committee boycotted teaching and administrative affairs against the financial crisis in the institution. Classes, offices, and transport were also closed at Balochistan University and adjacent sub-campuses were under the boycott.

It should be noted that yesterday the Joint Action Committee of UoB announced a boycott of all services against the financial crisis. On this occasion, the leader of the Joint Action Committee, Professor Kaleem Bareech said that

### Law College closed as a result of non-payment of salaries

It is also noteworthy that Law College has also been closed due to non-payment of salaries for the last two months. Balochistan University of Information Technology Engineering and Management Sciences (BUIITEMS) lecturers and faculty members staged a protest against the non-payment of salaries. The university's faculty took to grounds demanding payment of their salaries. There is too much inflation and we can not meet our basic needs due to no salaries from the university, a faculty member of BUIITEMS stated.

"Balochistan University employees have not been paid for the last two months". The boycott will continue until the end of the financial crisis and the payment of salaries.

# PM Shehbaz takes exception to CJP's remarks during SC hearing on Punjab polls

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday took exception to remarks made by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial during the Supreme Court hearing on the postponement of polls in Punjab. For the past week, the top court has been hearing the PTI's petition against the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to postpone polls to the Punjab Assembly till October 8. Earlier today, the court reserved its verdict in the case. During the hearing conducted on March 31, the CJP had made the following remarks: "Today, when you go to parliament, you find people addressing the parliament who were till yesterday in captivity, imprisoned, declared trait-



tors. They are now talking over there, and being respected because they are representatives of the people."

The remarks had come a day after a bill aimed at clipping powers of the CJP and giving the right to appeal in all suo motu cases with retrospective effect sailed through the Senate without being sent to the relevant standing committee. The bill, titled the "Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill 2023", seeks to take away the discretionary powers of the CJP to take suo motu notice, form benches and allocate cases in an individual capacity. Addressing the CJP's remarks on the floor of the National Assembly, the premier said that Pakistan's history was rife with examples of individuals serving prison sentences for having a particular stance or point of view. Web Desk

# Husband Wife shot dead in Sibi Balochistan

**Staff Reporter**

Unknown armed accused entered a house in the Sibi area of Balochistan and left two people shot dead. According to the details, this incident took place on the WAPDA road of Sibi where armed men shot dead Nasir Maqsood and his wife. Police rushed to the spot of the incident to start an investigation into the incident. The culprits were successful in



escaping from the s were handed over to their heirs after the necessary medical procedures.

# CPDI urges CM Balochistan to form information commission

**News Desk**

QUETTA: The Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) has called upon the Chief Minister of Balochistan to appoint members of the Balochistan Information Commission, as required by the Balochistan Right to Information Act, 2021.

The CPDI has emphasized that the establishment of the Information Commission is critical for promoting transparency and accountability in the government.

The Balochistan Right to Information Act was passed by the Provincial Assembly on February 1, 2021, and received the assent of the Governor of Balochistan on February 15, 2021. The Act mandates the Balochistan government to appoint members of the Balochistan Information Commission within 180 days of the commencement of the Act under Section 18(1).

### Two years on, the government is yet to establish an information commission

However, despite this legal obligation, it has been more than two years since the passage of this Act, and members of the Balochistan Information



Commission have not been appointed. This delay is a violation of the law and undermines the purpose of the Balochistan Right to Information Act.

### CPDI Chief writes a letter to the CM Balochistan

In a letter addressed to the Chief Minister of Balochistan, the Executive Director of CPDI, Mukhtar Ahmed Ali, highlighted the importance of access to information for promoting good governance, reducing corruption, and ensuring accountability in public institutions.

CPDI urged the Chief Minister to take immediate action to establish the Balochistan Information Commission and fulfill the government's obligations under the Balochistan Right to Information Act, 2021.

Mukhtar Ahmed Ali further stated that Balochistan is the only province where the Information Commission has not been established yet, depriving citizens of their right to information.

He emphasized that access to information is a fundamental right enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan, and the establishment of the Balochistan Information Commission is crucial for protecting this right.

CPDI calls on the government of Balochistan to take urgent action and appoint members of the Balochistan Information Commission to ensure transparency and accountability in the government.

## QUETTA VOICE

Editor Asim Khan

## Increasing ratio of suicides in Balochistan

In Balochistan, the ratio of suicides continues to increase especially among the women segment of society at an alarming level. Statistics shared by a little-known Paank, a non-governmental organization about the alarming increase in the number of suicide cases should be an eye-opener for policymakers.

The organization reports 56 suicide cases most of them women during the last three months in Balochistan. Last year, 80 suicide cases were reported across Balochistan. The cases must be higher than what is being quoted by the NGO since most of the cases go unnoticed in rural Balochistan because of social and tribal taboos.

Mental stress, social-tribal taboos, unemployment and poverty main reasons behind the increasing suicides ratio.

Mental stress, social-tribal taboos, unemployment and poverty appeared to be the underlying reasons behind the increasing ratio of suicides. And this phenomenon is not confined to Balochistan rather it is an issue faced by different parts of the globe.

Especially, frequent cases of suicides have been reported on social media from Balochistan's Mekan division. A growing number of cases in Mekan, which is considered to be the intellectual capital of Balochistan are disturbing. WHO defines mental health as a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stress of life.

The World Health Organisation defines mental health as a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well, and contribute to the community. Mental health is a basic human right, but in the non-urban social setup in Balochistan, mental health issues that include mental disorders, psychosocial disabilities as well as the risk of self-harm, are generally ignored and not given the right level of importance.

In most cases, people commit suicide due to stress and depression to get rid of worldly issues. There have been no proper health institutions to provide counseling to mentally challenged people.

Physiatry institutes should be established on the district level.

The health department established a psychiatry institute in the Bolan Medical Complex Hospital (BMCH) after the hectic efforts of well-known psychiatrist Dr. Ghulam Rasool. However, the institution needs more manpower and facilities to treat mentally ill people. Such institutes need to be established on district levels to make sure timely medical treatment/counseling of mentally challenged people.

It is ironic of fate that mental disorder/stress is hardly considered an illness in our society. People take it very lightly and easily and prefer to avoid psychiatrists. An awareness program should be launched by the Balochistan government to create awareness among the people about mental disorders and other depression issues.

## Withering Public Institutions

Asghar Harifal



The beleaguered public offices have come under a new wave of employee associations broadening the turf war.

The beleaguered public offices have come under a new wave of employee associations broadening the turf war. The new rallying point is to assert the right for the coveted packages in wages given to the provincial secretariat. Guided by the tools employed by secretariat employees to secure bloated wages in comparison with the attached department, the number of associations has multiplied and the pre-existing ones have coalesced into a broader alliance.

They have further asserted to arrogate the positions of head of attached departments claimed by provincial secretariat employees. A few days back Balochistan Secretariat Employees Association announced its withdrawal from a grand

alliance of other employees' associations. The alliance was formed to put pressure on the government for demands they all shared, which included the rise in pay and allowances and to address the discrepancies.

## A growing number of employees adding public grievances

The growing number of employee associations, in the name of their welfare, underscores the growing utility of forming pressure groups to protract spheres of influence. Taking a cue from the past, the growing trend will bring serious pressure on the frail institutional framework adding to public grievances.

