

QUETTA VOICE

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Levies arrest key accused in Najma Baloch suicide case



Firing in Hazar Ganji Quetta leaves a woman dead and 4 injured

Angry with Islamabad, CM Bizenjo announces to boycott NEC meeting

Quetta Voice Report

QUETTA: Chief Minister Bizenjo announced to boycott the National Economic Council (NEC) as a protest against the federal government. The federal government has not translated its words into action when it comes to Balochistan, the CM Balochistan said in a policy statement on Monday.

This attitude indicates a very desperate situation, Mr. Bizenjo lamented. He recalled that even 10 billion rupees announced by the Prime Minister for the rehabilitation of the flood victims have not been provided.

Balochistan Govt provides maximum assistance to the flood affectees

In this regard, repeated reminders were given to the federal government and a letter was also sent to the Prime Minister, the CM mentioned the context of the Prime Minister's announcement, the provincial government provided maximum assistance and rehabilitation to the vic-



tims by using their limited resources.

FG failed to include projects suggested by senators and MNAs from Balochistan

CM Balochistan said it

was hoped that these activities will be further promoted after the receipt of ten billion rupees by the federal government. Due to the lack of resources, the flood victims are still waiting under the open sky for government assistance, he mentioned.

The federal government has also been asked to include the projects suggested by the Balochistan members of the Senate and the National Assembly in

the federal PSDP, he noted. Due to the limited development funds of Balochistan, the members cannot give development funds to the Senate and the National Assembly. The members of the Provincial Assembly are not in favor of including the projects suggested by the members of the Senate and the National Assembly in the Provincial Development Program, the CM concluded.

Sardar Rind condemns May 9th incidents, says still part of PTI

Syed Ali Shah

QUETTA: The parliamentary leader of the Pakistan Tehrik e Insaaf (PTI) in Balochistan Assembly, Sardar Yar Muhammad Rind on Monday strongly condemned the May 9th incidents called for an action against the elements behind acts of arson across the country. Addressing a press conference, he said former prime minister Imran Khan always ignored him with regard to issues relating to Balochistan.

"We are silent members of PTI", Sardar Rind says

"We are silent members of PTI", he informed. We will consult with our comrades regarding the future of the upcoming elections.

Senior politician Sardar Yar Muhammad Rind said that May 9 was a very difficult day in the history of Pakistan. We



have never left the side of democracy, he mentioned. "I condemn damaging government or defense installations".

Sardar Yar Muhammad Rind said that after winning the 2018 elections, Imran Khan made him Special Assistant to the Energy Department but Khan kept ignoring me in all the decisions. I had sent my resignation to him on this matter.

Attackers enjoy Balochistan govt's patronage in Kachhi: Rind

Referring to an attack on his son's convoy in Kachhi district, he said one guard was killed and 4 were seriously injured. Despite the

identification of the elements involved in the incident, the responsible persons are still roaming freely in Quetta, the PTI leader claimed.

He mentioned it seems as if the accused have the patronage of the provincial government. The situation is that the accused are roaming around with armed guards in Kachhi and Quetta.

According to him, his political opponents are rewarded whenever they come to power. The opponents will be rewarded in the upcoming provincial budget and they will be deprived of new schemes in their constituency. Where is the justice? The government has issued a special grant of Rs. 77.5 million to my political opponents in recent days, Sardar Rind concluded.

Protest erupts inside SBK Women University

Staff Reporter

QUETTA: Protest erupted inside the Sardar Bahadur Khan (SBK) Women's University on Monday morning. A large number of students came out of their classes and chanted full-throated slogans against the university administration. "We want justice", the university campus echoed with slogans.

There was no word from the SBK administration about the students protest. The media was also stopped at the main gate of the university because of the protest demonstration staged by girls students.

A burqa-clad protester lashes out at the university administration



"This is injustice, our protest was not allowed", one of the burqa-clad student protesters said. She preferred not to mention her name. SBK university is the only women's university in Balochistan. According to sources within the higher education department, currently around 10,000 students have been studying in the university.

Security tightened inside the campus

Security within the university was tightened in the aftermath of the protest demonstration staged by students. Male and female police guards stopped the students from intensifying their protest inside the campus. The entry of private people was suspended as tension prevailed inside the campus.

The protesting students said hundreds of students from the pharmacy department were deprived of registration. They were

demanding an immediate registration of the students.

Footage shows teachers convincing protesters to end protest

Video footage shows some senior teachers trying to convince the protesting students to end the protest. Despite their request, the protesters continue to chant slogans. Subsequently, the protest ended with students demanding solution of the registration issue and provision of basic facilities in the university.

Levies arrest key accused in Najma Baloch suicide case

From Our Correspondent

AWARAN: Levies force arrested a key accused in the Najma Baloch suicide case on Sunday. Levies constable Noor Bakhsh was nominated in the first information report (FIR) in connection with the suicide of Najma Baloch, a young lady teacher in Gishkor area of Awaran district.

Family members and parents of Najma accused the levies constable Noor Bakhsh and two others for



forcing and blackmailing her to commit suicide. The suicide incident went viral on

action against the accused.

