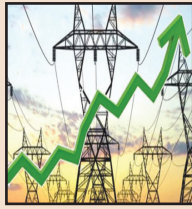


NEPRA slaps additional surcharge of Rs3.39 per unit on consumers



» Story on Back Page

Ghandhara Nissan announces first plant shutdown since Covid lockdowns



» Story on Back Page

NEPRA publishes performance report on NTDC, K-Electric



» Story on Back Page

Governor summons ECP officials for KP election date



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PPP DISTANCES ITSELF FROM PDM ALLIANCE FOR UPCOMING POLLS

ISLAMABAD
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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

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

"We are not a part of the PDM, but we are their partners in the government," the PPP stalwart said ahead of the general polls in Punjab — which are scheduled to be held on April 30.

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



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

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

Khan and said that the former prime minister is not a politician.

In response to a question about the police's attempt to arrest the PTI chief and whether he was consulted, Zardari said: "It is the prerogative of the interior

minister — why would he consult me?"

Khan has been evading arrest attempts by law enforcement agencies and is facing charges of money laundering and illegally selling Toshakhana gifts during his tenure as prime minister.

However, despite the legal issues, the PTI leadership remains undeterred and is keen to showcase its strength in Lahore in what it termed as a "historic public rally" to be held this Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Senator Raza Rabbani, a senior PPP leader, underscored similarities between the PDM-led incumbent government and the PTI regime — which the sitting rulers had vehemently opposed. In a press release, the ex-Senate chairman — whose party is in the ruling alliance — said: "It seems be it the PTI or present governments want azadi [freedom] from Parliament and the Constitution, 1973."

The country is witnessing its worst economic turmoil, with the rupee at an

all-time low, the foreign exchange reserves plunging almost every other week, and to top it off, a new wave of terrorism has also hit Pakistan.

In light of ongoing issues, Rabbani has also sought clarifications from the government as, according to him, the rulers keep avoiding parliament.

PPP Chairman and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari had also warned the centre of quitting ministries if the promises made to flood affectees in Sindh about financial assistance are not fulfilled. "The promises to flood victims are needed to be fulfilled otherwise it will be difficult for us to hold our [federal] ministries," Bilawal said during an event in Karachi.

Expressing his severe concerns and regret, the PPP leader said that the promises made to the flood affectees by the federal government could not be fulfilled. The flood-hit community is going through a difficult time amid rising inflation in the country, he added.

BOI to introduce Asaan Karobaar Bill in parliament

ISLAMABAD
GHULAM ABBAS

A year after the launch of the Asaan Karobar Programme to promote ease of doing business (EODB) in the country, the Board of Investment (BOI) has completed the draft bill of the programme to be presented in the parliament by the end of this month.

In March 2022, President Arif Alvi formally launched the Asaan Karobar Programme as part of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Development Policy to lessen the compliance burden on businesses, particularly for SMEs.

Former Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan had desired BOI to undertake regulatory reforms and guillotine procedures in line with international best practices to identify regulatory obstacles at all three tiers of government, i.e. federal, provincial and local government, for the elimination, simplification and modernisation of regulations.

Following the former chief executive's wish, BOI was in consultation with different stakeholders to reform and remove technical and legal bottlenecks in doing business in the country.

Officials privy to the matter state that by the end of January of this year, at least four rounds of regulatory reforms and guillotine have been launched and around 270 reform proposals have been taken up with federal and provincial departments. More so, 137 reforms have already been implemented as well.

During a consultative workshop held on Monday, the concerned stakeholders have agreed to initiate the legislative process to introduce the Asaan Karobar Bill in the parliament at the earliest.

The decision was taken in the workshop, in the presence of over 80 participants including representatives from public & private sector, all the provincial governments, AJK, G-B, Finance Division, Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Securities & Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), Pakistan Single Window (PSW),

Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Pakistan Business Council (PBC), KP-BOI, AJK-BOI, academia, etc.

While addressing the concluding session, Ambreen Iftikhar, Additional Secretary at the BOI, said that the valuable discussion between the stakeholders would be incorporated in the final draft of the Asaan Karobaar Bill. She also said that BOI was fully aware of the problems faced by different investors in initiating their businesses and in this regard valuable input was given during the consultative workshop. The Bill would ensure protection and promotion of small business owners to run their businesses with ease and comfort. She also stressed upon the effective implementation of the Bill, after it is passed by the parliament.

However, the Bill has challenges as well. According to the officials, the challenges confronting the Asaan Karobar Bill include limited access to finances, lack of skilled

labor, poor infrastructure, and a volatile business environment. The proposed Bill will be introduced in the Parliament by the end of this month after incorporating the relevant suggestions of the participants.

