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Second buy-back of 2023: Kohinoor Textile Mills announces 30m share buy-back



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PTI regime dismantled strong economy passed on by PML-N in 2018: Maryam



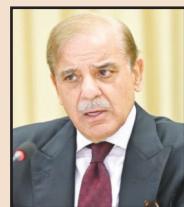
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CDWP clears 10 development projects worth Rs87.17bn



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Reforms to be undertaken in National Energy Efficiency Authority: PM



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2600 DEAD, THOUSANDS INJURED AS DEADLY QUAKE HITS PARTS OF TURKIYE, SYRIA

ANKARA
AGENCIES

A major earthquake of magnitude 7.9 struck central Turkey and northwest Syria on Monday, killing about 2600 people and injuring thousands others as buildings collapsed across the snowy region, and triggering a search for survivors trapped in the rubble.

The quake, which hit in the early darkness of a winter morning, was also felt in Cyprus and Lebanon.

"I have never felt anything like it in the 40 years I've lived," said Erdem, a resident of the Turkish city of Gaziantep, near the quake's epicenter, who declined to give his surname.

"We were shaken at least three times very strongly, like a baby in a crib."

Turkey's disaster agency said 76 people had been killed, and 440 hurt, as authorities scrambled rescue teams and supply aircraft to the affected area, while declaring a "level 4 alarm" that calls for international assistance.

Volunteers look for trapped under rubble after 7.9 earthquake hit parts of Turkiye, Syria.

State broadcaster RTR showed rescue workers in Osmaniye province using a blanket to carry an injured man out of a collapsed four-storey building and putting him in an ambulance. He was the fifth to be pulled from the rubble, it said.

President Tayyip Erdogan spoke by telephone with the governors of eight affected provinces to gather information on the situation and rescue efforts, his office said in a statement.

A Syrian health official said more than 230 people had been killed and some 600 injured there, most in the provinces of Hama, Aleppo and



Leadership offers condolences

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

President Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have expressed their condolences to Turkey and Syria after a massive earthquake killed hundreds and caused extensive damage to property.

The powerful 7.8 magnitude earthquake rocked southeastern Turkey and northern Syria early Monday, toppling hundreds of buildings and killing more than 600 people. Hundreds were still believed to be trapped under rubble, and the toll was expected to rise as rescue workers searched mounds of wreckage in cities and towns across the area.

On both sides of the border, res-

idents jolted out of sleep by the pre-dawn quake rushed outside on a cold, rainy and snowy winter night, as buildings were flattened and strong aftershocks continued.

Rescue workers and residents in multiple cities searched for survivors, working through tangles of metal and giant piles of concrete. A hospital in Turkey collapsed and patients, including newborns, were evacuated from a handful of facilities in Syria. In their separate messages, members of the government conveyed sympathies to the governments and people of the affected countries and expressed grief over the loss.

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Latakia, where numerous buildings tumbled down.

"The situation is very tragic, tens of buildings have collapsed in the city of Salqin," a member of the White Helmets rescue organisation said in a video clip on Twitter, referring to a town about five kilometres from the Turkish border.

The rescuer on the clip, which showed a rubble-strewn street, said homes were "totally destroyed".

President Bashar al-Assad was holding an emergency cabinet meeting to review the damage and discuss the next steps, his office said.

State television showed footage of rescue teams searching for survivors in heavy rain and sleet. Health officials urged the public to help take the injured to emergency rooms.

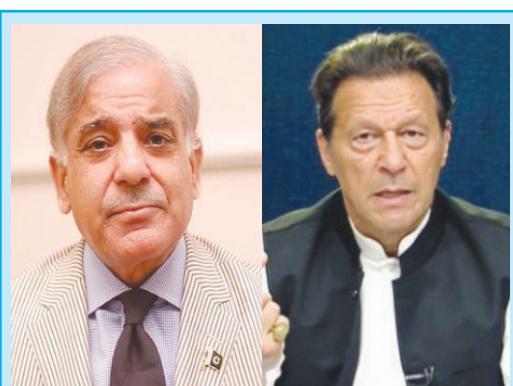
"Wounded people are still arriving in waves," Aleppo's health director, Ziad Hage Taha, told.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in Aleppo posted photographs of blocks of stone that had crashed down onto its mezzanine.

In nearby countryside, rescuers carried a bloodied, wailing baby out of a collapsed building, while, in the town of Azaz, a crane prised away slabs of concrete as rescuers carried away a body wrapped in a sheet.

Many buildings in the region had already suffered damage in fighting during Syria's nearly 12-year-long civil war. People in Damascus, and in the Lebanese cities of Beirut and Tripoli, ran into the street and took to their cars to get away from their buildings in case they collapsed, witnesses said. The United States was "profoundly concerned" about the quake in Turkey and Syria and was monitoring events closely, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said on Twitter.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 05



Thaw on cards as PTI drops hint on attending APC

■ PTI LIKELY TO ATTEND APC IF FEDERAL GOVT SHOWS FLEXIBILITY

■ GOVT POSTPONES MOOT FOR TWO DAYS AFTER PTI'S 'SIGNAL' TO ATTEND MOOT

ISLAMABAD
MIAN ABRAR

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) on Monday dropped a hint on attending the All Parties' Conference (APC) if formally invited by the federal government. Sources told Pakistan Today that the positive signal conveyed from the PTI was the major reason that the federal government on Monday decided to delay the APC for two days – pushing the moot to February 9. The sources said that a breakthrough was on the cards after initial back-channel contacts between the federal government and the PTI was poised to attend the moot if the federal government may show flexibility on major issues. PTI central leaders lashed out at the "imported government" for its policy of political victimization and revenge, saying that the PTI did not receive any formal invitation pertaining to participation of the 'imported Prime Minister-convened APC' to discuss the alarming upsurge of terrorism in the country. In a statement on Monday, PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry and former NA speaker and PTI senior leader Asad Qaiser said that the PTI leaders would consult their participation in the APC once the party received a formal invitation in this regard.

Fawad Chaudhry said that they came to know about Shahbaz Sharif's invitation to the PTI pertaining to the participation in the APC through media but the PTI did not receive any formal invitation in this regard hitherto. Fawad Chaudhry said that after receiving a formal invitation, they would consult regarding participation of the party in the conference. Asad Qaiser said that the government representatives invited him to participate in the APC over the phone the other day, which, he said, was not a proper way of invitation. He said that

they were cognizant of the fact that the country was suffering from serious crises and there was a dire need for unity at this juncture. However, he said that the government's behavior was immature, which was main stumbling block in creating an environment of unity. He made it clear that if the government was really serious in dealing with mounting problems, it had to change its attitude and had to demonstrate maturity to pull the country out of the prevailing quagmire. Asad Qaiser went on to say that the PTI government had uprooted terrorism from the country through a better strategy and established peace in across the country.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 05

Pak-IMF talks end without consensus on power sector subsidies, primary deficit

ISLAMABAD
SHAHZAD PARACHA

A week long technical talks between Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) ended on Monday without building consensus on power sector subsidies and primary deficit.

Sources said that both sides will start discussion on policy level talks from tomorrow (Tuesday) to finalize the Memorandum of Economic Policies Framework (MEFP) and they will try to sort out the pending issues.

Sources said that the Pakistani side could not convince the IMF team about curtailing the energy sector circular debt.

The Fund wanted the government to increase electricity tariff to overcome losses of DISCOs besides withdrawing Rs100 billion energy related subsidies to the export sector.

Sources said that the government has given assurance that it will withdraw Rs100 billion subsidies to the export sector, however provinces will be free to subsidize the export sector on their own. Meanwhile, the government team has also assured the IMF that they shall make cuts in PSDP as well as increasing the electricity tariff to overcome energy sector circular debt.

On the other hand, the government team has also shared a plan with regard to reducing the circular debt of the oil and gas sector.

As per the plan, the government will make a cash injection in a single day worth Rs 543 billion to SSGC and SNGPL.

The government will pay Rs 241 billion to SSGC and Rs 302 billion to SNGPL. The amount received by SSGC will further clear the circular of OGDCL. The SSGC will be able to repay Rs 154 billion loan to OGDCL and

Rs87 billion to Govt Holdings pvt Ltd, sources added. In addition, SNGPL will pay Rs 172 billion to OGDCL, Rs 90 billion to PPL and Rs 40 billion to GHPL, sources added.

Sources said that IMF has also forecasted 0.9% primary deficit against the budgeted estimation of 0.5 percent during this year.

Sources added that the IMF team has also shown concerns over non implementation of Single Treasury Accounts as a number of departments still are operating accounts in private banks. Sources also added that the IMF team remained committed to its demands with regard to increasing of GST from 17 to 18 percent GST on all goods with a point of view that one percent GST hike will help in collecting another Rs 39 billion, sources added.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 05

FORMER MILITARY DICTATOR MUSHARRAF'S BODY TO BE FLOWN TO PAKISTAN

DUBAI

AFP

THE body of self-exiled former military ruler Pervez Musharraf, who became a key US ally during the "war on terror", is expected to be repatriated on Monday. Musharraf, who fled Pakistan in 2016 for medical treatment after a travel ban was lifted, died on Sunday aged 79 in Dubai after a long illness.

Senior officials who asked not to be named said his body would be repatriated on Monday, with a burial expected later in the day.

Musharraf seized power in a 1999 bloodless coup and was acting simultaneously as the army chief, chief executive, and president when the 9/11 attacks on the

United States took place.

The general twice suspended the Constitution and was accused of rigging a referendum shoring up his power, as well as rampant rights abuses including rounding up opponents during his nearly nine-year rule.

"In the end, he left Pakistanis with a deep distaste for a direct military rule — so that even though the military wields much power behind the scenes now, it does not want to be in power directly again," Madiha Afzal, an analyst from the Brookings Institution, told AFP.

Musharraf became Washington's chief regional ally during the invasion of neighbouring Afghanistan, a decision which put him in the crosshairs of militants, who made several attempts on his life.

But it also earned Pakistan a huge influx of foreign

aid which bolstered the economy.

In Pakistan, where the military remains supremely powerful and enjoys significant support, Musharraf is a divisive figure. "There was good in him," 69-year-old Naem ul-Haq Satti, a retired civil servant, told AFP in an Islamabad marketplace.

"But his one act, which will be remembered throughout history, was he violated the constitution," he added. "The most important thing a country has is its constitution." Musharraf had been suffering from a rare disease known as Amyloidosis and last summer his family said he had no prospect of recovery.

Senior military chiefs "express heartfelt condolences on the sad demise of General Pervez Musharraf", a brief statement released by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the military's media wing, said Sunday.



Khan slams federal govt for suspending Punjab's Rs400b health card scheme

ISLAMABAD

STAFF REPORT

Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Imran Khan has expressed annoyance over federal government's decision of concluding health card scheme in Punjab. Taking to Twitter on Monday, he wrote that health card scheme was a blessing for majority of the population of the province, especially at the time when entire nation was in the grip of high inflation. Imran Khan further stated that due to this health insurance, the private sector was establishing hospitals in rural areas of the country. The renowned health journal weekly Lancet also lauded the health card scheme of Punjab, he added. Conclusion of health card scheme exposes the degraded mentality of the corrupt political parties occupied by two families. It should be mentioned here that the federal government has ceased the present form and volume of 400 billion health insurance scheme of Punjab under which all sections of the society were being facilitated without any discrimination of their financial status.

Gwadar to soon get 100MW from Iran as NTDC completes transmission line

ISLAMABAD

STAFF REPORT

The Gwadar region will soon get 100 megawatt power from Iran as National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) has completed the transmission line. The NTDC in line with the directives of Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Federal Minister Energy Engr. Khurram Dastagir Khan has completed the 29 kilometer long, double-circuit from Polan to Gwadar. Consequently, Pakistan's transmission system in the region will become capable to import additional 100 MW from Iran. Testing of circuit-II of the said transmission line was completed the other day, whereas testing of circuit-I will be carried out on February 07, 2023. Evacuation of additional 100 MW power will be started through this transmission line in the next few days. This import of additional power from Iran will be beneficial for the people of Gwadar & Makran division in terms of power adequacy, reduction in load shedding and will increase the confidence of the key business players and investors to tap the opportunities provided by the Gwadar region for their potential businesses.

Economy to face challenges even after IMF deal, Miftah Ismail warns

ISLAMABAD

STAFF REPORT

Former finance minister Miftah Ismail has predicted that things on the economic front would "remain tight" even if the government manages to secure the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) bailout programme.

Pakistan — with a \$350 billion economy — is seeking a crucial instalment of \$1.1 billion from the IMF to avoid default.

"Things will be tight for a while but we can get enough loans for now that we will get some room," Miftah replied to a

question asked during a question and answer session held by the former financial czar on the popular microblogging site, Twitter, on Sunday.

His response came to the question: "If we secure the IMF's tranche, will \$1.1 billion be enough to manage economic challenges? In addition, even if we add some more amount from bilateral donors, who are awaiting [the] IMF nod, our reserves will still continue to dwindle because of external payments, then what's the solution?"

The PML-N stalwart, however, said that for the future "we have to figure out a way to export more".

Pakistan is spiralling deeper into crisis amid a shortage of dollars and accelerating inflation, with reserves falling to a nine-year low.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar is facing the difficult task of convincing the IMF that the country is ready to implement other tough measures, including raising taxes and gas prices.

However, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif earlier today — while addressing the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly in Muzaffarabad, — again said that the "country is facing substantial financial challenges", with the IMF "combing

every book" and reviewing "everything" and "every subsidy" during the ongoing negotiations over the ninth review of the \$6.5 billion loan programme.

Miftah — in response to a question regarding the economic damage caused due to the delay in the resumption of the bailout programme — said that Pakistan lost credibility in the eyes of international players, which is "very costly".

"Plus we lost a few billion dollars in remittance and exports and in lost loans. And finally, this delay resulted in many factories closing, shortages, etc. So quite a bit of loss," he added.

PM orders to restore Wikipedia, says Marriyum Aurangzeb

ISLAMABAD

STAFF REPORT

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Monday said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had directed to restore the Wikipedia website with immediate effect.

"The prime minister has also constituted a cabinet committee on the matters related to Wikipedia and other online content," the minister said in a tweet.

She said the five-member committee, spearheaded by Minister for Information Technology and Communication Syed Amin Ul

Haque, included Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb, Law Minister Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, Minister for Trade Syed Naveed Qamar, and Minister for Communication Asad Mehmood.

PM Shehbaz Sharif constituted the committee as well as issued the directives for the restoration of the Wikipedia website in light of the recommendations of a ministerial committee, which conducted the "preliminary examination of the matter (Ban on Wikipedia)".

The ministerial committee included the ministers for Information and Broadcasting, Law and Justice, and Economic Affairs.

Sindh cabinet decides to start wheat procurement from Feb 15

KARACHI

STAFF REPORT

The provincial cabinet of Sindh has decided to start wheat procurement from March 15 at a rate of Rs. 4,000 per 40 kg, approved Rs 58.7 billion for relief work, enhanced the scope of the Rapid Response Force and created Crowd management unit to respond during violent public disorder.

The cabinet was held under the chairmanship of Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah here at CM House and was attended by provincial ministers, advisors, special assistants, Chief Secretary Sohail Rajput, Chairman P&D Hassan Naqvi, PSCM Fayaz Jatoi, and other officers concerned.