A case has been registered under the provisions of culpable homicide and harassment for harassing Najma, a teacher who provides free education to hundreds of poor children in Gishkor, and forcing her to commit suicide. Two of the accused named in the case have already been arrested - the Intelligence Bureau provided technical assistance in arresting the accused, levies sources said.

Firing in Hazar Ganji Quetta leaves a woman dead and 4 injured

Manan Mandokhail

QUETTA: Unknown accused opened fire and killed a woman and injured four including a child in Quetta's Hazar Ganji area on Monday. Police sources said unknown accused opened fire on a family in Hazar Ganji area and killed the woman on the spot. Four people including a child



sustained injuries in the attack. The injured were rushed to the nearby Bolan Medical Complex (BMC) hospital for medical treatment. An emergency was declared to provide medical treatment to injured of the attack.

The attackers sped away on their motorcycle. Motive behind the attack could not be ascertained immediately, police sources said.

Pakistan 'very hopeful' of sealing IMF deal this month: PM Shehbaz

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said Pakistan is "very hopeful" of finalizing a deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) this month.

"We are still very hopeful that the IMF program will materialise. Our ninth review by the IMF will match all terms and conditions and, hopefully, we'll have some good news this month," he told Anadolu in an exclusive interview in the Turkish capital Ankara.

The premier was in Ankara for President Tayyip Erdogan's inauguration, one of dozens of heads of state and government who attended Saturday's ceremony.

Islamabad has been negotiating with the IMF since early February for the release of \$1.1 billion, part of a \$6.5bn bailout package inked in 2019 by the previous government of former prime minister Imran Khan.

The staff-level agreement for the tranche's release has been delayed since November, with more than 100 days gone since the last staff-level mission to Pakistan, the longest such delay since at least 2008.

In total, about \$2.7bn are left to be disbursed from the package, which is scheduled to expire this month. At the end of May, PM Shehbaz requested IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva to help revive the stalled facility, but asserted that Pakistan does have a backup plan in place.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said last week that Pakistan will share its budget details with the Fund. He added that he would like the IMF



to clear its 9th review before the budget, which is due to be presented in early June, as all the conditions for that had already been met.

For its part, the IMF has said it remains in touch with Pakistan's authorities in order to pave the way for a board meeting before the financing programme expires at the end of June.

Ordinarily, a board meeting on a review of the programme would require a prior staff-level agreement. During his interview with Anadolu, PM Shehbaz said, "We have met all conditionalities. I repeat, each and every requirement of the IMF as prior actions has been met."

"Some of those actions are usually met after the board's approval, but this time the IMF required that those actions be met before the board's approval, so we have met them."

On contingency plans in case the IMF talks fall through, PM Shehbaz emphasised the resilience and fortitude of the Pakistani nation.

He said the people of Pakistan had faced challenges in the past, and if needed, will "tighten our belt" and rise again.

According to the premier, Pakistan has been facing a plethora of problems since April 2022, when the current government took over after Imran was ousted in a no-trust vote.

The issues are the result of the previous government's policies, the deadly floods in August, and the inflation problem, he said. INP

QUETTA VOICE

Editor Asim Khan

Flaws in the Balochistan census

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 considered 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.

Gender budgeting- a tool for gender removing inequalities

Mehfooz Ali Khan



Article 25 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan says that there will be no discrimination among the citizens on the basis of sex. It means that the rights of men and women shall be equal. Gender equality is a basic fundamental right in any self-respecting society. Do ground realities substantiate this assertion? Are there even playing grounds for

both genders? If not, why it is so? And how can gender mainstreaming be achieved?

Gender Responsive, Gender Sensitive and Gender Aware budgeting

There are many policy options to reduce this imbalance but budget is important as a policy and planning instrument

for governments that can be used for reaching the goal of Gender Equality. Gender Responsive, Gender Sensitive and Gender Aware budgeting in a country, region, or a province can create enabling environment to bring equality? The fundamental objective of gender budgeting refers to refining budget and related policies with a view to promoting gender equality as an integral part of human rights. Gender budgeting makes the gender-specific effects of budgets visible and raises awareness about their frequently implicit dimensions of discrimination against women.

Gender impacts of budgets and policies

Gender budgeting thus identifies the gender-specific implications of public finance – which is usually presented as gender-neutral – and, in particular economic policies. Gender budgeting is therefore regarded as a core strategy for raising awareness and understanding of gender issues and the gender impacts of budgets and policies. When

we talk in the context of Balochistan, the first question that strikes us that, 'Is there any study ever conducted to find out the Gender Gaps? Did we undertake any post or pre-budget assessment of the annual budget on different segments of the society, especially women, who form almost 50% (48.76%, to be specific) of our national population? In Balochistan, this ratio is 47.47%. If our budget is not Gender Sensitive, almost half the population is left out. In our set up women empowerment starts and ends with the provision of Sewing Machines, the opening of embroidery centers, or the holding of few cultural shows. It means a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process, and restructuring revenues and expenditures is required in order to promote gender equality. As mentioned above female population in Balochistan is 47.4% and their needs are completely ignored at

all levels and they are hardly involved in the budgetary process. An analysis of PSDPs since 2013-14 till 2020-21 shows that there was not a single project in the years 2013-14, 2014-15, as if women did not exist or they were not worthy of any consideration. Then from 2015-16 to 2019-20, there were one to three projects and the total outlay ranged from .12% to .22%. It shows how much priority that 47.49% of the population gets in the province. Although the world over women is not categorized as a vulnerable group.