As per the documents, the private sector, business associations, and chambers of commerce and industry are all actively involved in the identification of hindering regulations. The proposals received are examined and then the important ones are shared with the concerned departments & agencies in the public sector. The relevant departments also carry out their own impact analysis, and then implement reforms by making suitable regulatory changes to eliminate, reduce or simplify the regulatory difficulties.

The initiative is the first of its kind partnership between the public and private sector to simplify the regulatory landscape and create a friendly environment to support the growth of businesses, particularly SMEs.



Nine martyred, 13 injured in attack on security forces in Balochistan

QUETTA
STAFF REPORT

At least nine security personnel were martyred and 13 injured in an explosion near a truck of the Balochistan Constabulary in the Bolan district of Balochistan on Monday. According to Levies officials, the explosion occurred at the Kambri bridge on the Quetta-Sibi highway and targeted a vehicle of security forces. "This seems to be a suicide attack," a senior security official said. He said the bomber rammed his explosive-laden motorcycle into the police vehicle. Senior security officials are on the spot to collect evidence regarding the attack, he added. The site of the attack was cordoned off after the explosion. The Balochistan Constabulary personnel were returning from duty in Sibi Mela when they were targeted. The truck overturned with the intensity of the explosion. The bodies and injured personnel were shifted to Sibi where they were provided medical aid. The condition of some of the injured is reportedly critical which may increase the death toll. Emergency was imposed in the hospitals of Quetta and Sibi. The attack comes shortly after two Levies personnel were among six people martyred in three separate attacks in different areas of Balochistan, last week. The Levies force sources said four coal miners were killed as armed men opened fire at a mine in the Khost area of Harnai. Three coal miners were also injured in the attack. The attackers managed to flee after spraying the mine with bullets. The injured coal miners were rushed to the district headquarters hospital in Harnai for medical treatment. An emergency was declared in the hospital to provide urgent medical treatment to the injured persons.

PRESIDENT, PM VOW TO ERADICATE TERRORISM: President Dr Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have expressed their resolve to free the country from the menace of terrorism. In their separate statements, both strongly condemned the suicide attack on the personnel of the Balochistan Constabulary in Sibi that led to their martyrdom. President Alvi said terrorists would not be successful in carrying out their nefarious agenda. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said terrorism in Balochistan was part of the nefarious designs to create instability in the country. The President and the prime minister paid tribute to the valour of the country's martyred troops. They prayed to Allah Almighty to grant elevated ranks to the souls of martyrs in heaven and to grant patience to their families.

Islamabad court upholds Imran Khan's arrest warrants in Toshakhana case

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

An Islamabad district and sessions court on Monday upheld the non-bailable arrest warrants for PTI Chairman Imran Khan it issued last week in the Toshakhana reference over his persistent absences in the case hearings. Additional Sessions Judge Zafar Iqbal announced the verdict reserved earlier in the day after hearing the arguments on an application filed by the PTI chief seeking the cancellation of his warrants. The same court had last week issued non-bailable arrest warrants for Imran after he decided not to turn up before the court while attending hearings of three other cases — prohibited funding, terrorism, and attempted murder filed against him in other local courts located in proximity. On Sunday, an Islamabad police team was sent to Lahore to arrest Imran with the court summons. However, it returned empty-handed after the PTI chief evaded the arrest. Subsequently, Imran petitioned the Islamabad sessions court arguing that the withdrawal of warrants would enable him "a fair opportunity to appear and defend himself" in the case. Former premier Imran Khan is accused of concealing, in his assets declarations, details of the gifts he retained from the Toshakhana — a repository where presents handed to government officials from foreign officials are kept. Officials are legally allowed to retain gifts provided they pay a pre-assessed amount, typically a fraction of the value of the gift. PTI lawyers Qaisar Imran, Ali Bukhari, and Barrister Gohar appeared on behalf of the party head in the hearing.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 03

Hajj to cost Rs1.175m this year

■ Govt to generate \$444m under sponsorship, private hajj scheme

ISLAMABAD
SHAHZAD PARACHA

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has approved the Hajj Policy-2023, estimating Rs1.175 million as a tentative amount of the hajj cost, which is 36.59% higher than its amount in the previous year. The Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired the meeting of the Cabinet's ECC.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony submitted a summary on the Hajj Policy-2023. The ECC after discussion approved Hajj-2023 policy and agreed to provide a foreign exchange cover of \$90m. The policy states that the Hajj quota allocated to Pakistan for the year 2023 is 179,210 which shall be distributed between the Government and Private Hajj Schemes at a ratio of 50:50. Out of the government and Private Hajj Schemes, a quota of 50% each shall be reserved for sponsorship schemes. Under sponsorship, applicants shall be required to deposit their hajj dues in foreign exchange remitted from abroad and will not be allowed to deposit the hajj dues from the foreign currency accounts in Pakistan.