One of the phenomena, engendered by growing pressure groups in the public, is written writ large that institutions have exponentially grown in size, while at the same time turned into pathetically ossified entities, foretelling their imminent fall. The eventuality

will not only bring about suffering for all employees associated with these institutions but it will also add to the flight of the public at large. The bloated oversize of public departments in association with their age-old calcified nature has turned them into a self-serving superstructure and lost relevance to the common man.

## A department created for the general public turned into a service provider for employees only

A department created for the service of the general public has turned into a service provider for their respective employees. All the offices at district, divisional or provincial levels have more affairs related to employees than that of the ones for whose welfare the same are created. The resources placed at the disposal of these institutions with the aim to alleviate the issues of citizens, are arrogated to themselves and have turned into a

bone of contention for members of the institutions. Speaking of personal experience of a department, with district and divisional level offices, it was noted that more than 90% of the correspondence made with that office was related to the personal affairs of the employees working in that department. It is the case with every public sector institution. Their raison d'être is service unto self.

## Element of powers keep their opponents at bay

The element of powers among employees' associations also include larger size; the larger the size, the more nuisance value to keep the opponent at bay. At the provincial secretariat with the aim to enlarge its own size decades-old clerical staff positions are exponentially expanded leading to a 'one size fits all' structure. Despite specialization in every field turning into a norm, the public sector is stuck in an age-old management model. The information technology devel-

opment has turned the public sector structure into an obsolete entity. The manpower and the machine have found no compatibility. The only change in the last 75 years is that number of positions has shifted from one service group to another. Mutual bargaining among the service groups is termed reform in the system. A third-body assessment guided only by the public interest has never taken place.

The resistance to change has not only left the public sector unworkable, the private sector has overtaken it in the market. When private sector services are required from the market, the public sector functionaries are found totally clueless about the trend in the market. Resolutely, the public sector is uniformly characterized by sub-standard quality. The public sector has still not parted from the role, long performed by it but is now overtaken by the private sector with better performance. A role swap from a player to a regulator has still not taken place. The role of regulator, which should have been taken by the public sector, is distasteful for it.

The author is a serving Secretary for Archives and Culture

## The economy of space

By Yasir Hussain

Owing to phenomenal advancements in communication technology and artificial intelligence (AI), space has become yet another frontier of human exploration. While the growing weaponization of space has become an issue of concern, reliance on space-based technology for commercial purposes has also increased.

The commercialization of space has created new opportunities for businesses - from launching satellites to mining asteroids and other celestial bodies for valuable resources. The benefits of space exploration and its uses are manifold, and global powers are investing in this field to explore its potential for scientific and economic advancement.

According to a report by the Space Foundation, the global space industry generated revenues over \$469 billion in 2021. With its skilled workforce and expertise in science and technology, Pakistan is gradually making efforts to explore this dimension. With increasing private investment in space-tech, startup technologies to ease movement and communications, it is high time Pakistan prioritized investment in the space industry.

Pakistan was among the first 10 countries to start a space programme in 1961 under the leader-

ship of the late Nobel Laureate Dr. Abdus Salam, as chairperson of the Space Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco). The progress in harnessing space technology has however been rather slow. Much of the criticism goes to the politico-economic uncertainties and periodic financial crunches that Suparco had to face soon after the successful launch of the satellite 'Rehbar-1' on June 7, 1962. However, in an increasingly fragile global environment where the space arena remains lawless, Pakistan can no longer remain oblivious to the expanding commercial space activity.

Space exploration can lead to significant advancements in Pakistan's science and technology. Pakistan is both a target and victim of climate change. Its economy has incurred billions of losses due to climate-induced disasters such as floods, droughts, and earthquakes. Space-based technologies such as remote sensing and satellite imagery can be used to improve disaster management in Pakistan. The country is vulnerable to a range of natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and droughts. Space-based technologies can help in early warning, monitoring, and assessment of these disasters. For example, satellite imagery is also helpful in providing crucial

information for disaster preparedness. Pakistan is already using space-based technologies to monitor and manage its water resources and assess water quality. It can assist to develop better water management strategies and ensure sustainable use of water resources. Agriculture is the backbone of Pakistan's economy, employing over 42.3 per cent of the country's labour force and it contributes 18.9 per cent to GDP. The use of space-based technologies such as remote sensing is helpful in improving agricultural productivity in the country.

Satellite data, therefore, can be applied to monitor better crop health, estimate crop yield, and assess soil moisture. Likewise, Pakistan can also use space-based technologies to monitor its forests and wildlife by employing a combination of remote sensing and satellite imagery. These technologies can help identify areas that need protection, monitoring changes in land use, and planning measures to ensure the long-term survival of forests and wildlife populations.

As per some reports by USAID, 50-75 per cent of all court cases in Pakistan are related to land disputes. Due to the increasing housing demand and a rising

middle-class population, the real-estate business is experiencing significant growth. On average, a single land-related dispute takes 4-10 years to resolve. Land-related issues are further skyrocketing with an increasing number of housing societies and commercialization of lands across Pakistan. To address these disputes and to regulate the development of new housing schemes and societies, satellite imagery can help.

Satellite imagery can be used to create accurate maps of land boundaries and land use, which can further help identify discrepancies in land ownership and usage. In short, the Federal Board of Revenue can greatly benefit from commercialization of space. Satellite imagery can also be helpful in monitoring changes in land use over time, such as the conversion of agricultural land to urban development. This can help identify violations of land-use regulations and prevent disputes from arising. In this regard, satellite imagery can provide visual evidence of the state of the land, which can be used in legal proceedings to support claims of ownership or land use.

Pakistan can not afford to stay idle in the face of the increasing commercialization of space by both developed and developing states.

The space economy - a term which refers to resources that create value and benefits to human beings while exploring, researching, understanding, managing, and utilizing space - is transforming lives on earth. A Space Foundation report has found that there has been a massive increase in state-backed investment in space projects around the world. In 2021, there was a 19 per cent jump in overall government spending on military and civilian space programmes. India raised spending by 36 per cent, China invested 23 per cent more and the US pumped another 18 per cent in space ventures. This massive investment in space tech is due to the fact that such investment has improved the quality of life of people across the globe. There is no other way than for Pakistan to set its priorities in outer space and allocate resources accordingly for the commercialization of its space programme. There's enormous potential for Pakistan in commercialization of its space programme. The commercialization of space can not only create job opportunities for Pakistani scientists, engineers, and technicians but also attract foreign investment, providing a much-needed boost to the country's economy.

Five, get rid of an open capital account. Countries like China with \$3 trillion reserves have not opened their capital accounts. Why has Pakistan kept the capital account open for so long? Open accounts limit domestic policy autonomy and can deeply disrupt domestic production arrangements.

A comprehensive study about trade and financial liberalization for the 2014 Global Human Development Report concluded that 'opening up' benefits developing countries only when their human capabilities are high. Later studies have reconfirmed this essential point. Even in the EU accession process, less advanced countries like Romania and Bulgaria have tried to argue for selective capital controls.

There has been some talk in Pakistan about a one per cent economy. But a deeper concern is about a Pakistani elite, which feels as global as any, able to travel and co-exist in UK, US and Dubai spaces. Indeed, many Pakistani business operators tend to have a business base overseas as well. Even experienced Pakistani economists have tended to consider western practices in looking at current policies, rather than critically examining what has worked in other developing countries and applying those lessons to Pakistan. For a 220 million country we appear to be driven by the needs and values of a few million people at the most.