In Balochistan, they are not only vulnerable but also marginalized. But the treatment they get in Pakistan, especially in Balochistan, they are not only vulnerable but also marginalized in the real sense of the world. A UN Report on Women said that compared to men, women have 26% fewer chances of employment, and around 75% of the women labor force works in unregulated sector of the economy. Why they are consid-

ered vulnerable because they are

solely dependent on male counterparts both at home as well as at the workplace. Surprisingly there are no separate Rest Rooms (Washrooms) for ladies in Secretariat and directorates. For the entire female population, there is only one female park in Smugli Road and they have no recreational facilities whatsoever.

Women development department manned by male officers

There is a women's Development Department, mostly manned by male officers and workers, who are supposed to work for the welfare of female workers. They lack the capacity to formulate and implement plans for female uplift. Conditions outside the capital city are simply deplorable. Economic Development will remain an unrealized dream unless the government takes concrete

steps through gender budgeting for Gender mainstreaming and using this untapped potential.

The Iran-Saudi pact

By Abdul Sattar

The recent rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia has created a ripple of excitement among the people of the region, who have been badly affected by the undeclared cold war between the two countries.

The efforts to normalize ties between the two archrivals might also go a long way in stabilizing the situation in various parts of the region, and helping the people of Yemen put an end to the terrible war that has pushed millions of people towards hunger, starvation and miseries and caused colossal damage to the country's infrastructure.

The two Middle Eastern powers have expressed their intention to sort out issues in an amicable way, while announcing the restoration of diplomatic ties. It is also believed that this normalization will not only boost economic cooperation between the two countries but also allay apprehensions that the people of two states have about one and another.

Many believe that the leaders of two countries demonstrated great political acumen by accepting the reality of the modern world that advocates the resolution of problems through talks and diplomacy.

It is also hoped that friendly ties between Riyadh and Tehran will pave the way for an effective reconciliation between the Shias and Sunnis of Iraq besides

reducing tensions between the pro-Iran and pro-Saudi Arabia political factions in the Middle East and several parts of the Muslim world.

It is expected that positive signals emanating from Riyadh in Tehran might be instrumental in putting an end to the propaganda war unleashed by the media outlets of the two states years ago, bringing the people of the two states closer.

The easing of tensions could greatly benefit the Iranian economy that has been crippled because of the ruthless sanctions imposed by the US and its allies. The recent unrest in Iran was also partly fuelled by the precarious economic situation that has plunged millions of people into a life of misery and impoverishment. These sanctions dealt a severe blow to Iranian oil export, depriving it of its fair share in the global market, causing the loss of billions of dollars over the years.

The US and its European allies tried to isolate Iran at the international level, which also damaged the country diplomatically. Enemies of Iran used this unrest to tarnish the image of the country, asserting that Tehran is no different from a fascist state.

The normalization of ties perhaps will not instantly end Iranian isolation at the international level, but help Tehran find some sup-

port at regional forums. While sanctions against Iran are likely to continue, making it difficult for Tehran to get any sigh of relief at the global level, it can enhance Iranian share in regional trade.

After the normalization of relations with the UAE if Iran manages to put aside its differences with Saudi Arabia, it will help boost its image as a country that believes in talks and diplomacy, questioning the narrative that has been projected by the West asserting that the theocratic state seeks regional dominance by bankrolling proxies across the region.

Cordial ties with Tehran will also greatly help Riyadh that has been beset by drone attacks allegedly carried out by the Houthi rebels of Yemen. Riyadh has been trying hard to diversify its economy, pumping billions of dollars into construction of tourist resorts and development of service industries. These sectors of the economy cannot achieve any significant success amidst the atmosphere of hostility and animosity in the region. The fear of attacks in any country dissuades tourists from visiting that country. Such tensions also undermine the efforts that are meant to boost economic development.

Saudi Arabia is almost friendly with every country of the region. After following hawkish policies for

some years, its leadership has adopted a pragmatic approach – that seems to be promoting regional trade and economic development. The kingdom also seems determined to modernize. Animosity with Iran has greatly benefited the obscurantist forces of the country that thrive on such hostility. Good relations with Iran will allow the kingdom to deprive retrogressive elements of the excuse they employ to stoke anti-Iranian feelings.

Such people with a medieval mindset also scorn the reformist agenda of the current Saudi Arabia government. So, on the domestic front it will strengthen the pragmatist leadership of Riyadh, creating ease to carry out the scheme of modernization that is badly needed for a country which has been accused of fomenting sectarian hatred and religious orthodoxy. It will also help Saudi Arabia project its soft image which is necessary if the kingdom really wants to promote its services sector and diversify its economy.