According to sources, under the government's sponsorship, the hajj quota is expected to generate about \$194m and the private hajj scheme is expected to generate more than \$250m, depending on the cost of various packages and the applications received for them. In addition, the sponsorship scheme of government hajj quota shall be utilized on a first

come first served basis, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs shall decide about the unutilized quota of sponsorship scheme, and its allocation to regular/private scheme or return to KSA.

For the year 2023, tentative Hajj Package for Northern region (Multan, Lahore, Sialkot, Islamabad, Rahim Yar Khan, Faisalabad and Peshawar) is Rs 1.17m and for the South Region (Karachi, Sukkar and Quetta) is Rs 1.16m.

Sources informed Profit that there is no age limit for hajj this year and the intending pilgrims who have performed hajj within the last 5 hajj years (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022) years are ineligible for hajj 2023. However, intending pilgrims of the sponsorship scheme are exempted from this bar. The ECC also deferred a summary submitted by the Ministry of Industries and Production on Solar Panel & Allied Equipment Manufacturing Policy-2023 with direction to review and revise the proposed policy considering inputs from all stakeholders. The ECC also approved a Technical Supplementary Grant of Rs. 12 billion in favor of the Planning Commission for Conduct of 7th Population & Housing Census and Rs. 3,244m in favor of Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety for National Poverty Graduation Programme (NPGP).

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

GOVERNOR SUMMONS ECP OFFICIALS FOR KP ELECTION DATE

PESHAWAR
STAFF REPORT

KHYBER Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali Monday summoned officials from the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to initiate an “active and meaningful consultative process” regarding the date for the elections in the province — following Supreme Court’s verdict on polls.

The governor, in a letter written to the ECP, has summoned the officials on March 6 or March 7. The letter has been written in response to a letter sent by the commission for the announcement of the election date.

Last week, the Supreme Court, in a 3-2

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

The assemblies in the two provinces were controlled by disposed prime minister Imran Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI). In January, Khan, in a bid to force early elections, asked the provincial governors to dissolve the two assemblies.

On February 21, President Arif Alvi, who is from the PTI, unilaterally announced April 9 as the election date in the two provinces, creating a constitutional crisis, with experts wondering if he had the right to

do so. The top court took a suo motu notice of the president’s announcement to determine which government institution had the constitutional responsibility of deciding the poll dates.

In the written verdict, the apex court held that in situations where a governor dissolved a provincial assembly, the constitutional responsibility of appointing a date for the election was to be discharged by the governor.

“The office of the undersigned is cognizant of the dictum and directions dated 1st March 2023 issued by the August Supreme Court of Pakistan in suo motu case No. 01/2023 and hence, the undersigned is obligated to honour it in letter and spirit,” the

letter written by KP governor — which has been received by the ECP — read.

The governor, however, also mentioned a “relevant portion of the para of the dictum” of the apex court which is as follows:

“Para 11 The Election Commission must proactively be available to the President or the Governor and be prepared for such consultation as required for the date for the holding of general elections”.

“Consequently, the Election Commission of Pakistan is welcome to attend the office of the undersigned on 7th or 8th March 2023 at 11:00am, whichever is convenient, so that an active and meaningful consultative process could be initiated,” the letter read.

Appointment of new
NAB chairman notifiedISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

The appointment of Lt-General (retd) Nazir Ahmad as chairman of National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has been notified on Monday. According to the notification, Nazir Ahmad’s appointment as NAB chief will be for three years. The notification was issued by Ministry for Law and Justice, carrying signatures of Joint Secretary Umar Aziz. On Saturday last, the federal government had appointed Nazir Ahmad as the new NAB chairman for three years. The new appointment came after previous NAB chairman Aftab Sultan resigned last month, citing “interference” and “pressure”. Sultan had sent his resignation to PM Shehbaz Sharif which was subsequently accepted.