Six, fiscal space: It goes without saying: eliminate all the special SROs, and the associated giveaways (unearned incomes or rents). The last National Human Development Report (for Pakistan) estimated an annual cost of \$70 billion dollars in these legal giveaways to the elites, which contrasts with half that estimated amount for corruption. Just stop!

Rethink the centre-province fiscal arrangements, set 'checkable' development standards for expenditures which may also minimize political largesse, and require provinces to raise their own tax revenues as matching funds. It could well be, as has been argued elsewhere, that these steps may not be enough and that a deeper fiscal surgery is now required. There is talk of reducing non-combat military expenditures. What needs to be kept in mind in this regard is that only the government in consultation with the nation's military has the sovereign right to determine the details regarding the financial operational capability of its forces. Not the IMF.

Many innovations are possible. Take the example of Ethiopia, a non-oil producer, which set up a \$150 billion sovereign wealth fund, seeking investment for state-owned enterprises and assets as the government pushes ahead with its privatization initia-

## Great debates

By Murtaza Solangi

We have finally entered the most trying times of our history. Economic meltdown with no sign of relief, extreme political polarization and instability combined with rising terrorism - are all on full display.

There is also pressure on various stakeholders after the failed Imran project, and they are sandwiched between attacks from the PTI of Imran Khan and the dissenting voices from the current coalition. Governance is breaking down, ungoverned spaces are popping up all over the country, and the people are fast losing hope. Moral degeneration and the crime rate are on the rise due to despondency. And the bigotry nurtured over the decades has become an uncontrolled monster manifesting itself in the most ugly incidents like the one in Nankana Sahib recently. The great disorder under the sun asks for great leadership. Do we have it? Can we rise up? Can we sail through these choppy waters? Questions galore.

In terms of economic hardships, this probably is the worst time in the three quarters of a century of Pakistan. The country today looks friendless in the comity of nations thanks to the policies of our power elite. We might avoid a proverbial default after agreeing to the most shameful conditions put up by the IMF, but our problems are not going away even after the IMF

programme goes through.

Can we agree on an economic reform agenda to avoid international humiliation and put our country on the path of economic resurgence? We are bordered with the markets of around three billion people to our north and the east. Can we transform our economy to cater to the market needs of just those two neighbours as well as restructure our economy to be a useful part of the global value chain?

These are questions of our survival. Can we create a national consensus on these issues and issue a national economic charter across party lines and commit to our people as the way forward after the elections? The same old same old won't work. In order to reach the consensus, a series of great debates on mainstream and social media are needed. Will our media find time for these useful debates about the very future of our people or continue to get bogged down with silly shouting matches of 'he said he said'?

A cursory look at world history tells us that nations have experienced the worst times of their history including wars and great depression before but only countries with wise leadership and foresight have sailed through. During these depressing times, people with resources to survive have to help other people. That will help a country from going down a spiral of anarchy. People around the world have stood with their people in distress.

So can we. Will we? Will our power elites open their wallets and hearts to help the people of their own country to survive this troubling time?

We have seen countries disappear from the world map despite the mighty military power they used to have. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia don't exist today. This happens also when religious, linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity is not treated as a strength. The same diversity becomes your death warrant if you don't appreciate and celebrate it.

Pakistan continues to develop the population time bomb with every passing day. With no resources available to develop human resources, we continue piling up large crowds of ignorant, unskilled and unhealthy people. Combine this with the historic nurturing of bigotry and religious intolerance, and we are fast becoming a global nuisance.

The Pakistan passport today has become one of the most undesirable documents. We need a national consensus on population control as well as the state's equal opportunity to people of all faiths and no preferential treatment to any religious group. That is what Jinnah preached on August 11, 1947 while addressing the constituent assembly. Can we educate our people about that in our congregations, homes and other places? Will our media become a source of enlightenment and promote.

## To survive and prosper

Dr Akmal Hussain &amp; Dr Khalid Malik

That Pakistan is in a profound economic and political crisis is no longer in dispute. Most observers and economists are united in that opinion. What to do about it is less clear. The Chinese character for risk is closely related to opportunity, which is more accurately defined as a 'crucial point when something begins to change'.

Will it? We hope so. This article is more about 'what' needs to change.

There are two distinct thoughts about the current economic crisis. One: adjust now, stabilize the economy and then restart the growth process. Let us call this the traditional view. This thinking underlines the IMF programme: let the exchange rate be determined by market forces, curtail expenditures, increase taxes and so on. Each time this logic has been followed, the subsequent growth spurt hits the foreign exchange barrier with the under-performing export sector seen as the basic culprit. Technical discussions about export subsidies being inefficient, and/or the need to revamp the export sector, especially textiles.

The second approach, less successful of late, is to rely on the largesse of friends - China, UAE and Saudi Arabia. And, in earlier days, the USA. The thinking being that the country can scrape through without major structural changes in the Pakistan economy or in the ability of the ruling elite to maintain their global lifestyles.

The government has tried hard to pursue a mix of the two strategies, but it has become abundantly clear that the IMF option is the only option left.

Will that be enough? Will that lay the base for future prosperity? Will that shift the economy and society in 'putting people first'?

A quick review of successful development experiences, including South Korea and China, highlight some deeper more critical factors than just macroeconomic issues of balanced budgets and higher tax-to-GDP ratios. These include: a determined long-term policy perspective since development is all about transforming society and the economy; enhancing capabilities, by investing in people; and, by recognizing that social policy is as important as economic policy in this transformation.

One, establish (and adequately fund) effective public education and health systems. No

country, bar none, has succeeded in developing without a functioning public education system.

In a land with little social protection, pursuing universal health coverage with a focus on the poor is the right step to take now.

There are structural and funding issues which need to be urgently addressed for both subjects. Current income support programmes for instance not only need to be substantially enhanced but have to be conditioned on enhancing capabilities.

Two, fix the agricultural sector. First, tax agricultural income, especially since almost 70 per cent of the land is in the hands of large and medium farmers.

It is a myth (and little evidence) to argue that large farms are more productive than small farms. A cursory look at why East Punjab has done so much better than West Punjab shows that structural changes (land reforms) and incentives (and more educated next generation farmers) are at the heart of the differences.

If 'putting people first' is our defining slogan, then it is time to support small farmers (defined as less than 7.5 acres) which form 78 per cent of farmers and 32 per cent of total farm area. Start by reallocating state land to poor farmers, with strong technical support for seeds, fertilizer, and advice.

Initiate and scale up a Rural Employment Guarantee programme, enshrining the core idea of employment as a basic right. And, through this, provide a necessary injection of purchasing power into the rural economy, especially for the landless and those affected by the floods.

Three, restructure the export sector. Without getting into a long debate about subsidies, set up a five-year transition plan on a subsidy draw-down, with an agreed structural transition and diversification towards high value added, knowledge intensive exports.

But results are likely to take time. Four, remittances: Imagine a Pakistan economy without any remittances. The system needs to adjust and organize better investment grade products for overseas Pakistanis. Right now, the incentives are mostly about investing in real estate.