The rapprochements between Tehran and Riyadh will also boost the image of China as a global leader. Beijing has emerged as an influential country in a region that has been plagued by wars, conflicts and hostilities. The Chinese involvement also reflects the waning power of the US that is more interested in sell-

ing weapons to all the rival states instead of coming up with a solution to the problems being faced by the region. The people of the Middle East might remember China as the country that helped create a situation where they could have a sigh of relief, and Washington as an actor that did nothing for the region except fueling more tensions.

These good gestures by the two countries also indicate that the world is finally entering into an era of effective multilateralism. First, Russia stabilized war-torn Syria a few years ago and now China is trying to create the atmosphere that might go a long way in fostering regional unity and promoting business and trade in not only the Middle East but beyond as well. The prospects of this unity are bright because Riyadh is not only normalizing ties with Iran, but has also made efforts to put aside its differences with Damascus while enjoying good ties with the Iraqi government that also played a crucial role in bringing the two states closer.

The rapprochement should serve as a reminder to the belligerent leadership of Israel that has been seeking regional domination through fear and intimidation. Tel Aviv needs to realize that by violating international laws and usurping the rights of Palestinians.

Mirror, mirror on the wall...

By Kamila Hyat

The time has come when we must ask that magic mirror on the wall what the future of our nation is to be. Beyond the mirror, there are really no answers, with analysts putting forward a variety of opinions, some arguing that after three years of acute hardship caused by inflation, unemployment and related issues, Pakistan will boom back and make a full recovery. Others are far less optimistic and there is a sense of hopelessness and dependency across the country.

The evidence of this came in the fact that in 2022, as many as 750,000 young Pakistanis, most of them highly educated doctors, engineers, information technology experts and others opted to leave the country legally. This number was far higher than the under 300,000 which left in the two preceding years. Clearly, young people in a country which has a huge youth population – with 64 per cent of nation aged between 15 and 30 years – feel that there is no future for them in the country where most of them were born and where they grew up.

There are, of course, exceptions to the rule, and some brave young Pakistanis have chosen to stay back and help as they can. Their resolve needs to be applauded and so does the dedication to the country of other young-

sters who insist that they do want to give back after completing education overseas in some capacity or the other. Clearly there are deep feelings for Pakistan, despite the fact that its governance over the last seven decades has done so little for the people or devised policies which can bring out the immense potential of the country.

So, we asked the mirror if everything is lost. The answer is not clear. Much depends on what future governments do and how they act. We hope that there will be some sense of responsibility and an end to the childish bickering and refusal to discuss matters together despite the national crisis we are witnessing at the present time. We cannot say how the various players will act and if the institutions will stay true to the promise of steering clear of Pakistani politics. Obviously, it would be extremely wise to do so.

As we look at other countries in somewhat similar situations, Sri Lanka comes to mind. The country fell into a crisis three years ago – hit by hyperinflation and a situation which led to default. As a result, poverty doubled across the country and in urban centre even tripled. The plight of the people can only be imagined even though Sri Lanka has a better structure of education and governance compared to Pakistan. However, as the World

Bank has pointed out, more and more flaws have crept into their system of governance leading to the crash of the country and the crisis that hit it. It is now attempting to climb back and appears to be somewhat successful in doing so, with help from international donor agencies such as the World Bank as well as other foreign nations who believe that it is imperative that the country resumes its prior position in the world.

Pakistan must hope it can find similar support over the years to come and it must also face up to the reality that the next three years, at the very least, are bound to be tough ones, with us dependent on help from the outside. How much help can come in depends also on the government of Pakistan and its ability to mobilize diplomatic opinion and gain friends it has lost over the years due to various situations.

Though Pakistan, according to top economists across the world, has already defaulted, and has therefore turned to the IMF the lender of last resort we should remember that countries such as Argentina have defaulted no less than nine times since the late 1800s. The last default for Argentina came in 2001 and it is currently recovering from the situation again with the aid from the IMF. IMF aid is of course not always something to be welcomed.

The power and energy crisis

By Raashid Wali Janjua

Pakistan's power and energy crisis has reached crisis proportions. The power sector's circular debt of Rs2,377 billion – combined with Rs1,400 billion of the gas sector – and Rs600 billion payable to PSO speak volumes of our bad management and the unsustainable structure of power-and-energy-sector governance.

Our power sector structure is flawed – a combination of wrong generation sources, defective transmission and distribution system, poor bill recovery and demand management mechanism.

The failure to plan a balanced energy mix ratio, including an optimal mix of renewables and thermal-based sources has resulted in a disproportionate reliance on thermal-based sources of power generation ie 58.4 per cent. The planning failure on the supply side has also contributed to the present situation.

Supply side planning in Pakistan was predicated on ambitious projections of industrial growth. The lack of industrial development put paid to all optimistic assumptions of power consumption, resulting in a perennial imbalance between demand and supply. The total installed capacity of 43,775MW in Pakistan unfortunately does not get utilized due to lack

of industrial demand and poor transmission and distribution systems.

Pakistan developed thermal-based IPPs to cater for projected demand in the 1990s with generous ROI incentives for IPP owners through attractive tariff and capacity payment terms. In simple terms, the IPPs had to be paid even if they were not producing electricity because of the 'take or pay' provision of power purchase agreements.