CM Advisor on Law Murtaza Wahab briefed the media about the cabinet decisions.

At the outset, the cabinet condemned the terrorist attack in Peshawar that claimed over 82 innocent lives and vowed to "eradicate terrorists and their facilitators from our ranks" and also expressed solidarity with the people of Türkiye where southern areas have been hit by a deadly earthquake.

The cabinet appreciated the chief minister's visit to Peshawar where he visited the blast site and the hospital to give consolation to the injured. The cabinet also endorsed the CM's announcement of Rs one million compensation each for the families of the martyrs in the blast and Rs. 500,000 for the injured. The cabinet also decided to dispatch 100,000 blankets to Türkiye for quake-hit people.

The general administration department told the cabinet that during the floods and unprecedented rains, Rs 58.7 billion were released, including

Rs27,648.452 million for relief and rehabilitation, Rs8,390 million for a subsidy to farmers on Rabi Crop 2022-23, Rs1000 million for provision of fodder, Rs14,150.3 million for the repair of Irrigation works, Rs3,628.63 million for the survey or damages and related works, Rs3925.952 million for KMC and DMCs to repair bus routes and other works and Rs985.405 million for medicines purchase.

The chief minister directed the Advisor Agriculture to coordinate with the federal government that has been provided Rs8.39 billion for a subsidy to farmers on rabi crops for timely distribution through BISP. The cabinet approved the amount of Rs25.036 billion released/to be released onward for relief and rehabilitation. The cabinet took up the issue of recent recruitments in the police department wherein there were some complaints of fake domicile. Shah said that the recruitment was made purely on merit only for locals. The chief minister directed the chief secretary to get all the domiciles of newly recruited in the police department verified so that genuine candidates could be hired. The cabinet was told that the Inspector General Police has sent a summary for the expansion of the Rapid Response Force (RRF) and the establishment of the Crowd Management Unit (CMU). The Rapid Response Force (RRF) is an anti-terrorist and anti-dacoits force operating throughout Sindh, established in 2009. The RRF, in addition to core responsibilities, provides security to vital installations such as Oil Refineries, the Supreme Court & High Court at Karachi, the CM House, the Assembly Building, Security of VVIPs & Cricket Teams, important Religious, political, or Social gatherings.

SC dismisses bail plea of corruption accused over withdrawal of application

ISLAMABAD

STAFF REPORT

The Supreme Court on Monday rejected the bail plea of railway corruption accused Adnan Shafai over withdrawal of petition. A three-member SC bench comprising Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Amin-Ud-Din Khan heard the case. During the course of proceedings, the counsel for the accused said that his client was 20 grade officer and could not run abroad. On which Justice Sardar Tariq Masood remarked that the big ones run out. The lawyer of the accused told the court that Rs 2.2 million were allegedly taken while Rs 3.3 million were returned. Justice Sardar Tariq said that the money was returned after the accusation. Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi said that returning Rs 1.5 million from a bank transaction proved guilty. The counsel said that his client was in Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) custody for last six months. Advocate Mian Sohail counsel for the plaintiff said that the accused had caused a lot of damage to the railways while he took more than Rs 15 million from his client for various purchases. Pakistan Railway had also registered a case against the accused, he added.

Usama Satti case: Court awards capital punishment to two convicts

ISLAMABAD

STAFF REPORT

The district and sessions court of Islamabad has handed down death sentence to two convicts and sentenced three others to life in prison in Usama Satti murder case. Additional Sessions Judge Zeba Chaudhry pronounced the verdict. The court asked all the media representatives and unrelated persons to leave the court before pronouncing the verdict. Sources learnt that the accused namely Iftikhar Ahmed, Saeed Ahmed, Shakeel Ahmed, Mudassar Mukhtar and Muhammad Mustafa were produced in the court handcuffed. The court sentenced Iftikhar Ahmed and Muhammad Mustafa to death and imprisoned Saeed Ahmed, Shakeel Ahmed and Mudassar Mukhtar for life. It is to be noted here that on January 1, 2021, 22-year-old Usama Nadeem Satti was shot dead by the personnel of anti-terrorism squad in the G-10/4 area of Islamabad.

Two Chinese nuclear power units delivered to Pakistan

BEIJING

MONITORING REPORT

China has delivered two nuclear power units to Pakistan, according to the China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC). With the inauguration of Unit 3 of the Karachi Nuclear Power Plant (K-3) on Thursday, the two million-kilowatt Hualong-1 units K-2 and K-3 have now both officially been delivered to Pakistan and formally put into operation, said the CNNC. The CNNC said it has built two nuclear power stations in Pakistan with a total of six nuclear power units. Among them, the Karachi K-2/K-3 nuclear power plant is the largest nuclear power plant in Pakistan and the first million-kilowatt-grade single-unit power project in the country. Since entering commercial operation, the K-2 and K-3 units have generated nearly 20 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity, making contributions to Pakistan's social and economic development, it said. At the same time, the project has provided more than 60,000 jobs for the local people throughout the whole cycle, said the CNNC. Hualong-1 is a form of third-generation nuclear power technology independently developed by China.

ONE-MAN COMMISSION TO RECOMMEND J. SALIK FOR TOP CIVIL AWARD

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

CHAIRMAN One-Man Commission on Minorities Rights, Dr Muhammad Shoaib Suddle, in recognition of Convener World Minorities Alliance J. Salik's exceptional services to the cause of minorities decided to recommend the government to award him the top civil award Hilal-e-Pakistan, and nominate him for this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

The letter to Julius Salik also J. Salik

reads: "Julius Salik is God's exceptional gift to Pakistan. His momentous struggle for democracy began during the martial law of General Zia. His passion for tirelessly fighting for the rights of the oppressed in unorthodox ways soon made him the undisputed champion of the human rights of the hapless minorities."

The former Federal Minister for Population Welfare was thrice elected as a member of the Parliament (National Assembly) – in 1988, 1990 and 1993. In 1994, he joined the cabinet as Federal Minister of Population Welfare. In 1996,

Prime Minister Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto recommended him for the Nobel Peace Prize, describing him as the "nation's conscience."

J. Salik founded the World Minorities Alliance in 1980. "Though I had long observed the growing crusade of this jewel in the crown of Pakistan's Christian community, we had not met since 1995 when I headed Rawalpindi Division as Police Chief. I was pleasantly surprised when on 11 August 2022 J. Salik phoned me from Maryland, USA, to appreciate my work as the One-Man Commission for Minority

Rights at the Supreme Court of Pakistan. While thanking him, I requested him to return to Pakistan as the minority community needed a rare leader like him – a leader who enjoyed the legendary integrity, courage and trust associated with his name," he added.

Dr Suddle went on to mention, "J. Salik and his wife visited the Office of One-Man Commission on October 12, 2022. After presenting a flower bouquet, they invited me to visit a Christian Primary School in H-9 Islamabad a couple of days later to which I readily agreed. I was given a rousing reception on reaching the school. In his

welcome address, Mr. Salik listed many difficulties faced by the Christian community. I assured that every effort would be made to address the problems faced by both teachers and students."

At the request of Mr. J. Salik, he also visited Islamabad's Kachi Abadis including France Colony F-7/4, Miskin Colony, Musharraf Colony G-8, and J. Salik Colony G-8 on 23 November 2022. The concerned senior officials of CDA, IESCO, and Sui Gas were directed to be present during the visit.

"I must say that I was shocked to see the miserable living conditions of the inhabitants of these colonies. In my capacity as Chairman One-Man Commission for Minority Rights, I there and then issued appropriate time-bound directions to the accompanying officials and thanks to Mr. Salik's untiring follow-up the required work has begun in earnest."

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) scheduled the local bodies' elections for Islamabad on 24 December 2022.

Pakistan Embassy enters into partnership with Qyer to promote tourism

BEIJING
STAFF REPORT

The Pakistani Embassy in Beijing has entered into a strategic partnership with a travel sharing platform, Qyer, to promote the stunning tourism offerings of Pakistan to the world. This collaboration is aimed at maximizing the impact of the China-Pakistan Year of Tourism Exchanges 2023, which promises to be an exceptional showcase of Pakistan's rich cultural heritage and scenic beauty. The year-long digital campaign will be an in-depth exploration of the diverse aspects of Pakistan, including its breathtaking landscapes, vibrant culture, diverse cuisines, joyful festivals, and treasured heritage. Through Qyer's vast network of travelers, Pakistan's tourism potential will be showcased to a wider audience, creating greater awareness and interest among Chinese tourists. China has helped transform Pakistan's tourism by building road infrastructure under the framework of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. This year, with recent policies aimed at resuming outbound tourism for Chinese citizens and promoting Pak-China year of tourism, China is expected to play a crucial role in revitalizing Pakistan's confidence in tourism promotion, as the country was once a primary source of tourism for the rest of the world. Since its establishment in 2004, Qyer has served over 100 million travelers, making it the leading travel sharing platform in the region.

Containers of goods from China on way to reach Khunjerab Pass

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

A number of containers of goods needed for Pakistan are on their way to reach Khunjerab Pass, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. Khunjerab Pass on the China-Pakistan border is a strategic point on the Karakoram Highway, which links China's northwest Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region with Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region. The Chinese side has agreed to Pakistan's request for the temporary opening of the Khunjerab Pass and the facilitation of customs clearance for supplies from Jan 30 to Feb 10, 2023. The Customs works round the clock to facilitate customs clearance. On January 30, 11 loaded containers carrying goods urgently needed by the Pakistani side such as auto parts, polyester cloth, garments, utensils, roll paper, and tape arrived at Sost Dry Port. It is pertinent to mention that Khunjerab Pass is temporarily open from Jan 19 to 20 for the first time this year to transport goods from China to Pakistan.

Rashakai SEZ to start operation in March as construction advances

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Rashakai Special Economic Zone (SEZ) will start operation in March as construction advances, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday.

According to the report, it a sunny day on the Rashakai SEZ project. With a white helmet on, Engr. Samee Ullah is on his routine inspection of the project site with Chinese colleagues, reviewing daily progress and discussing possible on-site electricity-related issues.

The Rashakai Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is a flagship project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), jointly developed by Chinese and Pakistani companies.

A spokesperson from CRBC Pakistan, the Chinese undertaker of the SEZ, told China Economic Net (CEN) that construction work of the first phase of the Rashakai SEZ will be completed in March.

The spokesperson noted an important part of Rashakai SEZ Phase I construction is power transmission and transformation, and that construction work is in full swing. "The construction work is nearing completion. This is our achievement and a moment of excitement for all project team," said Engr. Samee Ullah, electrical engineer and external affairs director at the Rashakai SEZ project and recipient of the award for outstanding Pakistani staff in CPEC projects 2022.

In his role, Engr. Ullah is mainly responsible for overseeing the

construction of a 132kV grid station and 11kV distribution network at the Rashakai Special Economic Zone.

At the initial stage, the power transmission and transformation work hit snags due to inadequate information about the local power grid, causing a delay in the compilation of the System Study Report, which required a detailed plan of project design and construction.

However, Engr. Samee Ullah quickly stepped up to the challenge after joining the project team in May 2021. "I collected and studied a large amount of project data, and actively discussed with the project team on the response plan using my own learning and experience," Samee Ullah told CEN proudly, "I also worked closely with the local power

department to find the best solution and gain official approval." During the construction of the SEZ, Ullah was meticulous about details. He carried out various on-site inspections and proposed efficient and effective solutions to any problems that arose. To ensure on-site construction quality and efficiency, the detail-minded engineer would explain the design drawings to the on-site personnel and clarify the design intent. Samee Ullah told CEN that as the Rashakai SEZ nears completion, the main tasks will be to make standard procedures, rules and regulations for enterprises. "To achieve the above goals, we have to go through a lot of technical, commercial and legal procedures which may take some time, but we are pretty much hopeful and determined for this."

PBC expresses concern over provision of protocol to bring back Musharraf's body

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Haroon-ur-Rashid Vice-Chairman and Hassan Raza Pasha Chairman Executive Committee of the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) have expressed their condolences for bereaved family, on passing of General (R) Pervaiz Musharraf.

However, they expressed their serious concerns upon provision of extraordinary protocol for repatriation of body of Pervez Musharraf to Pakistan by sending special airplane to UAE on the expenditures of taxpayers of the Country and committing great loss to the exchequer, especially during current worst economic condition.

The TLTP learnt that the PBC said that he usurped the power after coup in October, 1999 and ruled in Pakistan as Former Army Chief and then

President of Pakistan till 2008 while abrogating the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973 and was guilty of high treason under Article 6 of the Constitution. He subverted the Constitution of Pakistan, twice, first on 12th October, 1999 and again on 03rd November 2007, when imposed Emergency and Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973 was held in abeyance/suspended. They expressed that the Special Court has been awarded death sentence to him in the High Treason case under Article 6 for abrogating the Constitution. He was absconder of Pakistani Courts and should not be given official protocol being convicted person. The Pakistan Bar Council filed appeal against Pervaiz Musharraf in high treason case which is still pending before Hon'ble Supreme Court. They paid tribute to late Mr. Justice Waqar Ahmed Seth, Former Chief Justice, Peshawar High Court, for his historic Judgment in High treason case against Pervaiz Musharraf.

Karachi Assistant Commissioner Hazim Bangwar insists he is male

KARACHI
STAFF REPORT

Newly-appointed Assistant Commissioner of North Nazimabad Karachi Hazim Bangwar has shut down all the troll and said that he is neither transgender nor a woman. "I am male." He also added that being called a woman should not be an insult. He said: "These are misconceptions and some

misunderstanding. Let me clear something that never have I ever held colorful flag. I hadn't associated myself with any organization. A lot of people are accusing me of being transgender or even a woman. No, I am male. The fact that you called me a woman and used it as an insult, however, offended me. Such a charge did not offend me personally. However, I thought they were disrespectful to moms, sisters, working women, and female officers.

Govt detains PTI leaders, journalists to divert public attention from inflation, unemployment: Asad

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) came down hard on the imported government for rising fascist tendency and rolling back the public welfare initiatives taken by the PTI government one by one amidst spiraling inflation. PTI central Secretary General Asad Umar said that the imported government has come up with new ways to divert public attention from the worst inflation in the history and rising unemployment in the country. He said that the imported government resorted to detain PTI leaders and well-known journalists so as the media could discuss these issues instead of the pain and agony inflicted by the imported government during its short few months rule. PTI Senator and former finance minister Shaukat Tarin criticized the government for blocking Punjab Health Card scheme and said that the imported government was rolling back the initiatives taken by the PTI government to improve the lives of the poor brethren one by one. "Kamyab Pakistan, Panahagahs, Ehsan ration and now flagship Sehat card were rolled back," he added. "Concurrently, the extravagant foreign trips by a bloated cabinet continue. People of Pakistan will not forgive you for this," Shaukat Tarin added.

MPs laud CPEC during visit of projects in Sind, Thar

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Parliamentarians visiting CPEC projects in Sind, termed Thar as 'bulwark of Pakistan's future Energy Security' as Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed said that Pakistan's natural wealth key to reviving national economy instead of perpetual dependence on IMF.