Many innovations are possible. Take the example of Ethiopia, a non-oil producer, which set up a \$150 billion sovereign wealth fund, seeking investment for state-owned enterprises and assets as the government pushes ahead with its privatization initia-

## Analyzing IKnomics

By Kaiser Bengali

Imran Khan has forwarded a 10-point agenda to steer the economy out of the existential crisis that Pakistan faces. This is welcome, since the government appears to be clueless on the steps required to address the issues - other than to seek more loans from all and sundry.

The plan contains three strands: curtailing the current account deficit, increasing the tax net to raise revenues, and promoting development in various socio-economic sectors. An assessment is in order.

The first part revolves around 'bringing in dollars', which includes motivating overseas Pakistanis to invest in the country, facilitating exports and promoting tourism. The second part is just that: 'increasing the tax net to generate revenue'. And the third part covers development of IT, tourism and mining, raising agricultural productivity, restructuring state-owned enterprises, and providing the youth with interest-free loans to take business initiatives.

The above roster appears to be an offhand attempt to throw in an assortment of ideas and call it a plan. There has not been a coherent development plan for over 40 years now; however, the PTI economic management has been even more garbled and

the present 'plan' more unfocused. IKnomics, like Daronomics, has proved to be a bad dose of quackery in the past and threatens to continue to be so in the future as well. Pious pontification cannot be a substitute for sound policy management.

The pre-2018 expectation of rich overseas Pakistanis contributing 1,000 dollars, supposedly motivated by Imran Khan's self-professed honesty, to overcome the debt burden never materialized. And the magic does not appear to occur again. Investments in the Middle East real-estate market are hard-nosed business decisions. Why anyone would invest their hard-earned money in a sinking economy is a moot point. In any case, Pakistanis have been burned earlier by the 'garz utour, mulk sawaro' slogan of the Nawaz Sharif days in the 1990s.

Exports will also not increase by coddling exporters with offers of VIP treatment. That has been the thrust to date: grant incentives. However, it is industry that produces the surplus for export. The macroeconomic policy framework has to encourage investment and growth in industry for it to produce quality goods at internationally competitive prices. Such a framework has eroded over the last 40 years and, as a result, investible funds are flowing into non-productive

speculative investments in real estate and stock markets. The PTI's policies during its tenure actually reinforced the macroeconomic distortions. The promise of tourism is again just an oft-repeated pious wish. Tourists do not go anywhere merely to stand and admire the view, howsoever picturesque. The basic infrastructure and facilities that international tourism demands do not exist, and public hygiene standards are appalling. More seriously, the regular dose of terror attacks, honour killings, forced conversions, etc that Pakistan spews forth for the international media cannot serve as a welcome mat for tourists.

The part about increasing the tax net to enhance revenues is again just a repeat of the hackneyed position that international creditors and donors have been churning out. The FBR has, over the last three decades, resorted to the harshest of measures to squeeze revenues out of a stagnant economy and more of the same is unlikely to deliver. What is required is reduction of non-debt current expenditure, including non-combat defence expenditure. Part of the resultant fiscal savings should be diverted to retire part of the outstanding debt to reduce the annual debt servicing burden. Does the PTI have the understanding or the courage to posit the problem in this context?

## Scientists records deepest ever fish off Japan

ISLAMABAD: Scientists have recorded videos of a fish swimming at an extraordinary depth in the ocean, making it the deepest observation of this nature that has ever been made off Japan waters.

The species - a type of snailfish of the genus *Pseudoliparis* - was filmed swimming at 8,336m (27,349ft).

It was filmed by an autonomous "lander" dropped into the Izu-Ogasawara Trench, south of Japan.

The lead scientist said the snailfish could be at, or very close to, the maximum depth any fish can

survive. The previous deepest fish observation was made at 8,178m, further south in the Pacific in the Mariana Trench. This discovery therefore beats the depth record by 158m.

"If this record is broken, it would only be by minute increments, potentially by just a few metres," Prof Alan Jamieson told BBC News.

The University of Western Australia deep-sea scientist made a prediction 10 years ago that fish would likely be found as deep as 8,200m to 8,400m. A decade of investigations around the

globe has confirmed this. The juvenile *Pseudoliparis* was filmed by a camera system attached to a weighted frame released from over the side of a ship, the DSSV Pressure Drop. Bait was added to the frame to attract sea life.

Although a specimen was not caught to fully identify its species type, several fish were trapped slightly higher up in the water column in the near-by Japan Trench at a depth of 8,022m.

These, again, were snailfish, *Pseudoliparis belyaevi*, and set a record for the deepest fish ever caught. INP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs Parliamentary Party Meeting.

## GlaxoSmithKline Pakistan's profits fall in CY22: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: GlaxoSmithKline Pakistan Limited's revenue from sales increased by 14% to Rs41.84 billion in the calendar year 2022 from Rs36.6 billion in 2021.

However, the company's gross profit decreased by 25% to Rs7.3 billion in CY22 from Rs9.7 billion recorded in CY21. The company's net profit decreased 54% to Rs2.5 million in 2022 from Rs5.4 million in the previous year, reports WealthPK.

Performance in 2021: During the year 2021, the company's gross sales went up to Rs36.66 billion from Rs35.1 billion in CY20, posting an increase of 4% year-on-year.

The gross profit for CY21 stood at Rs9.7 billion, 29% up from Rs7.5 billion in CY20. The profit-before-tax increased from Rs4.9 billion in CY20 to Rs7.4 billion in CY21.

The after-tax profit also increased from Rs3.37 billion in CY20 to Rs5.35 billion in FY21, posting a growth of 59% on a year-on-year basis. In CY20, the company's EPS was Rs10.60, which increased to Rs16.81 in CY21.

About the company: GlaxoSmithKline Pakistan is a limited liability company engaged in the manufacturing and marketing of research-based ethical specialties and pharmaceutical products. The company

is a subsidiary of SR One International BV, which is incorporated in the Netherlands, whereas its ultimate parent company is GlaxoSmithKline PLC, UK (GSK PLC).

However, the company's gross profit decreased by 25% to Rs7.3 billion in CY22 from Rs9.7 billion recorded in CY21. The company's net profit decreased 54% to Rs2.5 million in 2022 from Rs5.4 million in the previous year, reports WealthPK.

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## 34th National Games, 2023 Sports Conference" held under the aegis of OIY

QUETTA: 34th National Games 2023 Conference demanded of the authorities to conduct

demands were made in the 34th National Games, 2023 Sports Conference" held under the aegis of

Vice President Balochistan Darts Association, Taj Agha, President, Balochistan



34th National Games through sports associations registered with Balochistan Sports Board, reconstitute the management committee formed for conducting 34th National Games, utilise the services of provincial coach and district coach for arranging the national games, conduct inquiry against the police personnel involved in implicating Bashir Khan son of Muhammad Zarif, boxing player, in an alleged bogus case and get Director General, Balochistan Sports Board transferred. These

Organization of Islamic Youth (OIY) at Quetta Press Conference here on Monday. Conference was addressed by Hammad Khan Kakar, President, OIY, Muhammad Hadi Raheemi, Senior Vice President, Balochistan B o d y b u i l d i n g Association, Jan-e-Alam, Secretary General, Balochistan Cycling Association, Commander Fazel Nurzai, President, Balochistan Mue Thae Kick Boxing Association, Syed Bilal Agha, Senior Associate Secretary, Balochistan Archery Association, Asrar Khan,

Off Road Riders Association, Mehboob Ahmed Nurzai, Sian Umer Khan Achakzai, Rehmatullah, President, Balochistan, Ju Jitsu Association and others. Dr. Syed Ab ul Hassan Meri, Director General, Khana-e-Farhang, Islamic Republic of Iran also attended the conference. Add ressing the conference, he said that arranging sporting events amongst the players of Pakistan and Iran would be beneficial for bringing people of both the countries closer to each other. PR



QUETTA: People buying vegetable at under Benazir flyover.