Our present generation capacity – that touches a peak of 30,000MW once a while in extreme weather conditions especially in summer and then plummets down significantly – compels us to keep the generation capacity on idle even when not in demand, resulting in hefty capacity payments to IPPs. The demand and production gap of electricity in Pakistan is widening; against the demand of 120,392GWH, only 87,324 GWH was produced in 2018-19.

According to a LUMS Energy Institute (LEI) report, Pakistan with a base load requirement of 8,000MW caters to a demand load of approximately 20,000MW in extreme weather conditions for which it has an installed capacity of over 40,000MW.

The impact of this imbalance is an increase

in the cost of power generation, which, for political reasons, is not passed on to end consumers and keeps piling up in the shape of circular debt. Combined with poor bill recovery and transmission and distribution losses, the volume of circular debt keeps rising.

Also, the demand side is not satisfactory. On the demand front, Pakistan needs the actual base load of 8,000MW. Due to seasonal needs – keeping houses and offices cool in summer and warm in winter – the demand often rises to 30,000MW.

It is safe to say that Pakistan uses costly power generated mostly through imported fossil fuels to cool walls and roofs at subsidized rates. This indeed is an inefficient way of using costly electricity.

Now even if the temporary demand in summer spikes to 30,000MW, the solution is demand management – which is avoided to keep constituencies happy. There could be several solutions to this over-capacity issue, and one of those is to increase our industrial capacity so that the present base load could be taken up from 8,000MW to 14,000MW to reduce the adverse impact of idle capacity.

The present arrangement of spending \$100 billion on capacity pay-

ments to IPPs for maintaining the capacity that caters to the requirement of our domestic needs – air conditioning mostly – is the most inefficient way of utilizing power. Most of our IPPs are frontloaded through high capital expenditure (CAPEX) and have long tenors of debt and tariff. The renegotiation of the loan tenor and tariff terms is an option to bring down the cost of generation. But this is only a partial solution which has not borne fruit in the past.

The state of the oil and gas sector is also not enviable as the country has consumed 79.8 per cent and 66 per cent of the oil and gas reserves. With the cheap domestic gas sources drying up fast, Pakistan is likely to run out of domestic natural resources by 2030. Pakistan is purchasing costly liquefied natural gas and putting that into 186,000km-long pipeline infrastructure to burn it in domestic stoves.

The government is purchasing gas at a cost of \$16/mmbtu and selling it at a cost of \$2-6/mmbtu to rural and urban domestic consumers. The resulting gap in price recovery – plus gas thefts and transmission losses due to poor infrastructure – results in the gas sector's circular debt. This state of affairs is unsustainable. We need long-

term structural reforms through better regulation of the power sector and professional management.

Pakistan needs to enhance its industrial capacity for efficient consumption of its power capacity in addition to demand management through administrative measures like weather-friendly house designs, installation of smart metres and AMRs, plugging thefts through an overhauled transmission and distribution system and the gradual altering of energy mix, enhancing the share of hydel and renewables like wind and solar energy.

Price signalling is one of the effective tools to control energy waste. The cost of piped gas needs to be realistic and the exploration of the domestic oil and gas resources be expedited through special incentives to E&P companies. Pakistan needs an upstream regulator in the oil and gas sector along with the merger of Nepra with Ogra to bring more synergy in energy planning. The country also needs refinery policy urgently to help refineries upscale their productivity.

Pakistan should take some immediate steps like bold reforms, expert presence in the power and energy ministries, merger of regu-

It's all about politics

By Dr Farrukh Saleem

Our politicians are deeply and dangerously divided. Our judiciary is divided. Our state institutions are divided. Our journalists are divided. We the people are also divided – divided along political lines. Red alert: we are divided like never before.

Someone intelligent once said, "It's all about politics, stupid." Politics is where the story really begins. Our democracy-loving politicians do not consider each other as democratic rivals. They consider each other as enemies. Our democracy-loving politicians do not consider each other as democratic competitors. They all want to send their opponents to disease infected prison cells. Our democracy-loving politicians do not consider each other as democratic opponents. They want to annihilate each other; destroy and obliterate one another.

Here's a proven formula, a formula that has stood the test of time: political stability leads to economic progress. Political stability results in two things: long-term planning and higher levels of investment. Result: economic progress. Look at Botswana, a small African country that gained independence in 1966. Botswana has had a stable government and that overtime has resulted in country-wide economic development. Yes, political stability has resulted in Botswana into one of the

fastest growing economies in the world.

Chile, a Latin American country, is another example of political stability bringing in economic growth and a reduction in poverty. Chile is an example of economic progress through political stability. South Korea is another example of a country that has experienced economic progress through political stability. Singapore is another outstanding example of economic progress because of political stability. Singapore's politicians have turned Singapore into one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

Here's another proven formula, a formula that has also stood the test of time: political instability has four distinct consequences: economic uncertainty, volatility, a lack of confidence among investors and stagnation. Venezuela is a case in point. Remember, Venezuela has more proven oil reserves than any other country in the world, a total of 304 billion barrels. Venezuela is a case in point: contested elections, political turmoil and unrest. Result: hyperinflation, a decline in investment, a shortage of basic goods and a severe decline in living standards. Look at Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is mineral rich with coal, copper, iron ore, vanadium, tin, platinum, lithium and nickel. But a contested presidential election and political instability has resulted in hyperinflation, a lack of

foreign investment and a decline in living standards. Let us learn something from Democratic Republic of Congo. Contested elections, a long-running civil war, political instability and a lack of investment in key sectors like mining and agriculture. Take Iraq, for instance – the second-largest crude oil producer in OPEC after Saudi Arabia with 145 billion barrels. Ongoing political instability resulting in sectarian violence, political unrest and economic stagnation.