The delegation was organised by Pakistan-China Institute (PCI), in cooperation with Power China in Port Qasim and Shanghai Electric and Sind Electric Coal Mining Company (SECMC) in Thar.

The delegation was led by Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairman, Senate Defence Committee and PCI. During the three-day visit, the delegation first visited the Power China project at Port Qasim, which generates 1320 megawatts of electricity. Power China CEO Guo welcomed the delegation and briefed them on the project.



The Port Qasim power plant, an Early Harvest project of CPEC, provides electricity to over four million homes through clean energy, and it emits environment-friendly white smoke, using supercritical technology. The project has generated jobs, provided revenue to Pakistan worth over \$ 600 million in taxes and duties, and contributed to resolving Pakistan's chronic energy shortage.

Then on day two of the Sind CPEC projects tour, the delegation flew to Thar where it first toured the

Sind Electric Coal Mining Company (SECMC), which is a joint private-public partnership with support of the Sind government and China, witnessing the driving of dumper trucks by Thari women, in a living example of Women's empowerment.

The delegation also visited the newly established 1320 megawatts power plant established with investment from Shanghai Electric. China's total investment has been \$ 26 billion, generating 85,000 jobs, including 12,000 in Thar, plus 28,000 Pakistani students now study in China, resulting in a huge socio-economic transformation of the country, thanks to CPEC.

Over 5000 megawatts of electricity have been added to the national grid and some 700 kilometres of road infrastructure have knit the Federation of Pakistan closer together facilitating easier and faster travel.

Speaking to the workers of CPEC projects in Port Qasim and Thar, Senator Mushahid Hussain termed CPEC as 'single most transformative initiative for

economic development in the last 30 years, as it provided a basis for energy security, employment, and changing lives and livelihoods of the people of Pakistan'. Senator Mushahid Hussain said that 'Pakistan has huge natural resources, including mineral wealth, natural gas and maritime wealth which needs to be exploited for the blue economy.'

Thar alone has 175 billion tons of coal reserves, more than the oil reserves of Iran and Saudi Arabia put together. Thanks to CPEC, this 'black gold' is now contributing to the national economy. The natural gas reserves in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are several times higher than these reserves in Sui'.

The Senator added, "if we truly exploit and utilise our mineral wealth, natural gas, and offshore blue economy, cumulatively worth almost a trillion dollars, Pakistan can bid goodbye to the IMF handouts, which we have received for 23 times, without bringing about quality change".

ABBASI FOR MEETING OF NA COMMITTEES' CHAIRMEN TO BUILD CONSENSUS ON ISSUES

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

MINISTER for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi on Monday urged Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durran to call a meeting of chairmen of all the standing committees of the National Assembly (NA) to build consensus among the stakeholders over certain issues.

Responding to the apprehensions of NA Special Committee on Affected Employees Chairman Qadir Khan Mandokhail in the National Assembly, he said the respected chairman should take the ministries concerned into confidence before passing any directions to them.

The minister made it clear that nobody could challenge the discretionary powers of the august committee being in the constitutional domain.

He mentioned that the state institutions

were bound to follow the Supreme Court orders on the matter of sacked employees, therefore, "we should not blame our respective colleagues for ignoring the instructions of the special committee".

The minister it was against the parliamentary norms to speak against fellow beings without any logical reason or evidence.

Earlier, Qadir Khan Mandokhail pointed a finger at some ministers for non-implementation of his committee's directions in some departments working under their respective ministries.

He viewed that due to their non-cooperative behaviour, his committee was being made ineffective, which was a breach of the privilege of august House.

Taking a serious note of Mandokhail's reservations, Deputy Speaker Durrani directed the departments to follow the special committee's instructions in letter and spirit, as in case of failure, the House would take appropriate action against them.

He said the special committee was a committee of the NA and non-implementation of its directions would be considered a breach of the House.

Seconding the stance of Mandokhail, Pakistan Peoples Party's Shagufta Jumani cited the example of the sacked employees Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution, whose service matters had not been resolved yet by the quarters concerned, and they were living a miserable life.

She also raised the issue of the lack of medical and para-medical staff and non-availability of medicines at a medical clinic established in the Parliament Lodges to provide healthcare facilities to its inhabitants.

Muttahida Qaumi Movement's Muhammad Abubakar informed the House that the Federal Investigation Agency was raiding the houses of Pakistan International Airlines employees who were terminated from services on the grounds of fake degrees to recover the amount received by

them as salary and perks & privileges.

He said there was no use of the special committee if its recommendations were not implemented by the departments concerned.

PPP's Syed Agha Rafiullah said the houses of poor people located in the Labour Colony, Karachi were being demolished as the Pakistan Railways land was being retrieved as per the Supreme Court orders.

He asked the chair to refer the matter to the committee concerned so that an amicable solution could be found.

Responding to Rafiullah's query, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi said the respective member should have raised the issue of their compensation instead of stopping the process of retrieving the Pakistan Railways land.

He said action against the grabbers of railway land was being taken in compliance with the Supreme Court orders.

Polish ambassador highlights potential for economic growth in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Polish Ambassador Maciej Pisarski has expressed his belief in Pakistan's potential for economic growth despite its current challenges. He praised the country for its beauty, advanced road network, and potential for energy self-sufficiency. Poland, he said, is providing assistance to Pakistan in the exploration of gas reserves. The ambassador also highlighted the Polish efforts in supporting refugees from the Ukraine war and the promotion of employment and trade in the region as a solution to improve the situation. He noted that trade between Pakistan and Poland is expected to increase and that there are ample educational opportunities for Pakistani students in Poland. The Ambassador emphasized the availability of study visas for genuine students, but warned against those seeking a Schengen visa through Poland.

Ali Raza Rizvi offers condolences to quake-hit Syrian nation

LAHORE
NEWS DESK

Ali Raza Rizvi, Chairman Pakistan-Syria Joint Business Council of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry, has expressed condolences to the people and government of Syria over the loss of precious lives due to the earthquake in Syria. He said that the sympathies of the Pakistani people are with the people of Syria in this hour of sorrow. May Sabr Jameel and the deceased rest in peace, he added. Rizvi said that Pakistani are extremely saddened by the loss of precious human lives. "Pakistan is with its Syrian and Turkish brothers in this hour of trial. The people of Pakistan will provide all possible support to the Syrian and Turkish brothers in dealing with the disaster of the earthquake," he added.

Diaspora encouraged to intensify efforts in highlighting plight of occupied Kashmir

LUTON
STAFF REPORT

The president of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry, has called on the Kashmiri diaspora to increase their efforts in bringing attention to the struggles faced by the people of Kashmir under Indian state terrorism in the occupied region. While addressing a gathering in Luton, England, Chaudhry highlighted the current harsh circumstances faced by the residents of Jammu and Kashmir under illegal occupation. He also visited a Sikh Gurdwara in Luton where he was received by Secretary-General Man Singh and received the support of the Sikh community for the Kashmiri cause. The president further emphasized that India's treatment of not only the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir, but also of Muslims, Sikhs and other minorities within India, was unjust and inhumane. He pointed out that India's mistreatment of minorities has put New Delhi in a negative light globally.

Sri Lankan senior officials arrive in Pakistan for training

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

A group of 19 senior civil servants from Sri Lanka have arrived in Pakistan for a two-week executive training at the National Defense University (NDU), Islamabad under Pak-Sri Lanka Higher Education Cooperation Programme.

According to HEC, this is the third

batch of Sri Lankan officials on training under the programme, being executed by Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan. HEC has already conducted two other cohorts of such executive training for senior civil servants of Sri Lanka with the collaboration of National School of Public Policy (NSPP), Lahore.

The group comprises senior delegates representing different departments of the

Sri Lankan Government, including Public Administration, Provincial Councils, Home Affairs, Local Government, the Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA), the Police, and the Prime Minister's Office. The delegation comprises Additional Secretaries, Director Generals, CFOs, Consultants, and Directors.

During their stay in Pakistan, the Sri Lankan officials will be engaged in multi-

ple interactive workshops on International Relations, Geopolitics, Mechanisms for strengthening regional cooperation, Bureaucracy Frameworks, Artificial Intelligence, Planning, and Regional Integration. There will be numerous cultural visits in between the training sessions.

Officials from HEC and National Defense University (NDU), Islamabad received the delegation at the airport.

Minister stresses need to enhance exports for sustainable economic growth

ISLAMABAD
MONITORING REPORT

Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal said that Pakistan needed to enhance its exports for sustainable economic growth and development.

"Pakistan's sustainable and self-reliant economy depends on how fast we can increase our exports as this is the only solution to ending our dependence on international financial institutions," the minister said while addressing a ceremony of a report, Next Generation Report, here. He said Pakistan would get out of the economic swamp if it could elevate exports out of the indigenous resources from 32 billion U.S. dollars to 100 billion dollars in the next five to eight years.

"We have to work hard to catch up with the emerging economies in the world. The country is presently facing big economic challenges, but they are not bigger than our capabilities and resolve to overcome them," he added.

Talking about the young generation



of the country and their role in economic development, Iqbal said that the Pakistani government had undertaken various initiatives to cater to the aspirations of the youth, who comprises more than 60 percent of the total population.

"Empowering our youth is empowering Pakistan. Youth is our future. The fu-

ture of Pakistan is pinned on our youth, who have to steer the country forward with positive thinking," he said.

Iqbal also emphasized the need to promote collaborative potential in youth to face future challenges, saying the future of the world lies in teamwork, and not in individual work.

IHC bars police from proceeding with cases against Rasheed in Sindh, Balochistan

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday prohibited the police from proceeding against Awami Muslim League (AML) leader Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad in the cases filed against him in Lasbela and Karachi.

Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, who was hearing a petition by the former interior minister, issued the orders.

During the hearing, Ahmad's lawyer informed the court of a case registered at Abpara Police Station, another in Karachi, and a third case in Muree. The court was puzzled by the multiple FIRs in different cities for the same incident and asked if the arrest had been made in all three cases.

The lawyer said the arrest was made in

only one case and that Ahmad was "tied to a chair for six hours" and tortured during questioning. The court then stopped police action in the cases against Ahmad in Karachi and Lasbela and issued notices to bar councils, the attorney general, and the advocate general of Islamabad. The case was adjourned until February 9.

Meanwhile, a district and sessions court in Islamabad Monday adjourned the hearing of his request for post-arrest bail till Tuesday.

The hearing of the case resumed at 12:30 pm, with the prosecutor informing the court that the investigation officer was missing. The petitioner's counsel requested two days to prepare the case, leading Judge Umar Shabbir to adjourn the hearing until Tuesday.

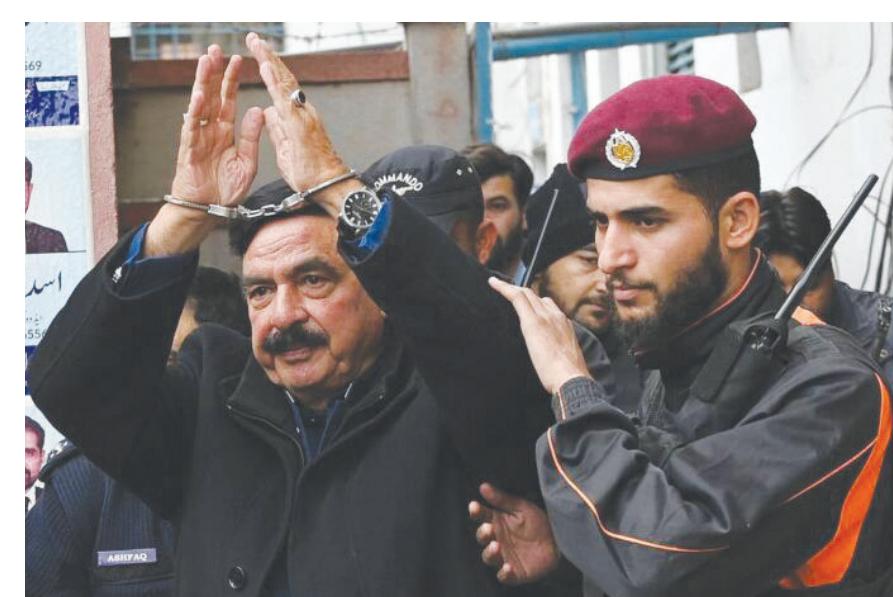
Ahmad is currently in jail on judicial

remand. He was arrested in connection with allegations against Zardari and later had another case registered against him by Muree Police.

The FIR was lodged by investigation officer Ashiq Ali, charging Ahmad with interfering in official affairs, physically assaulting and threatening police officers, and resisting arrest. Ahmad's two employees were also implicated in the case.

According to the FIR, Ahmad resisted police efforts and threatened them with consequences when they arrived at his residence.

The former minister faces charges under multiple sections of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), including criminal conspiracy, promoting enmity, and threatening to cause harm.



SENATE BODY TAKES NOTE OF CONTINUOUS ABSENCE OF INFORMATION MINISTER FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

THE Chairman of Senate Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting Senator Faisal Javed on Monday expressed serious reservations over the continued absence of the Minister for Information and Broadcasting from the committee meetings.

The chairman of the committee said that the representatives of the relevant journalistic and media organizations/bodies will be invited to the committee meeting to look into the problems faced by the journalists and after hearing the views of all the stakeholders, a plan of action will be formulated to deal with the threats to the well-being of the

journalists and the freedom of expression.

The meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting was on Monday at Parliament Lodges with Senator Faisal Javed in Chair.

PTV officials gave a detailed briefing to the committee on the issue raised by Senator Fida Muhammad regarding the approval of service structure of PTV news correspondents recruited on contract basis in 2015/16.

MD PTV apprised the committee that news correspondents were recruited on contract basis while there were no approved permanent positions available in PTV News. The matter was referred to the HR committee of PTV, recommendations of which were presented in the PTV board meeting held four days ago.

Decision has been taken by the board to

regularize the services of these news correspondents and they will be regularized soon after the minutes of the meeting are compiled.

The Chairman Committee instructed to keep the Committee and Senator Fida Muhammad informed about all the details in this regard. Issue of delay in payment of pension to the employees of Radio Pakistan was discussed in detail in the committee. DG Radio Pakistan told the committee that Radio Pakistan needs about six and a half billion rupees annually for expenses and currently it is getting four and a half billion rupees. Due to the shortfall of two billion rupees, the institution is facing difficulties in paying the pension and medical bills of the employees.

The chairman of the committee said that the pension payment of poor retired employ-

ees should be the first priority of the organization and the matter should be taken up with finance ministry.

DG Radio Pakistan said that by privatizing the land and buildings in various cities owned by Radio Pakistan, substantial money can be obtained which will enable payment of all these expenses. He further informed that the work in this regard is going on. Senator Irfan Siddiqui inquired whether the organization has hired any consultant or firm to privatize the assets of Radio Pakistan or the organization is doing all this work itself. Senator Syed Waqar Mehdi asked about the buildings of Radio Pakistan in Karachi. He said that the tower of Radio Pakistan in Karachi has been rented out to other organizations for very little money and one building is being used by Pakistan

Rangers. Secretary Information informed the committee that letters have been written to the concerned institutions to hand over the building used by the Rangers. The Chairman Committee established a sub-committee under the chairmanship of Senator Irfan Siddiqui to streamline the issues of Radio Pakistan.