## Arms seized at Dajjal post were destined to Zaman Park: DPO

BHAKKAR: DPO Bhakkar on Monday said that the arms seized at Dajjal check post were destined to Zaman Park.

District Police Officer Mohammad Naveed said that the accused were intending to shift the arms to Lahore in the name of a private security company.

"The security company provided licenses of 13 rifles, all of which were issued by the government of Balochistan," police chief said. "A letter has been written to the home department for verification of these licenses," he further said.

However, licenses of nine rifles were not provided, he said. "Arrested accused Ijaz has confessed that the unlicensed arms were destined to Zaman Park," DPO said. "Accused Ijaz also con-

fessed that the arms were kept at the place of Ali Ameen Gandapur," he added.

PTI leader Ali Ameen Gandapur caused disturbance at Dajjal check post of Bhakkar district, police earlier said.

The police tried to stop former federal minister Ali Ameen Gandapur's car, who was traveling to Dera Ismail Khan, accompanied with others, at the check post, officials said. "He infuriated, confronted with policemen and resorted to firing," policemen said.

"The cars in the convoy of Gandapur were not stopped and escaped from the scene after causing an affray," according to police officials.

"There were six to seven vehicles in Gandapur's convoy," DPO Bhakkar said. "The

convoy resorted to resistance when the police signalled them to halt at the check post," district police officer said.

"It is being apprehended that the vehicles in the convoy were carrying some illegal items," DPO Bhakkar said.

Bhakkar Police later nominated five persons including Ali Ameen Gandapur and 33 unknown accused in Dajjal check post rioting case. The accused have been booked under terrorism act and other charges.

Police has arrested four accused of rioting namely, Shakeel Haider, Altaf, Aftab and Naik Mohammad, DPO Mohammad Naveed has said.

"Arms and drugs have been recovered from the arrested persons," DPO Bhakkar said. INP

## ACE initiates graft probe against Yasmin Rashid

LAHORE: The Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) on Monday initiated a probe against former Punjab health minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Dr Yasmin Rashid on corruption charges of billions of rupees at Punjab Institute of Cardiology (PIC) and summoned her on April 4 at 12 noon.

Yasmin Rashid is accused of allegedly taking bribes in parking, canteen and cleaning contracts.

Meanwhile, the ACE has also called AMS store pharmacy Dr Masood Nawaz along with Dr Yasmin Rashid.

Executive Director of PIC Dr Bilal Mohiuddin, MS Dr Muhammad Tehsin, and AMS Purchase Dr Shakeel were also summoned by the ACE in the same case.

It has been alleged that by purchasing stents at exorbitant rates during the current fiscal year, the central purchase across Punjab caused a

loss of more than one billion rupees to the public treasury.

There is also an allegation of taking huge commissions by purchasing stents in violation of PPRA rules during this fiscal year.

The equipment used in the bypass operation is also alleged to be bought at exorbitant prices. The PIC administration is also accused of stealing items worth billions of rupees from the PIC store, including cardiac batteries. INP

## ATC extend judicial remand of PTI workers in vandalism case

LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Monday extended the judicial remand of 10 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers in a case pertaining to vandalism at Imran Khan's Zaman Park residence.

As per details, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf workers were presented before the anti-terrorism court. Upon hearing the argument the court extended the judicial remand for 14 days. The court also summoned the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) head along with the report on the next hearing.

Earlier, an Anti-terrorism Court sent 98 arrested workers of PTI on 14 days' judicial remand to jail in Zaman Park rioting case.

The court sent the accused to jail for identification parade. Police had arrested 98 PTI workers under the charges of rioting, violence against police and burning cars and other vehicles.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Punjab police broke into Imran Khan's residence. The police arrested more than 13 PTI workers in the anti-encroachment operation at Zaman Park Lahore and one police constable got injured in retaliation from the PTI workers. INP

## NAB summoned in court over notices to Imran Khan, Bushra Bibi

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday summoned the National Accountability Court (NAB) over notices to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in the Toshakhana case.

As per details, the court announced the verdict reserved over the NAB notices in Toshakhana case. Bushra Bibi, the wife of former prime minister Imran Khan earlier challenged the NAB call-up notices in Islamabad High Court (IHC) in the Toshakhana case.

The plea stated that the court should declare the NAB call-up notices on February 17 and March 16, illegal and the inquiry should be barred from making changes in the investigation till the final verdict.

NAB had summoned Bushra Bibi, the wife of former prime minister Imran Khan on March 21 in the Toshakhana case. The anti-graft body had summoned Imran Khan case on March 9. INP

## Hybrid wheat varieties a solution to impending food shortage: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Wheat plays a significant role in the country's economy. However, in

recent years, the crop production has been declining, which might INP

NOTICE INVITING TENDER		
The Executive Engineer, E&M (Workshop) Division Quetta Invites Bids From Eligible Bidders For Execution Of Following Works For The Year 2022-23 Based On Composite Schedule Rates 2018 On Percentage Rates. Earnest Money 2% in Shape of Call Deposit, Tender Fee Rs. 2000/- and Time limit 12 Months for each work.		
S.No.	Name of work	E/CoSt.
1	CONSTRUCTION/IMPROVEMENT OF B/T ROAD AT KILLI SHAIKHAN, QUETTA PSDP No. 918 (Z2022.1425) TSE-222304288823	14.857 M
2	CONST OF BT ROAD AT PANCHPAINI MOHALLAH MALIK ZAFAR QUETTA. PSDP No. 952 (Z2022.1626) TSE-222304288833	11.886 M
3	CONST OF TUFF TILL B/T ROAD & SWERAGE SYSTEM AT KILLI NUR MARRI ABAD TAKHTANI BYPASS NASHRULLAH MENGAL TOWN, KILLI GULSHAN HAYAT CHAKI SHAHWANI QUETTA. PSDP No. 1393 (Z2022.3605) TSE-222304288843	24.761 M
4	CONSTRUCTION/IMPROVEMENT OF B/T ROAD AT MIR SAZ KHAN STREET DEBA, QUETTA. PSDP No. 1409 (Z2022.3634). TSE-222304288853	14.857 M
5	CONSTRUCTION/IMPROVEMENT OF B/T ROAD AT ABDULLAH TOWN, QUETTA PSDP No. 1410 (Z2022.3635). TSE-222304288863	19.811 M
6	CONST: OF B/T ROAD PIR ZAIN-UD-DIN ROAD KILLI SHERANI GULSHAN TOWN TARKHAROD QUETTA. PSDP No. 1411 (Z2022.3637). TSE-222304288863	9.907 M
7	CONSTRUCTION OF 1 KM B/T ROAD KILLI AT SILLAR DISTRICT QUETTA. PSDP No. 1412 (Z2022.3638). TSE-222304288823	14.858 M
8	CONSTRUCTION OF B/T ROAD KILLI AT RAISANI ROAD MILL COLONY DISTRICT QUETTA. PSDP No. 1413 (Z2022.3639). TSE-222304288933	19.809 M
9	CONST OF BT ROAD AT NASHNAN COLONY KILLI SYED MUHAMMAD SHAH KASHMIRABAD QAMBARANI (1 KM) QUETTA. PSDP No. 1444 (Z2021.3706) TSE-222304288943	12.677 M
10	CONST: OF B/T ROAD CHILTAN STREET SARIAB ROAD QUETTA (2.5 KM). PSDP No. 1462 (Z2021.3793) TSE-222304288953	24.763 M