Here's Pakistan with several significant accomplishments. It has the fourth-largest irrigated land area globally, following China, India, and the US. Additionally, Pakistan ranks fourth in cotton production, fourth in sugarcane production, and fifth in milk production worldwide. Moreover, Pakistan is the sixth-largest date producer globally and the eighth-largest producer of wheat. Pakistan holds 105 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves. Reko Digg has 5.9 billion tonnes of copper ore and 41.5 million ounces of gold. Pakistan has the world's second-largest salt reserves. Our hydropower potential exceeds 60,000 MW.

"It's all about politics, stupid." Pakistan's primary issue is political, rather than economic. The root of our economic problems lies in the political sphere, and ultimately, the solution to our challenges lies in the hands of our politicians.

reserves and a depreciating currency are diminishing the country's ability to import essential food items and energy supplies and increasing food items' prices besides causing nationwide energy cuts. "More than 8.5 million people in Pakistan are likely to face acute food insecurity between September and December 2023. 70 per cent of people in Afghanistan do not get two proper meals a day. Economic and political crises are reducing households' buying power and ability to purchase food INP

PM emphasizes need to combat plastic pollution

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has expressed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to combat plastic pollution and embark on a journey of plastics reduction.

In his message on the occasion of World Environment Day being observed on Monday, he emphasized the need to combat plastic pollution.

He said as one of the top ten countries in the world for plastic pollution, Pakistan recognizes the urgent need for action.

Shehbaz Sharif said the government has prioritized the adoption of environment friendly alternatives and is actively working on the Plastics Prohibition Regulation 2023 for the Islamabad Capital Territory.

This regulation will establish a comprehensive framework and timeline for phasing out single-use plastics, while also leading by example on a plan to reduce and then ban the use of single use plastics by the entire federal government.

In a demonstration of the federal government's commitment to reduce plastic waste in Pakistan, Shehbaz Sharif has directed the Prime Minister House to stop using single-use plastics, which like the Ministry of Climate

Change and Environmental Coordination, will lead the way in phasing out and restricting the use of Polyethylene terephthalate or PET bottles in Federal Ministries, and Divisions across the board.

The Prime Minister called upon all stakeholders, including citizens, businesses, civil society organizations, and the media, to renew their commitment in fight against plastic pollution and preserving the planet's biodiversity for future generations.

Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman, in her message said that the consequences of plastic pollution are intense and long term, as it irreversibly damages our environment and threatens the very fabric of life on earth.

She urged a call for action as plastic production is set to triple by 2060 if no serious measures are taken to stop it.

The Minister shared the 7R's Action Agenda which marks the country's commitment to combat plastic pollution and initiate its journey towards reducing plastic waste.

These 7 R's are reduce, redesign, reuse, recycle, responsibility, research, and resource.INP

Pervaiz Elahi kept in same block where Sanaullah spent his days in Camp Jail

LAHORE: Former Punjab chief minister and PTI President Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi who was on a 14-day judicial remand has been kept in the Security Block of the Camp Jail in Lahore, it came to light on Monday.

This is the same block where Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah was kept during his detention days in the previous regime.

According to jail authorities, medical tests were run on Elahi last night and all his reports which have come today are normal.

The jail officials further said that Elahi would be provided jail food and he would not be allowed cuisine from home.

They said as per the routine, the accused involved in the anti-corruption cases can meet their relatives on Monday or Thursday. Elahi can meet his family on any of these two days, they added.

A magistrate court in Lahore Sunday turned down the Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE)'s plea seeking former Punjab chief minister Parvez Elahi's physical remand and sent him on a 14-day judicial remand. He was shifted to Camp Jail by ACE officials.

On Sunday, Elahi was presented before the court by ACE officials amid tight security after he was re-arrested for the second time in two days on Saturday.

Elahi was arrested from outside his house in Gulberg on June 1 in a corruption case. However, the court termed the charges against Elahi not "well-founded" and discharged him. Soon after his discharge, Elahi was

taken into custody again by the ACE officials in two cases — filed in Gujranwala — accusing him of causing a loss of Rs100 million to the national exchequer and receiving kickbacks during his time as Punjab chief executive.

On Saturday, Elahi was produced before Judicial Magistrate Mohammad Afzal's court in Gujranwala.

After the arguments from the ACE and Elahi's lawyers, the court discharged the PTI president in both cases and ordered his immediate release if he was not required in any other case.

But the PTI president was arrested yet again on Saturday — this time for making illegal appointments in the Punjab Assembly. This is the same block where Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah was kept during his detention days in the previous regime.