The bill to amend the Right to Information Act presented by Senator Walid Iqbal and other senators was considered. After a detailed discussion on the bill, it was agreed to refer the matter to the Law Department for further clarification. Senators, Fawzia Arshad, Syed Waqar Mehdi, Anwar Lal Din, Irfan Siddiqui, Umar Farooq, Fida Muhammad, Walid Iqbal, MD PTV, Secretary Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and PEMRA officials attended the committee meeting.

PTI regime dismantled strong economy passed on by PML-N in 2018: Maryam

CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE

She said the PTI's promises of creation of 10 million jobs and building of some five million houses were mere bluffs, as thousands of people, including media-persons, were rendered jobless in its tenure.

There was no media freedom during the PTI government, while on the contrary, the PML-N firmly believed in freedom of expression, she added. Social media was being used to mislead the people

through the propagation of lies, she said.

Maryam said the PML-N had always prioritized development activities in South Punjab, including Multan, and it would win elections from the region.

The Sarai Sooba Mahaz was merely an election stunt, which ended with the last general elections. The PML-N would realize the dream of establishing the South Punjab province, she added.

She criticized the PTI for not implementing the National Action Plan (NAP) in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa during the last 10 years. NAP was finalized with the consensus of all political stakeholders but the PTI government willfully avoided enforcing it and consequently terrorism was resurfacing now.

Anti-terrorist operations were carried out during the tenure of PML-N and peace was restored in the country after the sacrifices of many lives, she added.

Maryam said the youth bulge could play a role in the country's development and advised the young generation to take advantage of advancements in information technology. They should, particularly, get skills in artificial intelligence as it was the future of the technology world.

Later, she met PML-N parliamentarians, office bearers, and social media activists of South Punjab.

KE, Ctgsail Ink MoU to explore 1 GW Renewable Energy Projects



KARACHI: Committed to providing clean, affordable, and sustainable power for people of Pakistan including K-Electric's growing base of over 3.4 million customers, CEO K-Electric, Mr. Syed Moonis Abdullah Alvi and Mr. Wang Minsheng, CEO China Three Gorges South Asia Investment Limited (CTGSAIL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on exploring renewable energy including hydro projects across the country, including Azad Jammu & Kashmir. Both companies will also work to develop a roadmap for the installation of grid-scale Battery Energy Storage Systems into KE's network. China Three Gorges South Asia Investment Ltd (CTGSAIL) is a subsidiary of the China Three Gorges International Corporation (CTGI), which is the international business platform of China Three Gorges Corporation (CTG), focusing on clean energy investment, development and operation in more than 40 countries. CTGSAIL has 2.6 GW of generation assets in Pakistan worth over USD 6 Billion and is actively undertaking investments in hydel, wind, solar, and PV power projects across emerging markets in Asia, Middle East and North Africa. "This is a milestone moment for Karachi and its customers, and I am very pleased to be present here today," stated Moonis Alvi on the occasion. PR

Standard Chartered launches SC Sahar Women's Account

KARACHI: Standard Chartered Bank Pakistan Limited (SCBPL) has launched a special bank account for Women named 'SC Sahar'



Women's Account'. This innovative facility will cater to the evolving needs of the Bank's female customers and reflects Standard Chartered's focus on financial inclusion and empowerment of women. The SC Sahar Women's Account will enable women to avail services that include but are not limited to, no initial deposit or minimum balance requirement, free debit card and cheque book issuance, with free account statements and bank certificates. This account can be conveniently operated through the Bank's 24/7 digital banking. The Account is also offered to Business Customers, along with a 'waiver' on installation charges and monthly fee of 'Straight-to-Bank' (S2B) payment platform designed. PR

2600 dead, thousands injured as deadly quake hits parts of Turkiye, Syria

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

"I have been in touch with Turkish officials to relay that we stand ready to provide any and all needed assistance," he said. Meanwhile, Egypt has expressed sympathy and condolences to Syria and Turkey after a strong earthquake struck the countries on Monday and has offered to help in eliminating the consequences, the Egypt's Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "Egypt expresses its sincere condolences to the families of the victims and the brotherly Syrian and Turkish people in this hour of grief, emphasizing its readiness to help in dealing with the consequences of this terrible catastrophe," a statement read. Earlier in the day, Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Authority said that a 7.4 magnitude earthquake occurred in the Kahramanmaraş province at 04:17 a.m. local time (01:17 GMT). At least 300 earthquake-related deaths have been reported across seven provinces, while another 2,383 people were injured. In addition, strong tremors were felt in neighboring Syria, resulting in extensive damages and deaths.

Pak-IMF talks end without consensus on power sector subsidies, primary deficit

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

The fund has also emphasized the Pakistani team not only for abolishment of income tax exemption but to impose Rs180 billion flood levy to meet FBR's revenue target.

Sources said that Finance Minister Ishaq Dar still sticks to not imposing sales tax on petroleum

products as he thinks that a new wave of inflation will follow.

Sources said that the IMF agrees to subsidize energy related tariffs in the Kisan package as well as the Balochistan tube well scheme.

The government team will also give a roadmap for the privatization program during the policy talks, sources added.

Leadership offers condolences

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

In his message, Prime Minister Sharif called for global action in response to the growing threat of climate change-related natural disasters.

He conveyed his condolences to the government and people of Turkey and emphasized that the impacts of climate change are not confined to a single country or region. He said these events are a wake-up call for the international commu-

nity to act urgently for the benefit of humanity and the planet. He expressed Pakistan's support and solidarity with Turkey, recalling Turkey's past support to Pakistan in times of need.

The prime minister also offered his support to Turkey in any way possible. Sharif conveyed his deepest sympathies to the bereaved families and prayed for the departed souls to rest in peace and for the quick recovery of those injured.

Thaw on cards as PTI drops hint on attending APC

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

He said that the PTI always kept the interest of Pakistan supreme in its every policy due to which we got the desired results.

"We are ready to forget all our differences for peace in the country, but the imported government

needs to change its behavior first," Asad Qaiser concluded.

APC ON TERROR RESURGENCE PUSHED TO FEBRUARY 9: Meanwhile, Marriyum Aurangzeb, the information minister, announced on Monday that the government has postponed the All Parties Conference (APC) in Islamabad from Febru-

ary 7 to February 9.

The conference aims to address important challenges facing Pakistan and will involve discussions on a joint strategy to combat terrorism and a review of the National Action Plan (NAP) adopted following the attack on Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar in 2014.

CDWP clears 10 development projects worth Rs87.17bn

CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE

The forum cleared the Reconstruction of Turbat-Mand Road from M-8 till Iranian Border-Radeeq at the cost of Rs 20,992.875m to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNE).

The revised project additionally envisaged the completion of 410-meter long and 8.2-meter wide two lane Niheng Bridge at Rodbun, District Kech, Baluchistan Province at the cost of Rs 673.688m. The starting point of the project extends from the existing Nehang Bridge, the South side embankment of which has been washed away due to floods.

The forum also recommended the construction of Pun Panjgur-Gichak-Awaran Road, District Awaran at the cost of Rs 29,638.353m to the ECNE. This entails the construction of 228-kilometer long and 7.3-

meter wide (3.65-meter wide each) asphaltic carriageway, starting from Panjgur – Gichak – Awaran, District Panjgur & Awaran, in the Southern Baluchistan Region. The road will connect Gichak with Panjgur, as well as with Karachi via Bela-Hoshab Road. Similarly, the reconstruction of Mangopir at the cost of Rs 3190.432m was also cleared by the forum. The CDWP furthermore approved the project, Strengthening Institutions for Refugees' Administration SIRA at the cost of Rs 2,043.000m. The Ministry of States and Frontier Regions is mandated to deal with the issues related to Afghan refugees. The Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CCAR) being an attached department of the Ministry of SAFRON is the operational arm to manage Afghan refugees. CCAR and its Provincial Afghan Commissionerate's offices are responsible for advis-

ing/ providing inputs on policy matters and implementing the policies of the Ministry of SAFRON on Afghan Refugees' issues. It is estimated that nearly three million Afghan Refugees are living in Pakistan i.e. 1.436 million Afghans with Proof of Registration Cards (POR) for their identity; in addition to approximately 840,000 Afghan Citizen Card holders and an estimated 700,000 undocumented Afghan living in Pakistan. The Ministry of SAFRON with the technical assistance of the National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA) has registered these Afghan refugees. The Government of Pakistan has allowed UNHCR to conduct refugee status determination (RSD). Individuals recognized as refugees at the outcome of the UNHCR's RSD process and members of their family are issued with UNHCR Refugee Identity cards, known as Proof of Registration (PoR) cards.

Moreover, the 26 MW Shagharrang Hydropower Project in Skardu was recommended at the cost of 17,972.902m to the ECNE. The Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan is the sponsoring agency of the project. The main objective of the project is to exploit the potential of hydropower available in the middle stretch of Kachura Lungma to generate 26 MW output, which will augment power to the existing electricity network of the area to resolve power shortage to the consumers of load centers in Skardu valley.

The CDWP also approved the establishment of a Cancer Hospital in ICT (Revised) at the cost of Rs 3,406.169m. The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination is the sponsoring agency of the project. This project envisages the establishment of a 200 bedded state of the art hospital for indoor admission of various types of cancer patients. The division of the beds include 75 beds for adult oncology, 25 beds for women oncology, 25 beds for ICU, 30 beds for private and 20 beds for emergencies.

Furthermore, the forum approved of the Gwadar Safe City Project (Phase-1) at the cost of Rs 4,966.905m. Government of Balochistan is the sponsoring Agency. This project seeks to provide a safer city for the residents of Gwadar particularly at the identified strategic locations and also helps the law enforcement agencies in detecting and investigating crime by collecting evidence. Gwadar is relatively an unsafe city, with many foreign governments advising their citizens against traveling there. The current infrastructure is insufficient to cater to the security needs of Gwadar city. Gwadar safe city has been developed precisely to help all government stakeholders including the city administration, Gwadar police and other Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) to mitigate the security and communication challenges.

Finally, establishment of the National Forensic Science Laboratory at the cost of Rs 1978.422m was also approved by the forum. The Ministry of Interior is the sponsoring agency of the project. The laboratory will be established in ICT.

06 PAKISTAN TODAY COMMENT

Sorry legacy

► What they don't teach you at Artillery School

TRIUMPHS - as the victory festivities for returning generals in ancient Rome were called - were quite the spectacle. An extravaganza where all the stops were pulled out and the general in question was given a welcome that was a sight to behold. Subdued versions of these triumphs formed the model for all military celebrations for centuries since then.

But perhaps the one aspect of Triumphs that some modern armies don't teach, is the tradition of having a man standing behind the general in the same chariot, constantly whispering into his ear *sic transit gloria* ("all glory fades") and *memento mori* ("remember you are mortal").

The world might have seen a sea change since the days of the ancient Roman empire but those two lines are as immutable now as they were back then.

General Pervez Musharraf has died, as anyone who lives will, eventually. He leaves behind a sorry legacy, though; a fate that everyone that has lived does not have to share.

After carrying out one of the worst snafus in our military history, he toppled an elected government. Participated in a global war on terror, the terms of which would have been entirely different had the country been run at the time by an elected government, and not by a nervous military junta afraid of international sanctions. And then, to twist the knife, played a double-game in that very war, the consequences of which we are facing till this very day.

On the political front, though he wasn't the first dictator to have indulged in massive political engineering, it was still a harmful endeavour with or without the distinction of having been the first. Our ever stunted political evolution was set back decades.

The supposed economic progress that his remaining acolytes cite, was merely increased consumption as a result of dollars coming to the country in the aftermath of the war on terror, not systemic and sustainable economic growth.

Allowing free broadcast media in the country, too, was something that would have taken place anyway, and was a comment on technology, not state acquiescence. If private channels could be illegally beamed into North Korea, the only remaining state that practices old school totalitarianism, they sure could in lively and bustling Pakistan; the Musharraf regime thought it would give in and try to get some brownie points, styled in the 'benevolent dictator' mould.

The attacks on journalists, rights activists and political activists that marked his tenure notwithstanding, it was his brazen confrontation with the judiciary that proved to be his undoing, sparking off a lawyers' movement so unique that it made headlines the world over.

High on his power, surrounded by lackeys that often flank dictators, he famously pumped his fists in the air during a ceremony, while images of a thuggish political ally party of his in Karachi, killing its opposition members were beamed live on TV.

Lackeys often have the gift of the gab, but none are known for whispering those timeless words of caution, 'all glory is fleeting, you are but a mortal man...'

PAKISTAN TODAY
Dedicated to the legacy of late Hameed Nizami

Arif Nizami (Late)
Founding Editor

Yousaf Nizami
Editor

M. A. Nizami | **Aziz-ud-Din Ahmad** | **Umar Aziz**
Joint Editor | Joint Editor | Executive Editor

Striving for autonomy

► Pakistan is a friend, not a slave



SAMRA HAMID

prime minister (Liaquat) is average while the remaining cabinet is below average" which declared the additional issue of political vacuum, the new state faced.

Moreover, the unfair division of Indian subcontinent was not an accident but rather a pre-planned malice to destabilize Pakistan. As, Mountbatten using an unequivocal blunt manner said, "Administratively it was the difference between putting up a permanent building, a Nissen hut or a tent. As far as Pakistan is concerned, we are putting a tent. We can do no more." Empirically, this justifies their priority resulting in the unjust division of the east and the west of Pakistan. As a result of unfair division and India's led insurrections in east Pakistan, consequently resulting in tensions between the West and East of Pakistan exacerbated leading to losing the eastern territory. Whereas, it could have been prevented by declaring Bengal a separate state from the beginning of the partition. Resultantly, this elaborates on how the colonial masters exploited and disregarded the making of Pakistan, its resources, and human capital, viewing it merely as a tent that depicts its non-permanent status.

Since 1947, the malicious division of Muslim-majority states, particularly Bengal remained a major concern among the leaders of the newly established state of Pakistan. Therefore, it later on became the ground of conflict between West and East Pakistan. Similarly, even though Muslims of the subcontinent who asked for an independent separate land achieved their goal, but the seeds of divide and rule among them were deeply rooted. Resultantly, triggering provincial jealousies, particularly in the smaller provinces of Sindh, Balochistan, and the former North-West Frontier (today Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) led to socio-ethnic challenges preventing the state from becoming a nation.

Additionally, the challenge of countering ethnic groups' fight over their territory and the undecided border between Afghanistan and Pakistan created chaos between the neighbours. Resultantly, blocking economic opportunities and creating security concerns for Pakistan. Likewise, the sister state India remained a constant threat as it was granted the best of resources, industries and economic structure. Whereas Pakistan was not an industrial zone, as an underdeveloped region was handed over to the Muslims of the subcontinent. Even the banking system, money, and currency were with India, limiting Pakistan's commercial options.

Likewise, these grounds provided the west to play their game of interest in the region by exploiting Pakistan. As a result, the western military and financial support that should be a compensation for colonialism and exploitation became a favour to Pakistan. In exchange for those advantages, the West utilized Pakistan and compelled it to change its policy toward its neighbours. For instance, the incident of 9/11 and the US forcing it to do more, ordering a sovereign,

To sum up, Pakistan is and will remain important for the west, geopolitically against the emerging power, China.