The office of the Executive Engineer E&M (Workshop) Division CWPP&H Department Quetta invites technical proposals of Contractors/firms along with sealed financial proposals (Single Stage-Two Envelope Bidding Procedure) for above mentioned work from interested firms / Contractors. All interested bidders are required to submit documents as per following brief in support of their technical/financial proposal. The procurement shall be carried out in accordance with Balochistan Public Procurement Regulatory, Rules 2014 and Pakistan Engineering Council By-Laws ELIGIBILITY: (a) The Contractor must have fresh valid registration with Pakistan Engineering Council in C-6 and above with specialized code in relevant CE-01, CE-09, CE-10, discipline and registration with tax authorities i.e (NTN, Sales tax Department and BRA). BID SECURITY The bid must accompany bid security in the form of call deposit or bank guarantee of amount specified above in the name of the under-signing from a schedule bank TECHNICAL PROPOSAL Shall consist of the Following Documents:- Name of Firm / Contractor with year of establishment along with postal address and telephone number. Name of Technical Supervisory staff / Management Staff along with their qualifications / experience and proof of their stay with the firm, with fresh affidavit as per criteria specified in bidding data. 2 No of Projects, similar nature of work completed during last 5 years. (Details should be given as per criteria specified in bidding documents). 2 No of Projects similar nature and cost in hand. (Details should be given as per criteria specified in bidding documents) Fresh Registration / Clearance from income tax Department and BRA. Original must show on Submission / Opening the technical Proposals. Detail Turnover of at least 25.00 million for the last (3) three years showing the financial capacity of firm as per criteria specified in the Bidding Documents. Under taking on judicial paper that the firm was never black listed / no litigation by any Government / Semi Government Organization. It is mandatory that the Contractor must show the original fresh PEC valid registration i.e 2022 with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) on the time of submission / opening the Technical Proposal FINANCIAL PROPOSALS Shall consist of the Following Documents:- Detail BOQ with Quoted Rates in sealed envelope mentioned the name & Title of scheme. Bid Security @ 2% of bid quoted amount must be in the form of call deposit in favor of the office Name of the under signed from a scheduled bank of Pakistan. No Cheque will be acceptable. BIDDING / TENDER DOCUMENTS: The bidders can obtain the bidding document from the address mention above on production of green Chellan of an amount of above mention work (Non-refundable) in the head of account C02716 Civil works through Govt. Treasury/National Bank of Pakistan or can be downloaded from the Website of BPPRA (www.bppra.gov.pk), during working hours, from the date of publication of this invitation in newspapers till one day prior to the last date of submission. DEADLINES OF SUBMISSION: Technical and financial proposals from intending contractors/firms sealed in two separate envelopes clearly marked with Work title & type of proposal must be delivered by hand or through registered mail to the address mentioned below on or before 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 at 12:00 Hrs. OPENING: The envelope containing "Technical Bids" will be opened on the same day 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 at 13:00 Hrs. before procurement committee in the presence of bidders or their authorized representatives who choose to attend. The Second sealed envelope containing "Financial bids" of technically responsive / qualified bidders will be opened later, the date of which will be communicated after evaluation of the technical bids. Bids Validity: Ninety (90) days Place: The place of issuance, submission, inquires and opening will be - The office of the Executive Engineer, E&M (Workshop) Division Eastern Bypass Quetta, office Phone No. 081-2674143. Email Address: gmworkshopquetta@gmail.com.

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## Q-commerce awaits subsidy to meet growth targets: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: The newly emerging q-commerce industry needs subsidies to keep its head above water, as the rising inflation in Pakistan is hitting it hard like the other sectors of economy.

Talking to WealthPK, Mawahid Tariq, CEO of Apna Mart, a Taxila-based q-commerce start-up, said that inflation is denting the industry mainly in two ways: increase in the oil prices and the declining purchasing power of consumers.

The increase in the oil prices has caused a

surge in the transportation cost. The transportation cost constitutes a large share of the overall cost of running a q-commerce business. The net profits of businesses in this industry are under heavy pressure, as the cost of transportation per delivery has scaled up.

The declining purchasing power of consumers is the second factor responsible for the industry's low revenues. With the rise in inflation, the real income of consumers has plummeted in a real sense. Customers now demand fewer goods to be deliv-

ered to their doorsteps," he said.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) stands at 31.5%, according to the Bureau of Statistics. Food inflation in Pakistan jumped up to 45.1% in February from 42.9% in January 2023.

Similarly, oil prices have also shown an unprecedented rise. The petrol price has risen by 78 percent this year as compared to the previous year. High-speed diesel (HSD) has shown an increase of 95 percent this year.

"With a flourishing e-commerce in Pakistan

for years, local investors are taking interest in q-commerce. The consumer base of Pakistan is substantial, as it has a considerable size of middle class."

Regarding the government's plan to give fuel subsidy to the motorists, he said, "It is commendable that the government is coming up with a targeted fuel subsidy for the low-income people. However, q-commerce can also flourish if the same subsidy is extended to the industry. With subsidized fuel prices, the industry would be able to

cover its minimum revenue targets."

"The industry has the potential to generate large-scale employment in near future. Despite limited fiscal space, the government's fuel subsidy will serve the purpose of providing a cushion to the newly emerging industry," he added.

It is understandable that Pakistan is facing trying times on the economic front. Against all the odds, fuel subsidy will have a positive outcome on the q-commerce industry in near future and on Pakistan's economy in the long run. INP

# Senate passes resolution for equipping women, girls with digital skills

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Monday unanimously passed a resolution urging the government to prepare and implement a National Action Plan for providing a gender-responsive approach to innovation, technology and digital education.

The resolution moved by Seemee Ezdi and others asked the government to equip women and girls with digital skills through prioritizing education in Information Communication Technology subjects and allocate separate funds

through PSDP projects on digital empowerment of women.

The resolution recognized that bringing women and other marginalized groups into technology results in more creative solutions and has greater potential for innovations that meet women's needs and promote gender equality.

Another resolution passed by the house demanded the government to establish a permanent Division and its subordinate Task Force under the administrative control of the Ministry of

Finance for chalking out a practical roadmap of eliminating Riba and establishing an interest free financial and economic system in the country.

It said that the government should enact laws for prohibiting individual and collective interest/riba based business in the country. It said that interest/riba should be eliminated from various financial institutions.