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LAHORE: President Jamiat e Ulema e Islam, Maulana Fazal Ur Rehman and Federal Minister for Communication Maulana Asad Mehmood calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Private university van looted in Karachi

KARACHI: In yet another incident of street crimes, robbers on Monday looted a van of a private university in Karachi's Gulistan-e-Jauhar.

According to details, the van of a university female student and teacher was looted by two robbers, riding motorbike, in Gulistan-e-Jauhar.

The female students and a teacher were robbed of their mobile phones and cash, while the robbers fled the scene safely after throwing the key of the vehicle.

Earlier in March, businessmen and traders of Karachi threatened total shutdown of markets against the "rising street crimes" in the metropolis.

Addressing a press conference, President Karachi Electronic Dealers Association (KEDA), Mohammad Rizwan Irfan, said that the Sindh government has "completely failed" in controlling the street crimes in Karachi, pointing out the recent incident, wherein a "Rickshaw gang" took away mobile phones and cash worth Rs15m from shop in the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) area.INP

Five killed, 13 injured in van-dumper collision

PHALIA : Five people died as a result of a terrible collision between a dumper and a passenger van in Phalia on Monday.

The accident took place near Pahnianwali Adda area of Tehsil Phalia in Mandi Bahaudin, when a dumper and a passenger van collided due to high speed and five people were killed including the driver and three women, while 13 passengers were injured.

The rescue team shifted the dead bodies and injured to a hospital. The driver of the dumper fled after the incident.INP

May 9 riots: Another primary culprit involved in Jinnah house attack arrested

ISLAMABAD: In a recent development, the investigators on Monday unearthed another primary miscreant involved in the riots happened on May 9 at Jinnah house, Lahore.

According to the details, another primary miscreant, identified as Ali Raza, travelled from Okara to attack at Jinnah house in Lahore.

The alleged culprit Ali Raza revealed that the speeches of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership provoked him against the army.

"I became a part of the mischief as per the pre-arranged plan. Hassan Niazi, Yasmeen Rashid, Ijaz Chaudhry and others were included in the plan made on May 9 at Zaman Park," Ali Raza revealed.

"I along with the party leaders took part in the arson and vandalism at Jinnah house, Lahore. We were influenced by the anti-army speeches and became a part of the arson attack," He concluded. INP

People urged to save ecosystem from environmental degradation

MULTAN: Commissioner Multan Division Aamir Khattak urged the people to do their part to save the ecosystem from environmental degradation and promised a sustainable development policy to combat climate change that would boost socio-economic activities across the country.

Khattak, in a message on the occasion of World Environment Day, observed across the globe on Monday, reiterated the importance of creating mass awareness among the public about global warming and its adverse effects on lifestyle. He said that World Environment Day 2023 is being celebrated with the theme of eliminating plastic pollution.INP

Sindh's mangoes to enter Chinese market: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: China offers Pakistan a huge market to earn sizable foreign exchange by exporting different varieties of mangoes, reports WealthPK.

In this regard, a delegation of Chinese importers recently visited the Sindh Agricultural University, Tandojam and expressed interest in the mango varieties. They spoke to scientists and progressive farmers about the business opportunities in Sindh's mango-producing regions. It was mutually decided to promote the Mango Value Addition Programme in order to gain access to the lucrative international markets.

The Sindh Agriculture University is working on mango value addition, processing and by-products, and such products are of export quality.

The Chinese investors plan to import 6,000 tons of mangoes from Sindh and Punjab. In the initial phase, they'll import 6,000 tons of mangoes for processing.

They were looking for mangoes that were rich in pulp and could be grown from May to September.

Pakistan exported 37.4 tons of fresh and dried mango to China from January to September 2021, which represented a 10-time increase compared with the last year. However, this export figure is not an unsurpassable amount given the huge size of the Chinese market. The Pakistani mango accounts for less than 0.36% of China's total mango imports.

So, there exists a huge potential for exploration, which entails joint efforts for more Pakistani mangoes to enter the Chinese market.

Talking to WealthPK, Senior Scientific Officer at the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) Dr Nur Ullah said China had already helped Pakistan in several challenges, and with its advanced technology, Pakistan could also overcome this challenge. "Pakistan needs to strengthen its ties with China.INP

SC issues order of last hearing on audio leaks commission

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has issued its order of the previous hearing on the applications against the audio leaks commission.

The order says that the attorney general for Pakistan (AGP) told the court the federal government has objected to the bench. The next hearing on the petitions will be held on June 6.

The AGP told the court the federal government had filed a written application against the judges.

The registrar's office should register the federal

government's application, the order stated.

The parties may file a reply to the response of the audio leaks commission, it further said.

The office raised objections to Riaz Hanif's contempt of court petition, the SC order said, adding that if Hanif wants, he can remove the objection and file the application again.

The next hearing on the petitions against the audio leaks commission will be held on June 6, according to the order.INP

China extends cooperation to Pakistan to develop dairy industry

ISLAMABAD: China is extending cooperation to Pakistan to develop its dairy industry through production of high milk-yielding cows, the Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi (AAUR) said.

The goal of the cooperation is to improve genetic variations of cows being used in Pakistan for dairy farming. This can be achieved by breeding elite animals with high yields and long lives, and with better embryos, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Monday.