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yet financially dependent state to be on the US's block and threatening of bombing Pakistan to the stone age can be counted as examples of Western hegemonic designs. The impactful period of the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s cannot be ignored either, when the US abandoned Pakistan, putting it under sanctions with trained mujahidin and heavy armaments in its neighbour, Afghanistan.

A similar statement, by Hillary Clinton, the former US Secretary of State, confessing about the funding of the Taliban during the cold war and compelling Pakistan to join their war further verifies their approach towards Pakistan. She acknowledged that "We also have a history of kind of moving in and out of Pakistan. I mean let's remember here the people [Taliban] we are fighting today we funded twenty years ago... What we sow we will harvest. We then left Pakistan [after the disintegration of the Soviet Union]. We said, okay fine, you deal with the stingers that we have left all over your country, you deal with the minds that are along the border. And by the way,

we do not want to have anything to do with you, in fact, we are sanctioning you". Surprisingly, even after much effort of the west to play with its broken toy, Pakistan managed to become a nuclear state, it has a reliable ally, China, in its neighbourhood with whom it has both military and civil relationships and a large army which is capable, credible and communicative.

To sum up, Pakistan is and will remain important for the west, geopolitically against the emerging power, China. Similarly, Pakistan's nuclear capabilities are one of the reasons the West cannot entirely abandon Pakistan as it did with other Muslim states such as Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan. Only if Pakistan did not have nuclear weapons, it would have suffered the same fate as the rest of the Muslim world.

Pakistan must become self-sufficient and autonomous in its economy and politics to eliminate its dependency on the West. To do so, Pakistan's political elite should work together to develop long-term economic plans/economic models that are certain to remain unchanged for the next ten to fifteen years. Furthermore, the collaboration among the political parties will also help in focusing on the prioritization of national agendas. Similarly, by doing so, Pakistan would be able to make autonomous decisions that will not only benefit the state's interests but also its economic growth. Furthermore, as Pakistan cannot change its neighbours, fostering relations based on trade and commerce with them would be advantageous and productive. Lastly, establishing law and order would help minimize corruption, thus bringing forth more suitable leadership for Pakistan ultimately, taking Pakistan on road to socioeconomic and political prosperity.

The writer is a Research Assistant Fellow at the Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN), Quetta

Cyber deterrence

► Is it possible?

RIMSHA MALIK

CYBER deterrence is the use of threat and defensive strategies to prevent or discourage cyber-attack on a country or organization. The goal of cyber deterrence is to create a disincentive for potential attackers by making it clear that the consequences of an attack will outweigh any potential benefits. This can include both proactive measures, such as strengthening a country or organization's cyber defenses, and reactive measures, such as the threat of retaliation. Cybersecurity professionals predict that by 2025, global cybercrime would cost \$10.5 trillion yearly. To reduce cyber-related dangers, states must develop effective deterrent measures and strong, effective methods.

China and the United States have distinct policies for cyber deterrence. China's policy is focused on protecting its critical infrastructure and national security interests through a combination of legal measures, technical means, and international cooperation. The Chinese government has also been accused of using cyber espionage to acquire sensitive information from other countries.

The United States, on the other hand, has a more proactive approach to cyber deterrence. The U.S. government has emphasized the need for strong cyber defenses and has launched offensive cyber operations in response to perceived threats. The U.S. has also imposed sanctions and indictments on individuals and organizations involved in cyber activities that threaten U.S. national security. Additionally, the U.S. has also been promoting international norms of responsible state behavior in cyberspace. Both countries have sought to shape the global governance of cyberspace to align with

their respective interests and values, which has resulted in a certain level of tension between them.

In the global cybersecurity index, Pakistan is ranked 79th. As new forms of warfare threaten states, terms like "cyberwars," "cyberattacks," and "cyber-intrusions" have crept into the discourse of state security. Pakistan has a relatively sophisticated cyber warfare capability and has been involved in a number of cyber attacks against its adversaries in the past. It is not clear what specific cyber deterrence strategies Pakistan employs, but it is likely that the country has a mix of defensive and offensive capabilities.

Cyber deterrence is possible, but it can be challenging to implement effectively. One of the main challenges of cyber deterrence is that it can be difficult to attribute cyber-attacks to a specific individual or group. This makes it difficult to determine whom to hold accountable and what specific actions to take in response to an attack. Additionally, the constantly evolving nature of technology and the internet makes it challenging to stay ahead of potential threats and to effectively defend against them.

Another challenge with cyber deterrence is that it requires a complex, multi-layered approach that includes both defensive and offensive measures. This can involve implementing robust cyber security measures, developing a strong incident response plan, and having the capability to respond to attacks in a timely and effective manner. Despite these challenges, governments and organizations are actively working to develop and implement strategies for cyber deterrence. This includes cooperation on a global scale, sharing information, and building trust among nations in order to better detect and respond to potential cyber threats. However it is challenging, Cyber deterrence is possible, but it requires a multi-layered approach and ongoing efforts to stay ahead of evolving cyber threats. The policy primarily employs deterrence by denial, which involves denying the offender any benefit.

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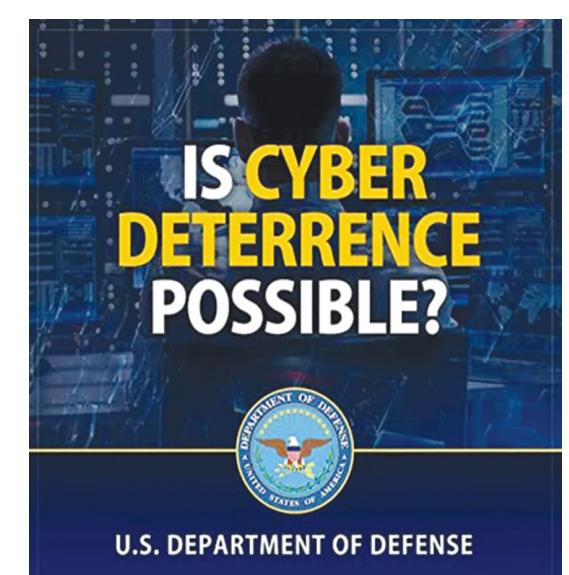
Cyber deterrence is aimed at maintaining peace by preventing or discouraging cyber-attacks from occurring. This can be done through a variety of means, including,

BUILDING STRONG DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES: By fortifying its own cyber defenses, a country can make it more difficult for adversaries to successfully launch cyber-attacks against it.

DEVELOPING OFFENSIVE CAPABILITIES: Having the ability to launch cyber-attacks against an adversary can serve as a deterrent, as the adversary may be less likely to attack if they know they will face retaliation.

DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS: Countries can engage in diplomatic efforts to establish norms of behavior in cyberspace and to build trust with other nations to reduce the likelihood of cyber conflict.

DETERRENCE THROUGH PUNISHMENT: If



a cyber-attack occurs, a country can respond with a variety of measures, including sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and even military action. By using a combination of these strategies, a country can effectively deter potential adversaries from launching cyber-attacks, thus helping to maintain peace and stability in the cyber realm.

Pakistan must establish a centralized command that would act as the main entity in charge of developing military capabilities in cyberspace. The development of a framework for protecting the nation's critical infrastructure from cyberattacks requires collaboration between the government, military, and commercial sectors. The reduction of cyber vulnerabilities requires a strong cybersecurity infrastructure. Further investments in new technologies must be undertaken in addition to the implementation of policies and improving the regulatory framework. This will strengthen the cyber defense, establish a strong posture of deterrence, and improve Pakistan's domestic cyber capability.

The writer is a freelance columnist



Solidarity with Kashmiris

► Indian atrocities continue unabated



MUHAMMAD ZAHID RIFAT

IKE every year, people and the government of Pakistan are observing yet another Kashmir Solidarity Day on February 5, 2023 to reiterate their continued unstinted moral, diplomatic and political support to Kashmiris struggling and suffering at the hands of occupying Indian security forces for securing their birth right of self-determination in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions.

Hearts of Pakistanis and Kashmiris beat together, slogans of "Kashmir Baney Ga Pakistan" and "Pakistan Zindabad" are frequently raised in the Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir territory and Pakistan flags fluttered and hoisted at mosques and other public places and houses on different occasions like India's Republic Day which the Kashmiris observed as the black day. Founder of Pakistan Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah had described Kashmir as the lifeline of Pakistan.

People and the government of Pakistan have been and will continue supporting the just cause of Kashmiris, living in the longest lockdown in illegally Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir, till they win freedom from forcible Indian occupation, exercise their right of self-determination and decide their future themselves in a free, fair and transparent plebiscite under UN supervision.

Through the observance of Kashmir Solidarity Day, the people and the Pakistani leadership will also be giving a clarion call through rallies and meetings for waking up the somehow sleeping international community which even after seeing, observing, noticing and condemning ongoing Indian security forces brutalities and atrocities on innocent Kashmiri men, women, youth and children engaged in unarmed struggle against Indian occupation for more than seven decades but not doing anything more than that.

Pakistan through its leadership has not only revived and activated the lingering unresolved Kashmir issue at all international forums topped by UN General Assembly through its civil and military leadership but also been repeatedly and emphatically telling and warning the world at large that there will be no durable peace and stability in South Asia until the Kashmir dispute is peacefully and amicably resolved on the basis of international legitimacy and Kashmir has quite rightly described as a "nuclear flash point".

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres at also been on different occasions calling and stressing upon neighbouring nuclear power armed India and Pakistan to come together and seriously discuss their problems stemming from the unresolved Kashmir dispute saying there was no military solution to the decades old conflict, it is clear when seeing Pakistan and India, military confrontation between the two would be a big disaster of unmitigated proportion for both countries and the whole world.

According to him, it was absolutely essential to have a de-escalation on the Line of Control, as regards human rights abuses in Indian-occupied Kashmir, it was essential that human rights are fully respected. The world body Secretary was on record to have stated August 8, 2019, immediately after India's unilateral action of revoking special status of Jammu and Kashmir and merging it with the Indian Union, wherein he had called for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute based on UN Security Council resolutions and the UN Charter.

But somehow he has always avoided outrightly condemning India for flagrant violations of the Line of Control (LoC) killing innocent civilians in an unabated manner and also for its gross human rights violations in illegally occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

One cannot help saying that the UN was itself was helpless in getting its own Security Council resolutions implemented to resolve the Kashmir dispute even after more than seven decades of lingering and let the struggling, suffering and bleeding Kashmiris exercise their birth right of self-determination.

One is reminded here also of a guerrilla war which had ensued from 1975 to 1999 between Indonesia and pro-independence forces in which thousands of East Timorese were killed. In 1999 East Timor was placed under UN supervision and on May 20, 2002 Dili became the capital of newly-independent Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

The burning question which arises here is that if the UN could take East Timor under its supervision subsequently leading to its independence from Muslim country Indonesia then why cannot the world body can take over occupied Jammu and Kashmir territory where the bloodshed, violence and human rights violations are going on for decades together in an unabated manner and implement the Security Council resolutions by holding free and fair plebiscite to solve the lingering burning Kashmir dispute.

Was the world body afraid of big country India which is now ruled by Bharatiya Janata Party-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (BJP-RSS) Prime Minister Narendra Modi promoting Hindutva at all costs?

India has all along been clamouring about

Jammu and Kashmir being its integral part in a vain attempt to cheat its own people and befool the international community. It was an established and duly internationally acknowledged fact that Jammu and Kashmir is a disputed territory, India has no other claim over it than that of an occupier, like all occupiers and colonizers of the past, India wants to physically, politically and psychologically crush the indigenous Kashmiri struggle, India has become a nightmare for its minorities.

On August 5, 2019, India had not only unilaterally annulled special status of Jammu and Kashmir but also placed the entire 8 million population of occupied territory under military siege which is continuing for more than three years in an unending manner and the territory remains shut to the outside world with no means of communications, no media and no UN observers visiting there.

Gross human rights violations in the forcibly occupied Indian territory since August 5, 2019 include Kashmiris martyred 410, women widowed 22, children orphaned 56, people injured 1577, people arrested under draconian laws 14487 and largely structures damaged as of August 5, 2021, according to facts and figures compiled by Kashmir Institute of International Relations through close monitoring of happenings in the occupied territory.

As for youth pellet victims and public safety act detentions since August 5, 2019, are concerned large number of Kashmiri youth have been injured by pellets, landed and a couple of thousands arrested under Public Safety Act (PSA).

Indian occupying security forces crimes against besieged Kashmiris since 1989 include killings of more than 100,000, 22,924 widowed, 112,131 rapes, 197,811 orphans and 110, 375 houses and infrastructures destroyed.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also taking various measures in an illegal manner like genocide to turn Muslims majority into minority and getting Hindus settled there in large number under fake domicile certificates.

The Kashmiris just indigenous struggle is continuing, 900,000 strong occupying security forces continuing brutalities, custodial killings and atrocities under draconian laws in an unabated manner, people and the civil and military leadership of Pakistan also continue extending all moral, diplomatic and political support at all international forums, the blood of the Kashmiris will certainly and surely not go waste and they are bound to secure their fundamental basic right of self-determination in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions with the continued blessings of Almighty Allah sooner or later, Inshallah.

The writer is Lahore-based Freelance Journalist, Columnist and retired Deputy Controller (News), Radio Pakistan, Islamabad and can be reached at zahidriffat@gmail.com

“India has all along been clamouring about Jammu and Kashmir being its integral part in a vain attempt to cheat its own people and befool the international community”

EDITOR'S MAIL

Send your letters to: Letters to Editor, Pakistan Today, 4-Shaheed Fatima Jinnah, Lahore, Pakistan.
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Letters should be addressed to Pakistan Today exclusively

PEC beyond access

THE Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), whose responsibility it is to help the country advance in the field of technology and innovation, has become a glaring example of incompetence, mismanagement and carelessness. All the helpline numbers of PEC remain 'busy' all the time, and if, by chance, someone does receive a call, the caller is directed to other extensions to talk to. And, of course, no one takes the call on 'that' extension. All the numbers available on the official website are either dysfunctional or unresponsive. Furthermore, PEC's mobile app is equally problematic and fails to be of any help to millions of engineers. The same is the case with PEC website's continuing professional development (CPD) portal. The Council's IT and CPD departments have failed to make the portal fully operational. It crashes every other day. Engineers across the country face numerous problems, but have nowhere to go to register their complaints.

The PEC's administration and elected governing body must take serious action in this regard and make PEC a more cooperative, efficient and innovation-friendly organisation.

ABDUL QAYOOM
LAHORE

Wasting food

FOOD wastage is a common yet dangerous problem of society. Pakistan is an agricultural country that can easily cater to the food requirements of its people. The fertile soil of Punjab and other provinces, complemented by sufficient water resources provided by the Indus and its tributaries, make Pakistan a country perfect for producing food, not only for its own population but also for exporting to other countries to underpin the troubled economy. Yet, we are faced with severe food insecurity.

The problem became formidable after the devastating floods caused by the monsoon rains last year. The challenge of food security is severe in Balochistan where poverty is ruling unchallenged for many years now. The wastage of food aggravates this problem. A huge amount of food is wasted at weddings, birthday parties and other social events. If this wastage is curbed, more food can be made available to feed the destitute. The government should launch awareness campaigns and bring to light the abject poverty in the country, especially in Balochistan. It is high time we behaved and celebrated responsibly.