Speaking on the resolution, Minister of State for Finance Aisha Ghous Pasha said it is the government's priority to

make the financial system free of riba. For this purpose, a task force has already been established to prepare a roadmap in this regard.

Speaking on a motion, Minister of State for Law and Justice Shahadat Awan said efforts are underway to promote Urdu language at different levels. He said there are also rulings of the Supreme Court and a High Court on the enforcement of Urdu as an official language.

Earlier, the House passed two bills

including: The Control of Narcotics Substances Amendment Bill 2022 and Pakistan Institute of Research and Registration of Quality Assurance Bill, 2023.

Three bills were laid before the Senate. These included: The Toshakhana (Maintenance, Administration and Regulation Bill, the National Commission on the Rights of Child (Amendment) Bill and the Export Processing Zones Authority Amendment Bill. INP



ISLAMABAD: A Woman wearing traditional Hijab receives floor sacks from Free Floor distribution Center under Prime Minister's scheme at G-7 Markaz during the holy month of Ramadan.

## Population census to continue in Karachi till April 15

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Bureau of Statistics on Monday decided to continue the seventh digital census process in Karachi till April 15 where 0.6 million households are yet to be enumerated.

Almost 90 percent census process has been completed in the country. Manwar Ali Ghangharu, director of the Sindh Federal Statistical Institute, said that the population of Karachi has increased to 1.23 million as of Sunday. However, 0.6 million households will be counted in the census. The average household in Karachi consists of 5.8 people.

He said that the census staff will be dispatched after determining the areas wherever the census staff has not yet reached. For this reason, the census staff will continue to perform duties till April 15. INP

## Punjab govt not to upgrade PM's helipad

LAHORE: The Punjab government on Monday shelved its decision to upgrade the helipad at Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's residence in Model Town of Lahore.

The Punjab government will no longer upgrade the Model Town main Helipad at the Prime Minister's residence.

The Home Department has also withdrawn the letter approving funds for upgradation.

It merits here to mention that the Cabinet Committee had previously approved the upgrade of PM's helipad and nighttime landing facility.

The Punjab government, however, has reversed this decision. INP

## Running week will decide fate of country: Sheikh Rasheed

RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League (AML) Chief Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed said on Monday that time to hold talks has been over, now nation has to take a decision, either this country should be run under the constitution or on the wishes of Sharif's and Zardaris.

In a message, he said the current week would decide the constitutional legacy of Pakistan whether the country would be run constitutionally or on the wishes of Sharif's and Zardaris dynasties. In his tweet message, the AML chief said constitution required elections in 90 days but they rulers were hell bent on sinking the country.

He added that those who considered the masses "worthless creatures" and denied them right to take decision would repent. Mr Ahmed said they could register 140 cases against PTI chief Imran Khan but he would not be disqualified. "If he (Imran) goes to jail, it will prove to be a doom's day for the 13 parties on. He said the IMF deal had failed, zero international donations, electricity, gas and flour were becoming rare commodities. Grabbing power by force was government's agenda. He reiterated that only the Supreme Court could save the country now. The AML president said the government wanted the people and institutions on collision course with each other. "Nawaz Sharif did not return to Pakistan, wheat price went up by 100 per cent, petrol by Rs123 per liter and ghee prices went up by Rs200 per kg." The government should accept Mufti Taqi's advice and take the country out of the ongoing crisis. INP

## Three killed over land dispute in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD: Three people were killed when firing started between opponents over dispute of land in the Nishatabad police station jurisdiction.

According to details, two of the victims were brothers who were identified as Wajhat and Nawazish whereas the third victim was their cousin who was identified as Imran. As per sources, the mourners of the deceased have staged a protest against the murder of their family members and have blocked the Sargodha road. INP

## Oil prices shoot up following sudden decision to cut output

ISLAMABAD: Oil prices have increased sharply after several of the world's largest exporters announced surprise reduction in production.

The price of Brent crude oil is trading above \$84 a barrel after jumping by more than 5%.

Economists warned that higher oil prices could make it harder to bring down the cost of living.

Brent crude prices rose after Saudi Arabia, Iraq and several Gulf states said on Sunday they were cutting output by more than one million barrels of oil a day.

In addition, Russia said it will extend its cut of half a million barrels per day until the end of the year.

Energy giants BP and Shell saw their share prices rise on

Monday, with both rising more than 4%.

Oil prices soared when Russia invaded Ukraine, but are now back at levels seen before the conflict began.

However, the US has been calling for producers to increase output in order to push energy prices lower. A spokesperson for the US National Security Council said, "We don't think cuts are advisable at this moment given market uncertainty - and we've made that clear."

High energy and fuel prices have helped to drive up inflation - the rate at which prices rise - putting pressure on many households' finances.

There have also been fears that there could be an impact on transport costs, if fuel prices rise. -- INT

## Rahul Gandhi files appeal against jail sentence in defamation case

ISLAMABAD: Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi has filed an appeal against his conviction and jail sentence in a criminal defamation case in Surat city of India.

He was sentenced to two years in jail by a court in Gujarat state for 2019 comments about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's surname at an election rally. The Congress leader was also disqualified as a lawmaker later.

Opposition leaders have accused the governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of a political vendetta. The BJP has denied this, saying that due judicial process was followed in the case. National elections are due in India next year, and Mr Gandhi will not be allowed to contest until his sentence is suspended or he is acquitted in the case. Gandhi appeared at the court in Surat city with his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and

other top Congress leaders on Monday afternoon. Many Congress workers had gathered outside the court in support of Mr Gandhi, holding banners with the words "save democracy" on them. A senior police official told ANI news agency that a large number of police personnel have been deployed in Surat. Legal website Live Law reported that Mr Gandhi's appeal was accompanied by two applications: one to suspend his sentence, or get bail, and the other to suspend his conviction. A decision in his favour in the second application could lead to his lawmaker status being reinstated, the website said. Gandhi was on bail for 30 days after being given time to appeal the judgement, which was passed on 23 March. The defamation case against him, brought by BJP lawmaker Purnesh Modi, revolved around comments. INP

## Trump preparing for battle at New York court hearing, lawyer

ISLAMABAD: Former U.S. president Donald Trump is "gearing up for a battle" ahead of his scheduled court hearing on Tuesday, his lawyer has said.

According to the reports, Trump is expected to fly to New York City from his Mar-a-Lago home on Monday to face charges related to hush money payments made to a porn star.

He then plans to return to Florida following his court hearing, where he will address his supporters. Mr Trump has continued to deny any wrongdoing. His lawyer, Joe Tacopina, promised that any charges against the former president will be fought vigorously. "He's someone who's going to be ready for this fight," Mr Tacopina told ABC's This Week programme on Sunday.

"We're ready for this fight. And

I look forward to moving this thing along as quickly as possible to exonerate him."

Media reports have said that Mr Trump will be facing more than 30 charges related to business fraud over a \$130,000 (£105,000) payout to Stormy Daniels in 2016 that was made in an attempt to buy her silence over an alleged affair.

Sources familiar with the case have told U.S. media that the former president is being charged with falsifying business records. Details of the charges, including what they are and how many, remain under seal. Tacopina has said that he himself has not yet seen the charges.

Trump has been reportedly meeting with his advisors and legal team to plan his defence ahead of his flight to New York on Monday. INP



ISLAMABAD: Former Ambassador Ayaz Wazir presenting his book titled "Stifled Voice" to President Dr Arif Alvi.