To this end, the Royal Group of China has established a laboratory in Lahore to develop buffalo embryos of elite animals.

The company also plans to set up a buffalo dairy farm of 8,000 heads. The China-Pakistan coop-

eration in the production of high milk-yielding cows is expected to contribute significantly to the development of Pakistan's dairy industry.

It aims to increase milk production, improve the quality of dairy products, enhance farmer incomes, and ultimately meet the growing demand for milk and dairy products in the country.

"China and Pakistan have been collaborating in different fields of agriculture and livestock, specifically in the production of high milk-yielding cows."

This cooperation aims to enhance Pakistan's dairy industry by introducing and breeding superior breeds of cows known for their high milk production capabilities," said AAUR in a statement.INP

Elections to be postponed for another 6 months, PPP leader claims

KARACHI: Pakistan People's Party leader and Adviser to Chief Minister Sindh on Agriculture Maznoor Wassan, known for his political forecasts, ruled out possibility of martial law in the country.

He said, "I don't see the holding of general elections on time and there are chances elections could be postponed from six months to a year."

He said that a time will be sought for holding accountability then elections will be held.

It is pertinent to note that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that general elections in 2023 will take place on time and the government aimed to complete the census and compile results before it.

Earlier, speaking to a delegation of Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE), Shahbaz Sharif stated that polls will take place in August or September 2023 and holding elections on time will strengthen democracy.INP

Road to Makkah: Hajj flights for Pakistani pilgrims start via Jeddah

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Religious Affairs spokespersons announced the commencement of Hajj flights of Pakistani pilgrims on government quota through Jeddah as Saudi Airlines flight carrying 340 pilgrims arrived in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) capital Jeddah.

Religious Affairs Ministry spokesman said that pilgrims via Road to Makkah were sent to Makkah by eight buses.

The spokesperson confirmed that 3387 more Pakistani pilgrims will reach Jeddah by 11 flights on June 6 (Monday).

Earlier, two flights from Islamabad and Multan reached Jeddah in which 1,500 Pakistani pilgrims reached Makkah via Jeddah.INP

Direct Hajj flights from Quetta officially kicks off

QUETTA: In a significant development, direct Hajj flights from Quetta have officially kicked off, marking a milestone for pilgrims in the region. Last night, a total of 145 pilgrims embarked on their sacred journey to Medina directly from Quetta.

The initiation of direct Hajj flights from Quetta brings great relief to pilgrims from Balochistan, streamlining their travel experience to the holy land of Hajj.

Quetta International Airport witnessed yet another significant breakthrough as it welcomed the commencement of these special flights. The PK-747 aircraft, operating on the new Runway Category-II, made a successful first night landing before embarking on its journey to Medina with the 145 Hajj pilgrims onboard.

Prior to this development, PK-6133 and PK-6137 had facilitated the travel of

three hundred Hajj pilgrims to Medina. Previously, pilgrims from Quetta had to undertake the additional leg of their journey to Karachi before heading to the holy land.

Pilots expressed their utmost satisfaction with the new experience of landing on Quetta Airport's state-of-the-art CAT-II runway during nighttime.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) spokesperson highlighted the recent upgrades that have made direct flights possible from Quetta. Thanks to the recent expansion, the runway now extends over an impressive length of 12,000 feet, allowing for more extensive operations. The installation of the modern CAT-II airfield lighting system on the new runway guarantees smooth and reliable operations in various weather conditions. The spokesperson further revealed that the enhanced facilities at Quetta Airport have opened INP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting to discuss proposals for providing relief to poor and middle class in the upcoming budget.

Massive potential in Pakistan to boost olive production: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Sprawling olive farming has sparked a silent revolution in the Pothohar region, and the initiative has listed Pakistan the 19th member of the International Olive Council.

"Pakistan, with suitable swaths of land and environment for olive cultivation, has the potential to become one of the leading olive exporters," said Dr Imam-ul-Haq, a horticulturist associated with Barani Agricultural Research Institute Chakwal, while talking to WealthPK. He said the fields of Pothohar region in Punjab province have a suitable climate for olive cultivation, as wild olives grow abundantly in areas such as Kallar Kahar, Khora, Mandial, Kunhatti Bagh and Kufri areas. Dr Imam said olive plantation is being carried out with limited capacity in different areas of the country. However, he said, owing to suitable climate, Chakwal has been named as "Olive Valley". He said it

takes five years for an olive seedling to bear fruits with proper care.

Dr Imam said Pakistan has the potential to surpass Spain, the world's largest olive oil producer, as it has 10 million acres of land suitable for growing olives, much more than Spain's olive-growing areas.

Pakistan is producing approximately 1,500 tons of olive oil per year and 830 tons of table olives, bringing new financial opportunities for farmers and also helping the country to cut its import bill.

During the last decade, large-scale cultivation of olive plants in Pothohar region of Punjab and northern areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, particularly in Bajaur tribal district, has begun to deliver fruitful results. The initiative has helped tackle some of the effects of climate change such as soil erosion and desertification, and generate new opportunities to farmers. INP



KARACHI: Pakistan Navy Personnels and students of Bahria University cleaning the beach on the occasion of World Environment Day.