NEMAT ULLAH
LAHORE

Dunning-Kruger effect is at play

IN the current post-truth era, where truth no more matters, and when fake information is pedalled and imbibed through osmosis, everyone behaves as the most authentic person in town; the pseudo-savants. The deluge of half-cooked information has produced people with shallow knowledge who are nothing more than intellectual quacks. Such people actually suffer from the Dunning-Kruger effect under the influence of which individuals with half or no knowledge about a phenomenon paradoxically pose as the most authentic source of information on that very topic.

This is to perpetrate intellectual dishonesty and reasoning corruption. Although the Dunning-Kruger effect remained scientifically undiscovered till the late 20th century, it was present in human society as is corroborated in proverbial sayings, like 'a little knowledge is a dangerous thing'.

Even writers through the ages warned of its deleterious impact. Charles Darwin said: "Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge." But now the whole thing has attained pandemic proportions, especially, but not exclusively, in our part of the globe with questionable digital literacy. The ubiquitous affectees, the victims of Dunning-Kruger effect, are ready to express their half-baked opinions unasked on every matter whether it falls in their purview or not. They shun others' opinions with definitiveness without giving a single thought.

It makes them intolerant in discussions and dialogues where they barge into their own. Actually it springs from knowledge gap when they fail to keep pace with the world around them which is moving on at high velocity. Their inflated self-assessment makes them egoistic regarding the acceptance of their opinions. Their inauthentic ideation ends up making them persona non grata in public discourse. The study of the Dunning-Kruger effect in the field of education goes a long way in gauging the rot that is eating into the vitals of our education system. Students spending more time on digital screen are know-it-all, and they do not like to listen to teachers even on topics that require experience-based knowledge. Students gloss over their incompetence because they genuinely and most sincerely overestimate their abilities. It further leads to their inability to recognise that their performance in studies is poor. They are incapacitated to rectify their shortcomings as long as they remain under the spell of their self-delusion. Interestingly, the effect also affects teachers who excel in a given discipline of knowledge and think a task is as simple for their students as it is for them. They express exasperation when students do not perform to their expectations. They seal the students' fate then and there, ignoring the fact they have not come down to students' level in their pedagogical approach. Their own cognitive blind spot does not let them acknowledge the gap between their calibre and that of their students. They will have to come down to their students' learning level to make the learning process comprehensive and effective.

Socrates once said that his wisdom was knowing how much he did not know. And the self-acclaimed 'Socrates' of today simply play the role of some internet search engine, overblown with random knowledge that is doled out the moment someone uses the 'keyword'. The simplest remedy for this suffocating malady is metacognition, that is thinking about one's own thinking. It is to critically watch one's own cerebral behaviour, the self-accountability of one's thought pattern. One needs a few moments of solitude and monologue because the moment one recognises and acknowledges the inherent psychological snobbery, one is half way through the solution. After all, it has hampered one's own positivity and growth. Efforts super-saturated with sincerity and motivation to remove and recognise deficiencies in one's own knowledge or cognition help one in the self-recovery phase. Books and newspapers keep one abreast of a kaleidoscopic range of changes in the global intellectual landscape. Books and newspapers develop mindfulness and soulfulness whereas on the screen every bit of knowledge is flashy and superficial. For starters, such souls first have to demarcate the domain whereat they compare themselves with the others. Everyone is prone to this effect, but openness to feedback, objectivity in analysing others' opinions, and a lifelong commitment to learning can help minimise its impact.

M NADEEM NADIR
KASUR

MIDDLE EAST EYE
AZAD ESSA

HOW SHAH RUKH KHAN'S PATHAAN WILL STRENGTHEN HINDU NATIONALISM

ON THE SURFACE, THE FILM IS AN ENTERTAINING HOMAGE TO CLASSIC 70S BOLLYWOOD CINEMA, BUT AT ITS CORE, IT CELEBRATES MILITARISM AND PROMOTES THE INDIAN ARMY AS A JUST, MORAL ACTOR IN A ROUGH WORLD

IS IT REALLY A SURPRISE THEN THAT PATHAAN USES "GOOD" AFGHAN VILLAGERS TO TRAP HIS PAKISTAN-SPONSORED ADVERSARY? THE PARALLELS WITH RSS AND INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY ARE STUNNING. AND IT DOES ALL OF THIS WITH THE FINESSE OF A PEACEMAKER AND LOVER, AND NOT A HARSH POLEMICIST OR PROVOCATEUR

HERE is a moment in Pathaan, the new Bollywood film that has raked in historic profits in its debut week at the box office, when the titular character, played by Shah Rukh Khan (known as SRK), is asked: "Are you a Muslim?"

He deflects the question and answers that he doesn't know what he is since he is an orphan who was abandoned in a cinema hall. "My country brought me up. That's why I chose to serve my country and joined the army," he adds. The scene tells us everything we need to know about the film and reveals SRK's attitude towards religion in India. But we shall return to that. First, let's talk about the plot.

In the thriller, Pathaan is tasked with stopping a deadly attack planned by an Indian ex-spy, Jim (John Abraham), who joins forces with a Pakistani army general, Qadir (Manish Wadhwa).

The movie villains threaten to unleash a lethal virus over a city in India that would annihilate its entire population. The Pakistani general wants to retaliate against India's decision to revoke Article 370, or the special status of the semi-autonomous region of Indian Occupied Kashmir, while the former spy has a personal axe to grind with his former bosses.

Pathaan, a special agent working at the top of India's intelligence agency, RAW, has to pair up, albeit awkwardly at first, with Pakistani spy Rubina (Deepika Padukone) to save India from the deranged duo.

Since the film's main antagonist is an aggrieved Indian former spy working at the behest of a Pakistani general, it has been applauded for providing some nuance to the longstanding geopolitical rivalry existing between the neighbouring countries. So, in this way, Pathaan, a "good" Indian Muslim, works with Rubina, a "good" Pakistani agent, to prevent a massacre in India orchestrated by a "bad" Pakistani general and a "bad" errant Indian agent.

There are good people and bad people, the film seems to say. It doesn't matter if they are Indian or Pakistani. This, some observers have noted, is the subversive plot that all of India and even Pakistan have been waiting for, as Delhi slides further into authoritarianism and fascism under the Hindu nationalist prime minister, Narendra Modi. And Kashmir, like so many Bollywood films before it, is merely a placeholder.

'RAISED BY INDIA' The success of the film and the reopening of cinema halls to accommodate the returning masses to theatres ravaged by Covid-19 has been seen as a slap in the face to Hindu supremacists who called for its boycott over a saffron bikini scene. It was also interpreted as evidence of SRK's "resistance" to fascist forces who do not see a place for Muslims in India. But is Pathaan really the film we have all been waiting for?

Does it poke at any of the myths of Hindu nationalism and supremacy that have enveloped India over the past decade? For this, we must return to that scene when the whisky-toting-bikini-clad liberal Pakistani spy Rubina (read: "good Muslim") stares longingly at Pathaan and asks if he is Muslim.

After evading the question and expressing his nationalistic pride as the orphan who was "raised by India", Pathaan explains that his adopted name came from a clan in a village in Afghanistan that nursed him back to health following an injury he sustained during a mission for the Indian army. In a single swipe, the scene erases both Pathaan and SRK's direct connection to his Muslim heritage.

In so doing, it succumbs to the Hindu nationalist belief that Islam is not intrinsic to Indian Muslims.

Pathaan's Muslimness - conveyed through a story of how he was given his name in Afghanistan - is therefore a borrowed and acquired identity and, crucially, one that is foreign to India. In this way, Pathaan was "lost" and through his kinship with the Indian army, he is "found".

His allegiance, then, is to Mother India, to whom he belongs. And for Pathaan, Mother India manifests herself in his superior, Nandini (Dimple Kapadia) whom he calls mother, too.

Later, and naturally so, when Nandini sacrifices herself for the nation, she invokes the name of the Hindu deity Shiva, making it clear who is at the core of Mother India's spiritual centre.

This is a stunning invocation of Hindutva (Hinduism, or ways of being Hindu) and underscores SRK's embrace of Hindu majoritarianism in Indian society while tacitly legitimising the vast prejudices against Muslims there.

We have seen it in Main Hoon Na (2004), in which the plot line is eerily similar. Invoking the Hindu epic The Ramayana, SRK plays Major Ram who works with his brother Lakshman (Zayed Khan) to stop another disgruntled Indian soldier, Raghavan (Suniel Shetty), from destroying a temporary peace deal with Pakistan.

On the surface, the film is an entertaining spoof and homage to classic 70s Bollywood cinema, but at its core, it celebrates militarism and promotes the Indian army as a just, moral actor in a rough world. Raghavan is a Hindu nationalist who cannot accept peace with Pakistan because his son died in Kashmir; and so the film can't help but find a way to casually demonise Kashmir, too.

In Chak De! India (2007), SRK plays Kabir Khan, a disgraced hockey player whose mistake against Pakistan in a World Cup Final costs India the World Cup. He is labelled a traitor. Years later, Kabir Khan takes on the coaching gig of the hapless Indian women's hockey team and leads them to an unthinkable World Cup win. In so doing, he proves his worth as an Indian Muslim and is welcomed back into Indian society.

Again, the message is clear: Muslims must perform the impossible to gain acceptance or remain invisible. It is the kind of approach SRK has carefully incorporated in his private life, too.

He is quoted as saying: "I am a Muslim, my wife is Hindu, and my kids are Hindustan," and "I gave my son and daughter names that could pass for generic (pan-Indian and pan-religious) ones: Aryan and Suhana", underlining that his privileged household is somewhat of a syncretic space, like Bollywood, where actors have for decades cosplayed as secularists and sold India as an inclusive, vibrant, non-violent, and tolerant democracy. But outside the bubble, India has always been a difficult place for Muslims, or Dalits, or Christians.

Pathaan continues this legacy and refuses to engage with reality. But beyond the scam of the secular fantasy promulgated by Bollywood, of which SRK has been its biggest proponent, Pathaan goes even further and causes irreparable harm. And this revolves around the depiction of Kashmir.

KASHMIR: THE REAL PLOT: Predictably, the film does not challenge India's decision to revoke Article 370, and the only "dissent" emerges from the Pakistani general and his hired mercenary who want to exact revenge on India. But whereas Kashmir may be considered as merely the backdrop of the plot, Kashmir, in truth, is the plot itself.

In a time of rampant Hindu nationalism, when Modi and his ruling party, the BJP, are defining the Indian na-



tion in strictly Hindu terms, Bollywood's fantasy secularism in the form of Pathaan has come to reinforce Hindutva's gains over Indian Muslims and over Indian Occupied Kashmir while putting a liberal spin on it.

By the logic of the script, Pakistan's anger towards India over its actions in Indian Occupied Kashmir is effectively reduced to one man's personal quest for vengeance. What Kashmiris themselves may want is not even a question or a consideration in the film. They are simply part of India, whether they like it or not.

Furthermore, the way to solve this crisis is not to restore Indian Occupied Kashmir's semi-autonomous status or to work together to give Kashmiris their right to self-determination (one could only dream of the latter); the film instead teams up a pair of Indian and Pakistani spies to thwart an evil plot against India, portrayed as the victim, despite its role as the perpetrator of the central crime, the brutal annexation of Kashmir.

In another scene, Jim, the former spy turned villain, offers to call off the biological attack on one of India's cities if the government "gave" him Indian Occupied Kashmir (presumably on behalf of the Pakistani general). India refuses. Again, the message is clear: Indian Occupied Kashmir is not up for discussion even if it results in the annihilation of an entire Indian city.

UNDIVIDED INDIA: The abrogation of autonomy in 2019 and the period since then has seen some of the most difficult days in Indian Occupied Kashmir in an already decades-long occupation. The Indian government's crackdown on all forms of dissent, including restrictions on internet access and communication, has had a chilling effect. It has also implemented a project to change the demographics in order to achieve Hindu supremacy in the Muslim-majority region. The nature of Brand India, partly as a result of the soft power that Bollywood has exerted for decades, is such that India has been granted complete impunity by the international community for its brutalisation of Kashmiris.

What is this, other than the endorsement and normalisation of Modi, the RSS, and the Hindu right's settler-colonial project in Indian Occupied Kashmir? And what message does it send?

Indian Muslims are expected to rein in their Muslimness and prove their loyalty to the nation and empire

in order to belong, including, and especially, when it comes to normalising and defending the occupation of their fellow Muslims in Indian Occupied Kashmir.

Moreover, Pathaan presents a world in which Pakistan and Afghanistan can be brought under the domain of India's ambitions too. All of the other countries in the region must orbit around India. The geographical overlap with Hindutva's territorial imaginaries of what is known as Akhand Bharat (Undivided India), which extends from Myanmar to Afghanistan, is hard to miss.

Is it really a surprise then that Pathaan uses "good" Afghan villagers to trap his Pakistan-sponsored adversary? The parallels with RSS and Indian foreign policy are stunning. And it does all of this with the finesse of a peacemaker and lover, and not a harsh polemicist or provocateur.

This is not to discount the fact that SRK has faced attacks and the wrath and jealousy of the Hindu nationalist brigade over his wealth and place as a symbol of inclusion in the Indian imagination. They have burnt his posters, trolled him endlessly online. His son, Aryan, too, was "deliberately targeted" in an irregular criminal investigation.

But within a week of the film's release, SRK observed in an interview that the success and love showered on him had greatly diminished the problems he had faced in recent years. "In the last four days, I've forgotten my last four years," he said.

The troubles he has faced, however, are nothing compared to what the last four years have meant to ordinary Indian Muslims reeling under new citizenship laws, pogroms, public lynchings, destruction of homes and mosques, mass arrests, and intimidation. Nor does it compare to the millions of Kashmiris waking up to new settler-colonial laws every passing day, while India has completely silenced and criminalised all forms of dissent.

For its hero to not even attempt to defeat the forces of communalism or fascism by way of fiction but instead ask that Muslims either hide themselves or organise in the service of the Hindu nation and help oppress Kashmiris further, Pathaan is not merely an awful film, it will strengthen the fascist hold over India.

Azad Essa is a senior reporter for Middle East Eye based in New York City.

IN NETANYAHU'S ISRAEL, THE POLICE ARE IN SERVICE OF THE FAR RIGHT

HAARETZ
EDITORIAL

UNDER National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israel Police is deepening what can be called security coordination with the right-wing snitch organizations. Last week, Jonathan Pollak, a left-wing activist and Haaretz employee, was charged with aggravated assault of a police officer, disorderly conduct and obstructing a police officer in the discharge of his duties.

This came after he was arrested the previous Friday (January 27) at a demonstration in Kafir Beita against the illegal settlement outpost of Evyatar, during which he threw rocks at a Border Police vehicle, according to the indictment.

Pollak denies the allegations. He was also questioned in connection to a com-

A RIGHT-WING ORGANIZATION COLLECTS INCRIMINATING EVIDENCE AND FILES COMPLAINTS AGAINST A LEFT-WING ACTIVIST, AND THE POLICE ARREST AND INVESTIGATE, THEN REPORT TO THE ORGANIZATION

plaint filed against him by the Ad Kan organization on suspicion of obstructing a police officer in the discharge of his duties and reckless use of fire at a demonstration in the village of Burqa in 2019.