## Increasing women's workforce participation to enhance Pakistan's economic growth: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has enormous untapped potential to enhance economic growth by encouraging the participation of women in the labour force.

Talking to INP-WealthPK, Dr. Mariam Mohsin, Assistant Professor at the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), said GDP could increase by 60 percent by the year 2025 if the female labour force becomes equal to the male working population.

She said despite making half of the country's population, women had a remarkably low participation rate of only 21 percent in the current workforce and only 25 percent of women with a university degree work.

In Balochistan, the female labour force participation is recorded at 4.9 percent, which is shockingly low.

Pakistan has one of the lowest rates of women entrepreneurs in the world. Women own only 8 percent of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), she said.

According to the Global Gender Gap Index Report 2022, Pakistan ranks 145 out of 146 countries for female economic participation and

opportunity.

As per the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) rates in Pakistan are very low, ranging from 14-21.7 percent over the period 1990-2019.

Discussing the reasons, the PIDE assistant professor said discriminatory social norms, lack of support, rigid working culture along with lack of affordable and quality childcare centres had made a large percentage of women unproductive. Dr. Zainab Naeem, Assistant Research Fellow at the SDPI, said it would be in the best interest to enhance female participation in business activities. Women need encouragement to initiate start-ups and use innovative ideas to solve persistent economic problems plaguing the country. "To encourage female participation in the labour force, prudent measures must be taken to provide a level playing field. These include the implementation of pro-women laws, expansion of financial access for women, flexible working hours, and better childcare facilities. In addition, we must acknowledge the participation of rural women in the agriculture sector," she added. INP

## Pakistan ready to work with all SCO countries for achieving common goals: Amir Muqam

PESHAWAR: Adviser to Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs, Engineer Amir Muqam has stated that Pakistan looks forward to work with all Shanghai Cooperation Organization countries to achieve common goals.

Virtually addressing the 20th meeting of Ministers of Culture of the member states of Shanghai Cooperation Organization, he said Pakistan attaches a great importance to SCO and strongly believes that it is a unique platform to celebrate our commonalities and to work together to forge a common future marked by our rich cultural heritage.

He said that SCO has become an important platform for the participating countries to enhance their cultural exchanges and promote mutual understanding.

The online meeting was held in the chair of the Minister of Culture of India and also attended by Ministers of Culture of SCO Member States and delegates. INP

## Shazia directs authorities to ensure disbursement of Benazir Kafaalat in transparent manner

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Shazia Marri on Monday

has directed the concerned authorities for more vigilance to ensure the disbursement of Benazir Kafaalat and other initiatives in a more transparent manner.

According to press release, she presided over a meeting on zoom and the Secretary Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) briefed Minister regarding the ongoing quarterly disbursement of Benazir Kafaalat which has been enhanced from Rs 7000 to \$500 by the Federal Government. The meeting was attended by the Secretary Benazir Income Support Programme Yusuf Khan, Additional Secretary Dr Tahir Noor, and all Director Generals including heads of Provinces and regions. The details of other initiatives including disbursement of Benazir Taleemi. INP

## SC rejects Fawad Ch's request to de-seal entry points of Red Zone

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Monday rejected the request of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry to order to de-seal the entry points of the Red Zone.

The PTI leader appeared in the apex court and said that the entry points of the Red Zone had been sealed.

"It seems as if we were in Gaza. Even the lawyers are being prevented from entering the Red Zone. Arguments are taking place at the entry points," he argued before the court.

"We are conducting hearing of the case. It is not necessary for thousands of lawyers to come. If you have given a call to the lawyers, talk to them," Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial said. The nine workers of Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), whose post-arrest bail petitions had been dismissed in the case of vandalism and torture of policemen in Zaman Park, were Monday produced in an anti-terrorism court (ATC) of Lahore. The accused were produced before the court after their judicial remand ended. "Weapons and petrol bombs had been recovered from these suspects," the investigation report said. ATC Administrative Judge Abhar Gul Khan conducted the hearing. It is to be noted here that 93 suspects in the case have been released on bail. An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore Monday extended the interim bail of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders till April 17 next in the case of vandalism in the judicial complex. INP



ISLAMABAD: Neil Hawkin High Commissioner of Australia called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Ishaq Dar

## Russia announces arrest of suspect in cafe killing of pro-war blogger

ISLAMABAD: Russian investigators have arrested a woman allegedly involved in the killing of pro-war blogger Vladlen Tatarsky in a blast at a St Petersburg cafe.

In video released by authorities - most likely recorded under duress - Darya Trepova is heard admitting she handed over a statuette that later blew up.

But in the footage released, she does not say she knew there would be an explosion, nor admit any further role.

More than 30 people were wounded in the bombing in Russia's second city. Tatarsky had been attending a patriotic meeting with supporters in the cafe as a guest speaker.

A video circulating on social media showed a young woman in a brown coat apparently entering the cafe with a cardboard box.

Images showed the box being placed on a table in the cafe before the woman

sat down. Another video showed a statue being handed to Tatarsky.

In a brief excerpt of her interrogation released by the ministry, Darya Trepova, 26, sighed repeatedly.

When her interrogator asked if she knew why she was detained, she replied: "I would say for being at the scene of Vladlen Tatarsky's murder... I handed over the statuette which blew up."

Asked who gave it to her she responded: "Can I tell you later please?" Russia's anti-terrorism committee alleged the attack was organised by Ukrainian special services "with people co-operating with" opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Navalny has been in jail ever since he returned to Russia from Germany in January 2021. He survived a nerve agent attack in Russia in August 2020, which was blamed on Russian security service agents. INT

## Q-commerce awaits subsidy to meet growth targets: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: The newly emerging q-commerce industry needs subsidies to keep its head above water, as the rising inflation in Pakistan is hitting it hard like the other sectors of economy.

Talking to WealthPK, Mavahid Tariq, CEO of Apna Mart, a Taxila-based q-commerce startup, said that inflation is denting the industry mainly in two ways: increase in the oil prices and the declining purchasing power of consumers.

"The increase in the oil prices has caused a surge in the transportation cost. The transportation cost constitutes a large share of the overall cost of running a q-commerce business. The net profits of businesses in this industry are under heavy pressure, as the cost of transportation per delivery has scaled up. The declining purchasing power of consumers is the second factor responsible for the industry's low revenues. With the rise in inflation, the real income of consumers has plummeted in a real sense. Customers now demand fewer goods to

be delivered to their doorsteps," he said. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) stands at 31.5%, according to the Bureau of Statistics. Food inflation in Pakistan jumped up to 45.1% in February from 42.9% in January 2023.

Similarly, oil prices have also shown an unprecedented rise. The petrol price has risen by 78 percent this year as compared to the previous year. High-speed diesel (HSD) has shown an increase of 95 percent this year.

"With a flourishing e-commerce in Pakistan for years, local investors are taking interest in q-commerce. The consumer base of Pakistan is substantial, as it has a considerable size of middle class. "Regarding the government's plan to give fuel subsidy to the motorcyclists, he said, "It is commendable that the government is coming up with a targeted fuel subsidy for the low-income people. However, q-commerce can also flourish if the same subsidy is extended to the industry. INP