Following the investigation, Ad Kan posted on Twitter: "A few days ago the police contacted us after the anarchist Jonathan Pollak was arrested again, on suspicion of throwing a rock at a Border Police jeep. We are well acquainted with Pollak, unfortunately. The collection of incriminating evidence we gathered and the dozens of complaints we have filed with the police to date led to his arrest, but he was very quickly released and continued to endanger civilians and soldiers."

The tweet depicts a situation that should trouble every citizen, regardless of political affiliation: A right-wing organization collects incriminating evidence and files complaints against a left-wing activist, and the police arrest and investigate, then report to the organization. Pollak was also investigated on suspicion of incitement in his speech in 2021 at a ceremony of the Yesh Gvul movement (that was based on an opinion piece he published in Haaretz, for which he was questioned on suspicion of incitement to violence and terrorism).

This investigation was also opened following a complaint by the right-wing organization Disabled Veterans' Forum for

Israel's Security, which operates together with the Im Tirtzu movement. Pollak is still under arrest, and Liran Baruch, the chair of the forum, boasted on Facebook: "The police assured me that he will remain in custody until the end of the proceedings and that the indictment is expected to include assault and throwing rocks, including last Friday, and incitement to murder Jews in his famous speech."

The police said the investigation of Pollak was approved by the State Prosecutor's Office, but this does nothing to hide the twisted relations that have developed between law enforcement bodies and the right-wing organizations. Three years ago,

Deputy Attorney General for Criminal Affairs Amit Marari wrote in an opinion that law enforcement is the role of the authorities and should not be done by representatives of the political camps. But in Benjamin Netanyahu's Israel, the opinion of a deputy attorney general isn't worth the paper it's written on.

This dangerous trend is expected to intensify now that Ben-Gvir is working to transfer the powers of police into his hands, according to the amendment of the law governing the police. This constitutes politicization of the police and turning it into an instrument of enforcement for the right's persecution.

UN AGENCIES SWING INTO ACTION TO HELP VICTIMS OF DEVASTATING TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA QUAKES

UNITED NATIONS
AGENCIES

UN aid agencies have scrambled to help many thousands of victims of the massive earthquake, that hit southern Türkiye and northern Syria, amid fears of a gigantic humanitarian crisis.

The initial 7.8 magnitude quake struck close to Gaziantep early Monday morning, followed by another 7.5 magnitude tremor several hours later.

"My heart goes out to the people of Türkiye and Syria in this hour of tragedy", the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a statement.

"The United Nations is fully committed to supporting the response," he said. "Our teams are on the ground assessing the needs and providing assistance."

More than two thousand have reportedly died and many more are injured with the toll continuing to rise as the rescue work continues. Guterres said that the UN was counting on the international community to help the many thousands caught up in the disaster, "many of whom were already in dire need of humanitarian aid in areas where access is a challenge."

Emergency medical teams from the World Health Organization, WHO, have been given the green light to provide essential care for the injured and most vulnerable, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a tweet.

Specialist UN surge teams from the Office of UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) also tweeted that they were "ready to deploy", amid multiple horrifying social media posts showing huge buildings collapsing in heavily built-up areas.

In a statement issued via Twitter, the UN in Türkiye expressed deep sadness at the loss of life and the destruction of property. The team expressed its condolences to the families of victims "as well as to the people and Government", wishing the injured a speedy recovery. "United Nations Türkiye expresses its solidarity with Türkiye and is ready to assist." UN humanitarian coordinating office OCHA underscored that the 7.4 magnitude quake hit at the height of winter. The epicentre was in southern Türkiye, where nearby Gaziantep – an important UN aid hub for northern Syria – was among the cities affected.

"Deeply saddened by the loss of life caused by this morning's #earthquake,"



the UN refugee agency in Syria (UNHCR) tweeted, adding that it was "actively coordinating a response with UN Agencies and other humanitarian actors to deliver assistance and support to those in need in Syria".

Although the earthquake was felt as far

away as Lebanon, closer to home, northern Syria's Aleppo and Idlib also reportedly saw thousands of building collapse, including two hospitals.

Humanitarian needs in northern Syria are already huge, as the region is home to millions of people displaced by the country's

long-running war.

Snow and rain have hampered the work of rescue teams, whose families are also among those believed to be buried under collapsed buildings.

After an official request for international assistance from Ankara, the UN Children's Fund, UNICEF, confirmed that it was ready to support the emergency response.

"Our hearts and thoughts are with the children and families in Türkiye and Syria affected by the devastating earthquakes. Our deepest condolences to those who lost loved ones," said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell.

Echoing that message of support, the UN migration agency, IOM, said that its warehouse in Gaziantep had prepared non-food items and essential relief ready to be deployed. "IOM teams are also doing on-the-ground assessments to inform the response", spokesperson Safa Msehli said.

IOM Director-General Antonio Vitorino tweeted his solidarity "with people in Türkiye, Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, Jordan and all those affected following the deadly earthquake. We will be working closely with governments in the region to support those affected and help alleviate their suffering."

US looks for Chinese balloon debris

WASHINGTON
AFP

US navy personnel worked to recover on Sunday the debris of a suspected Chinese "spy" balloon shot down after it floated over North America for days.

China voiced anger on Sunday at the shooting down of the balloon, which it insists was an unmanned weather surveillance aircraft that had veered off course.

"The United States' actions have seriously impacted and damaged both sides' efforts and progress in stabilizing Sino-US relations," Chinese vice foreign minister Xie Feng said.

The balloon's detection had already prompted the cancellation of a planned visit by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who had been due to arrive in Beijing on Sunday.

However, the Republicans continued to savage US President Joe Biden's handling of the incident, saying the balloon should have been shot down earlier and accusing him of being soft on China.

The aircraft spent several days flying over North America, before Washington on Saturday said an F-22 fighter jet had shot it down off the coast of South Carolina, because of what it called Beijing's "unacceptable violation" of US sovereignty.

Pentagon officials on Friday had described the airship as a "high-altitude surveillance balloon," adding that Washington had taken steps to block it from collecting sensitive information.

General Glen VanHerck, commander of US forces in North America, said in a statement Sunday that navy personnel were "currently conducting recovery operations, with the

China lodges strong protest with U.S. after unmanned airship shot down

BEIJING
STAFF REPORT

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng on Sunday lodged solemn representations with the U.S. embassy in China over its use of force to attack China's civilian unmanned airship. According to a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Monday, Xie stressed that the entry of the Chinese airship into U.S. airspace due to force majeure was totally unexpected and accidental, and that the ins and outs of what happened are crystal clear and clearly do not allow room for distortion or smearing.

However, the U.S. side has turned a deaf ear to all of this and overreacted by insisting on the abusive use of force towards the civilian airship that was on route to leave U.S. airspace, Xie said. This act has seriously violated the spirit of international law and international practice, he said.

"What the United States has done severely impacted and under-



mined the efforts and progress made by the two sides to stabilize China-U.S. relations since the two countries' leaders met in Bali, Indonesia," Xie said.

He said China firmly opposes and strongly protests against this, urging the U.S. side not to take further actions to harm China's interests and not to upgrade or expand tensions between the countries.

"The Chinese government is closely following the development of the situation, and will resolutely safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the Chinese company concerned and safeguard China's interests and dignity, and reserves the right to further react in response to this matter, if necessary," Xie said.

US Coast Guard assisting in securing the area and maintaining public safety." Beijing has said the balloon was primarily gathering weather data and that it had been blown off course.

"More intel"

Chuck Schumer, the US Senate Democratic leader, said the downing of the balloon by a fighter jet "wasn't just the safest option, but it was the one that maximized our intel gain."

That was because any instrumentation on the airship was more likely to survive a water landing.

"We sent a clear message to China that this is unacceptable," he said in a statement.

"We protected civilians. We gained more intel while protecting our own sensitive information."

He said the full Senate would receive a classified briefing on Febru-

Israel forces kill five Palestinians in Jericho raid: Israeli official

WEST BANK
AFP

Israeli forces on Monday killed five alleged Palestinian men in a raid in the occupied West Bank, an Israeli official said, after a days-long search for suspects in a shooting near Jericho.

Hamas confirmed its members were among the dead, saying in a statement the Gaza-based group was mourning members of its military wing killed "in an armed clash with the Zionist occupation".

The early morning Israeli raid came amid a spike in Israeli violence and after days of what Jericho authorities have described as a "siege" on the city since the shooting attack late last month.

The Israeli security official, requesting anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media, told AFP the army was holding the bodies of the Palestinian dead.

Israel has used the remains of people killed in clashes or attacks as bargaining chips throughout the conflict.

The army said in a statement "a number" of armed men were killed in a gunfight during the raid on the Aqabat Jabr refugee camp at the entrance to the city, which lies close to the Jordanian border.

It reported no casualties among the Israeli forces.

"A number of armed assailants were killed after firing toward IDF (Israeli military) soldiers who were operating in the area," the army said.

In an initial statement, the Palestinian health ministry reported "three citizens were shot by the Israeli occupation during the attack of Jericho," one of them in critical condition. Violence is rare in Jericho, a popular destination for tourists who are drawn to the ancient city's religious and cultural sites.

Israel said the Monday raid had targeted "the Hamas terrorist squad that carried out the shooting attack" on January 28, when according to the army two armed men approached an Israeli settlement restaurant near the Palestinian city. One of the gunmen had opened fire at the restaurant but his weapon jammed after just one bullet that did not hurt anyone. The suspects fled and the army has since reinforced its presence around Jericho and carried out extensive searches at checkpoints. An AFP correspondent last week reported cars backed up at entrances to Jericho with queues lasting hours. Jericho governor Jihad Abu al-Assal said the situation amounted to a "siege" which was "incurring huge costs" to local businesses, agriculture and the tourism industry.

'Heinous crime'

Israeli forces on Saturday detained "a number of suspects" in another raid in Jericho, the army said at the time. A further seven people were detained in Aqabat Jabr on Monday, it said.

Governor Assal called the latest raid "a heinous crime, on top of the crimes committed by the occupation every day against our Palestinian people".

"We call on the world to stop this occupation, and to protect our people from the occupier," he told AFP on Monday. Israel has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh described the Jericho incursion as a "heinous massacre".

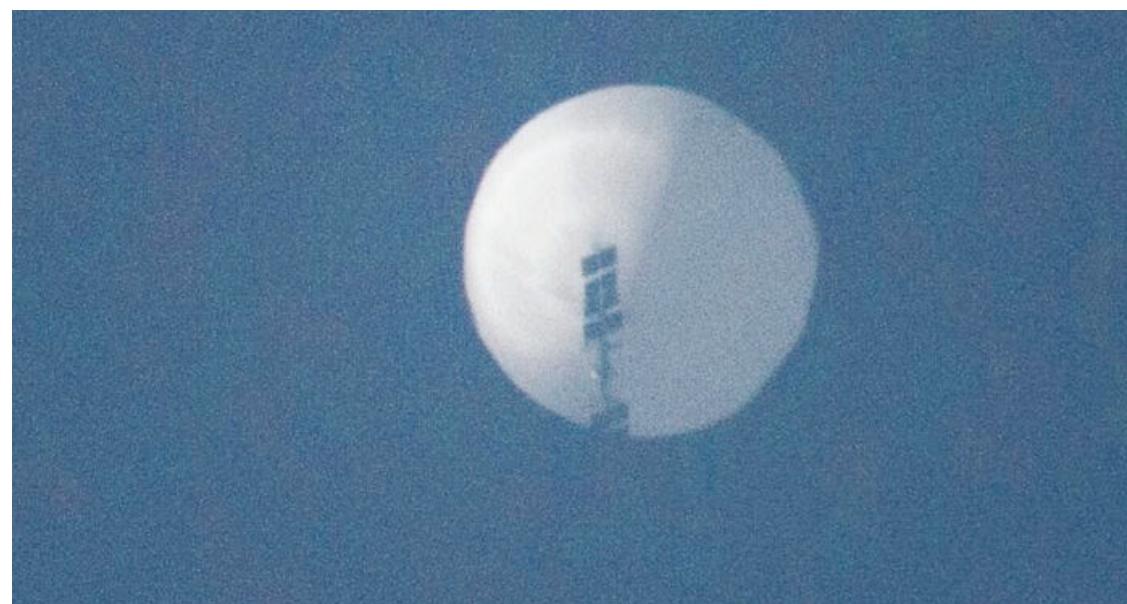
"The heroes in Aqabat Jabr camp fought until they were martyred defending their land and their holy sites," he said in a statement. "The successive killings by the enemy in the West Bank will be disastrous for them."

Since the start of the year and prior to the latest Jericho operation, Israeli forces have killed 36 Palestinian adults and children.

Six Israeli civilians, including a child, and one Ukrainian civilian have been killed over the same period in a single attack in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem.

Last year was the deadliest year in the West Bank since the United Nations started tracking casualties in the territory in 2005.

There were 235 fatalities in the Israeli war in 2022, with nearly 90 percent of the deaths on the Palestinian side, according to AFP figures.



JAVED MIANDAD TAKES A DIG AT INDIAN CRICKET BOARD FOR WITHDRAWING FROM ASIA CUP

QUETTA
STAFF REPORT

FORMER Pakistan captain Javed Miandad makes a bold statement regarding India's withdrawal from Asia Cup 2023 scheduled in Pakistan. Javed Miandad, known as a nightmare of the Indian bowlers, stated during the exhibition match between Peshawar Zalmi and Quetta Gladiators at Bugti stadium, Quetta, that the Pakistan team is playing enough of cricket and don't need India to survive.

"India can go to hell if they don't want to come to Pakistan to play cricket. Pakistan do not need India to survive," said Javed Miandad.

BCCI secretary Jay Shah, the son of Indian Home Minister Amit Shah, previously made some statements that India will not travel to Pakistan for the Asia Cup 2023. In reply, Chairman PCB

Management Committee Najam Sethi also replied with a point mark that Pakistan will also not travel to India for the ICC World Cup 2023 as India always backs off whenever Pakistan gets such opportunities.

The 65-year-old cricketer also takes a dig at the Indian Government and states India is afraid to play against Pakistan.

"Why is India afraid to play against Pakistan? They know if they lose to Pakistan, the public will not spare them. Narendra Modi will disappear; their public won't leave him," said Javed.

There was no confirmation regarding where the tournament would take place. While Pakistan has the hosting rights of the Asia Cup, the ACC President had earlier stated that India will not be traveling to Pakistan.

Shah, who also Secretary of the BCCI, demanded that Asia Cup be moved to a "neutral venue" last year.



Man City charged by Premier League over alleged breaches of financial rules

LONDON
AGENCIES

Manchester City have been referred to an independent commission by the Premier League over alleged breaches of its financial rules, the English top flight announced on Monday.

The alleged breaches span a period from the 2009/10 season to the 2017/18 campaign.

City were banned from UEFA competitions in February 2020 for two years by European football's governing body for "serious financial fair-play breaches" but the sanction was overturned by the Court of Arbitration for Sport in July of the same year.

The defending Premier League champions are alleged to have breached league rules requiring provision "in utmost good faith" of "accurate financial information that gives a true and fair view of the club's financial position".

The Premier League said the accurate financial information required related to "revenue (including sponsorship revenue), its related parties and its operating costs".



English Football Club selects young Lyari player for advanced coaching in England

KARACHI
STAFF REPORT

English Club Swindon Town FC selected a young football player from Lyari for advanced coaching in England after completion of initial phase of training as per international standards in supervision of Coach Alex Pike.

It was told by Swindon Town FC delegation to Commissioner Karachi Iqbal Memon here on Monday.

The three member delegation comprised of Vice Chairman STFC Xavier Austin, Coach Alex Pike and Chris Hull of Sky Sports briefed the Commissioner about arrangements for coaching of talented young footballers of Karachi in England to train them for playing at the international level.

The young footballers of Karachi have already completed the training phase in Karachi under the supervision of Swindon Town coach Alex Pike and a young player of Lyari, Zubair, has been initially selected and he would be provided education and training of game techniques for two years in England, they informed adding that youth of Karachi would soon start journey to study and play in England.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Karachi Football Club under the patronage of the Karachi administration and Swindon Town

FC in February last year in Karachi. Under the MoU training and living expenses during the two-year stay in England will be borne by Swindon Town FC.

The selected children have been given English language classes in collaboration with American Cultural Centre to overcome language barrier in receiving training in the UK.

The Karachi youth have all the skills required to compete in world level football competitions and now they will have opportunities to play football at the international level, Xavier Austin said and added, but there was a long way to go to become a world class player.

He said that the phase of selecting talented young players was very difficult but due to the keen efforts and guidance of Commissioner Karachi they had succeeded in completing the phase.

Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Iqbal Memon said that for the first time the talented football players of Karachi will get an opportunity to learn and demonstrate their skills according to international standards and requirements at the international level. "One day we will definitely see these children of Karachi in action in international football competitions," he added.

The Commissioner recalled that watching the football matches and sports activities in Lyari gave him the idea that these children



also need opportunities to progress and learn and play at the global level and now was the

time to realise the idea. The delegation will review the performance of the talented foot-

Kashmir Day Badminton competition, Qari Umar won gold medal

PESHAWAR
STAFF REPORT

The Kashmir Day Badminton competition held in the provincial capital Peshawar with Qari Umar won the gold medal in the final played here at Wadood Hall on Monday. In the final match, the champion player Qari Umar defeated Haseeb 3-0, the score was 21-19, 21-18 and 21-19. National Champion Aamir Raqib gave trophies to the players. Badminton coach Malik Faraz Khan and others were also present on this occasion. A large number of players from district Peshawar participated in the badminton tournament organized by the Directorate of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to express solidarity with Kashmir. In the final match, there was a competition between Qari Umar and Haseeb Khan. In the final match, Qari Umar defeated Haseeb 3-0 and won the champion trophy, the score between them was 21-19, 21-18, 21-19. Addressing the ceremony, Amir Iqbal said that DG Sports Khalid Khan and Deputy Director Jafar Shah took a good decision by organizing sports competitions on this day. For the success of the coach Malik Faraz made the best arrangements and a good environment. He said that Malik Faraz played an important role in the promotion of badminton in Peshawar but also in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, whose hard work and efforts enabled him to find many talented players at the grassroots level.

Maiden Test ton for Chanderpaul against Zimbabwe

AGENCIES

Tagenarine Chanderpaul struck his first Test century and fellow opener Kraigg Brathwaite also reached three figures as the West Indies reached 221 without loss on Sunday after a rain-affected second day of the first Test against Zimbabwe in Bulawayo. Captain Brathwaite recorded his 12th Test ton as he made 116 while Chanderpaul, son of West Indies great Shivnarine, closed on 101. It is the highest opening partnership by West Indians since Chris Gayle and Kieran Powell scored 254 against New Zealand in Antigua 11 years ago. Saturday's play had been abandoned because of rain soon after lunch with the tourists 112-0 and the inclement weather intervened again. Play was only able to start at 1500 local time (1300 GMT) on Sunday after sawdust had been scattered across the damp areas in the outfield. As was the case on the opening day, the West Indies openers took few chances, scoring at fewer than two and half runs per over against some tight Zimbabwe bowling on a sluggish pitch. Brathwaite, who has been in a rich run of form, looked the more comfortable and was the first to reach his century. By the close he had faced 246 balls and hit seven fours. Chanderpaul was more circumspect although there were moments when he played like his father who only retired from Test cricket eight years ago, having racked up 30 centuries in 164 Tests.



KOHINOOR TEXTILE MILLS ANNOUNCES 30M SHARE BUY-BACK

ISLAMABAD
MUHAMMAD RAAFY KHAN

KOHIINOOR Textile Mills Limited (KTML) has decided to buy back 30 million of its ordinary shares, the company announced to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Monday. This is the second such buy-back announcement in 2023 after Kohat Cement Company Limited (KOHC) announced the same last month.

The KTML's notification to the PSX read: "The Board of Directors of Kohinoor Textile Mills Limited in its meeting held on February 06, 2023, has accorded approval

to the company, subject to approval of shareholders by way of special resolution, in order to purchase/buy-back of its own shares through Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited upto a maximum of 30,000 000 constituting 10.023% of the issued ordinary shares of the face value of Rs 10 each at the spot / current share price prevailing during the purchase period in cash and out of distributable profits of the company."

The principal business of KTML is the manufacturing of yarn and cloth, processing and stitching the cloth and trade of textile products. The decision of the board of KTML to buy-back shares will need to be approved through a special resolution

passed by the shareholders in the next Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of the company. The EGM will be held on March 3. The proposed buy-back period will start from March 13 to August 29.

The purpose of the buy-back is the cancellation of shares and will be made out of the distributable profits of the company. According to the company, the reduced share capital after the buy-back will improve the earnings per share, future dividends, and break-up value of the company's shares. In addition, it will also allow an opportunity of exit to those investors who wish to liquidate their investments in the company's stock.

In 2022, six major companies on the

PSX announced share buybacks. The uncertain economic situation in Pakistan reduced the share prices of many profitable and established companies which made their valuations attractive. Due to a lack of institutional and foreign investors in the market, these companies decided to take advantage of the decline in their share prices to buy back their own shares.

It started with NETSOL in May (two million shares), followed by Maple Leaf Cement (25 million shares), then Lucky Cement (10 million shares), JDW Sugar Mills (two million shares), then BAFL (200 million shares), and finally ENGRO (70 million shares). Except for the ENGRO

buy-back, which is yet to start, all previous buy-backs have been completed.

We wrote a featured piece for Profit magazine at the end of last year titled '2022: the year of share buybacks'. The article predicted that "it might even be the case that the buy-backs have only just started, and next year in 2023 we may see even more buybacks than the ones we saw in 2022. Time will tell." After KOHC, the KTML announcement is the continuation of the buy-backs we saw last year.

On Monday, the share price of KTML opened at Rs 46.5, reached a high of Rs 49.45 and finally closed at Rs 48.77, a daily increase of 6.02%. The volume traded was also a massive 1,909,500 shares.

PTI regime dismantled strong economy passed on by PML-N in 2018: Maryam

MULTAN
STAFF REPORT

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz Monday said the last PML-N government had passed on a strong and robust national economy in 2018 which nosedived in the face of a miserable failure of Imran Khan-led PTI regime.

In a matter of few years, the PML-N government's achievements were squandered, thus opening a floodgate of inflation and leaving common people at the receiving end, she said while talking to the media before meeting with the PML-N parliamentarians, ticket-holders, and social media team here.

Maryam Nawaz, who is also Senior Vice President of the PML-N, said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government had inherited a Pakistan with a high economic growth rate of 5.8 percent, but it drastically cut down the development trajectory.

Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mariyam Aurangzaib, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, senior party leaders Pervaiz Rasheed, Tehmina Daultana,

Talal Chaudhry, and Senator Saud Majid were also present. Maryam Nawaz said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was working round the clock to steer the economy out of trouble and control price hikes, which had resulted due to the wrong policies of the PTI regime.

It would take time to rectify the ills the country had to suffer during the four years of the PTI's "misrule", she added. Maryam recalled that Nawaz Sharif had finalized a programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2016 but its burden was not shifted to the people and as a result, the country was economically strong when the general elections were held in 2018.

On the other hand, the IMF programme signed by the Imran-led government worsened the economic conditions and triggered the worst-ever inflation, she added.

Maryam said the last PML-N government had kept the prices of essential commodities stable such as wheat flour was available at Rs 35/kg, sugar at Rs 55/kg, and edible oil at Rs 140 per liter.

She said the agreement signed by the PTI regime with the IMF not only caused inflation and an economic downturn but its violation further worsened the situation as well

leaving no choice for the incumbent government except to accept the tough conditions being imposed by the international lender. As regards the PTI's 'Jail Bharo' movement, Maryam said Imran Khan should surrender himself first. "We are waiting for him and other leaders to do that."

To a question, she said the reasons for the PTI's victory in the last general elections were different. Now the situation was totally different.

She, however, added that political stability was imperative for the country's development. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was taking all possible steps to overcome inflation, however, the provincial governments would have to play their due role in controlling the price hike.

To another question, Maryam brushed aside the PTI's propaganda of terming cases against its leadership 'political victimization' and said no one should escape from the law of land on the pretext of being a politician. There were solid pieces of evidence in the foreign funding case, besides another case of hurling life threats to the officials of the Election Commission of Pakistan and their families.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 05

Reforms to be undertaken in National Energy Efficiency Authority: PM

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Monday decided to carry out restructuring and capacity building of the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (NEECA). He was chairing a review meeting here for promoting energy conservation in the country. The prime minister formed an inter-ministerial committee under the leadership of former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi for important reforms in the energy efficiency authority. He directed that the inter-ministerial committee should take steps for the immediate revival of the authority. He voiced concern over the wastage of resources and the closure of different institutions in the country. The PM expressed his displeasure over the shortcomings in the performance and capacity of NEECA. The number of personnel in the authority should be increased and transparency should be ensured in the institution, he stressed. The experts in NEECA should devise a strategy for energy savings in the sectors of construction, industry, communications, power, and agriculture. The prime minister was briefed in detail about the performance and mandate of the authority. It was informed that in the past no considerable steps were taken for the capacity building of NEECA. The PM instructed that a timeframe should be set for immediate comprehensive planning and reforms in NEECA. He was told that the draft of the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Policy would be presented for approval before the cabinet soon. Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, federal ministers Ishaq Dar and Khurram Dastgir Khan, Advisor to the PM Ahad Cheema, Minister of State for Petroleum Dr Musadiq Malik, Special Assistants to the PM Jehanzee Khan and Syed Fahd Hussain, and officials concerned attended the meeting.

CDWP clears 10 development projects worth Rs87.17bn

ISLAMABAD
GHULAM ABBAS

The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) has cleared ten development projects worth Rs 87.17 billion during its meeting on Monday.

The meeting, which was chaired by Federal Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal, was also attended by the Planning Ministry secretary, the Chief Economist, members of the Planning Commission and representatives from various other ministries and divisions.

According to details, the forum considered ten projects related to the Ministry of Housing and Works, Ministry of Na-

tional Health Services Regulations and Coordination, Ministry of Communication, Ministry of Science & Technology and Higher Education Commission HEC. These projects include: reconstruction of Turbat-Mand Road, construction of Pun Panjgur-Gichak-Awaran Road, reconstruction of Manghopir, completion of Niheng Bridge, the Shagharrang Hydropower Project, the Strengthening Institution for Refugee's Administration (SIRA), establishment of Cancer Hospital in ICT, Gwadar Safe City Project (Phase-1), development of Ziarat Town and the National Forensic Science Laboratory.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 05

Imran urges party workers to register for 'Jail Bharo Tehreek' voluntarily

PESHAWAR
STAFF REPORT

Ex-prime minister Imran Khan on Monday appealed to PTI workers to register with the party's district presidents for the 'Jail Bharo Tehreek' (court arrest drive), vowing to launch the movement within a few days.

Imran had announced the movement last week after apparently running out of options to press the PML-N-led government to hold elections in two provinces — Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa — and stop it from "political victimisation".

"Now we have two ways — one to come on roads and go for wheel-jam but it will hurt Pakistan economically. The other is

to allow this imported government to have its desire to put us behind bars fulfilled by the 'Jail Bharo Tehreek,'" the PTI chief said in a televised address from his residence in Lahore's Zaman Park on Saturday. In a video address released today, Imran said he wanted the PTI district presidents to begin the registration process and called on volunteers to come forward. "First I want volunteers to register," he said. "Then I will give a date in a few days on which day we will begin the 'Jail Bharo Tehreek'."

At the same time, Imran also called on the public to join the movement, saying that it was a "peaceful protest". "You're not doing politics [...] you are fighting

ing a jihad."

The PTI chief said the movement would also help to achieve "Haqqiqi Jamhooriyat" (real democracy) where there would be rule of law. He added that only this could help the country out of the current crisis.

During the address, Imran highlighted that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and the governors of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had not yet given a date for provincial elections, stating that this was a violation of the Constitution.

"If they exceed the 90-day period [for announcing polls], the Constitution is clear about the imposition of Article 6 against the violators," he said, adding that the people were looking toward

the judiciary for justice.

Imran also offered an explanation for why the PTI had decided to launch the 'Jail Bharo Tehreek'.

"In the entire world, nations are run according to the law," he said. "The Constitution decides what is legal and illegal."

The PTI chairman lambasted the "imported" coalition government for making a joke out of the Constitution and the law ever since it came into power.

He said that the government and the police were openly flouting the directives issued by the courts. "The court had ordered the government to hold local government polls in Islamabad [but] they are yet to announce a date."

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OUR INTERNATIONAL SPEAKERS

Evans Munyuki - Author of "Building a Digital Bank"
Irfan Lodhi - Mashreq Bank Pakistan Limited
Alexandra Topalian - Moderator / Master of Ceremonies
Faran Niaz - CEO & Founder, CX Future

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CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS:

- Framing Policies for the Digital Economy | Dr. Ishrat Husain
- How UBL Became the Favorite Bank of Pakistan's Tech-Savvy Customers | Shazad Dada
- Keynote: Top trends shaping Fintech and Banking | Nadeem Hussain
- Building a Digital Bank | Evans Munyuki
- Pakistan's Digital Payments Ecosystem | Sohail Javaad
- Digital Payments, Open Banking & E-commerce | Halima Iqbal, Muhammad Yar Hiraj, Tughra A.T. Ali, Yasser Khan Naeem Zamindar, Farukh Ali Baig, Saad Niazi, and Shahzad Shahid
- Explore New Revenue Engines | Sohail Javaad, Irfan Lodhi, Mudassar Aqil, Naveed Ali Baig, and Mir Nejib Rahman
- Branch Transformation | Michael Engel
- Fire-side Chat | Zafar Masud and Adnan Rizvi
- Next Gen Technology Transformation | Zohair Saif, Riz Qazi, Omar Khalid, and Imran Khan
- Digital Transformation at DBS | Robin Speculand
- From #23 to #1 Bank in CX | Faran Niaz
- Use Social Media by Financial Institutions | Mir Nejib Rahman
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