Govt to stamp out
menace of terrorism:
Rana SanaullahISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan on Monday said the government would provide all resources to provinces for maintaining law and order and root out the menace of terrorism through effective measures. Addressing a press conference, he said there would be no cut in the resources of provincial governments and all requirements of law enforcement agencies would be fulfilled. “Though economic condition is very tough and austerity measures are being taken but the government would not compromise on needs of law enforcement agencies and all resources to be provided to them as per directions of the Prime Minister,” he maintained. During the meeting of the Apex committee, he said that federal government had assured to provide all resources to the provinces for maintaining law and order. The minister said that entire nation was standing with the brave and courageous law enforcers who were even sacrificing their lives to eliminate terrorism. Rana Sana said that one civilian and eight personnel of the Balochistan Constabulary were martyred and 13 were wounded in a bomb attack in Bolan. He said that constabulary van was on its way back to Quetta from Sibi when an explosion occurred on the Kambri bridge in the area bordering the Sibi and Kachhi districts. The minister said that a suicide bomber riding on motorbike rammed into the police van. He said that wounded personnel had been shifted to hospitals through helicopter and every possible treatment was being given to them. Regarding comments of Maulana Fazlur Rehman about postponement of elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa amid security concerns, the minister said that his opinion regarding postponement of election was valuable. However, he said the decision to hold elections was not of the government but of the Election Commission of Pakistan. PDM would hold a meeting to discuss this matter as it seem difficult to run the election campaign in the current situation, he said. Regarding the possible arrest of Imran Khan, the minister said that things were clear against Imran Khan and he would have to appear before court to face the trial. He said that PTI leaders including dramatized the situation when Islamabad police team reached Lahore to arrest Imran Khan. “If Imran Khan is so much obedient to law, he should appear before the court as per orders,” he added. The minister said the verdict of the court about Imran Khan would be accepted and implemented in case he was acquitted or awarded punishment. “Imran Khan will have to appear before the court in next hearings otherwise he will be presented there,” he maintained. He said that Imran Khan along with property tycoon looted Rs 50 billion of the national treasury and got registered Al-Qadir Trust of 450 Kanal. He said that Imran Khan and his spouse were the trustees of this trust while both also minted money through their front lady ‘Farah Gogi’. To a question, the minister said the PTI’s inapt government ruined the national economy during its three-and-a-half-year tenure and it violated the agreements with International Monetary Fund (IMF). To a question, he said that Nawaz Sharif criticized their opponents in past but in decent way as he did not believe in misbehaving with others. To another query about police torture on journalists, the minister said that inquiry report would be presented in court and the decision of court to be respected.

Imran Khan to launch election campaign
at Lahore rally on WednesdayLAHORE
STAFF REPORT

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) has announced to hold a ‘historic rally’ in Lahore on Wednesday which will be attended by party chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan.

The announcement comes as Imran Khan has been evading arrest attempts by law enforcing agencies and is facing charges of money laundering and illegally selling gifts received during his tenure as prime minister.

Despite the ongoing legal issues, the PTI leadership remains undeterred and is keen to showcase its strength in Lahore.

Speaking at a press conference, party leader Hammad Azhar said, “When that lion (Imran Khan) will leave Zaman Park on Wednesday, there will be historic scenes in Lahore. Future

generations would read and see the pictures and videos of [this event]. They will understand this is how a nation becomes alive.” Hammad went on to say that no one can stop Imran Khan’s voice as his voice is Pakistan’s voice right now. He also took a swipe at the ruling government, saying that the leaders sitting in Islamabad often forget what the actual temperature of Pakistan is.

“The weather is usually pleasant in Islamabad, so the people sitting on the throne often forget what the actual temperature of Pakistan is,” he said.

The PTI had previously suspended its ‘Jail Bharo’ movement earlier this month following the Supreme Court’s ruling in a suo motu notice over delay in the announcement of elections in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

However, several PTI leaders and workers were still arrested as part of the movement, which sought to mark a



protest against the government’s policies and to put pressure on the government to announce elections.

It remains to be seen how the government will respond to the PTI’s planned rally in Lahore, particularly

given Imran Khan’s ongoing legal troubles. However, the PTI leadership is clearly determined to show that it still has the support of the people, and that Imran Khan remains a potent force in the country’s political landscape.

IESCO seeks Power Division’s advice
over administration mattersPROFIT REPORT
AHMAD AHMADANI

The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) is caught in a bind and asked the power division for advice regarding the regularisation of its employees on Monday in light of recommendations of the Special Committee on Affected Employees.

IESCO’s Director General (HR), in a letter dated March 6, 2023, to the Power Division’s Senior Joint Secretary (Admin), has asked whether it may proceed for regularisation of its employees (those on contract and/or daily-wage basis) in light of directions set forth by the special committee.

The committee under the chairmanship of Qadir Khan Mandokhel, MNA, had earlier directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of IESCO to reinstate the services of the 87 employees who were terminated with all benefits and that their services should be regularised from the date of termination. Another recommendation included that the services

of 587 contract employees and 170 daily wagers should be regularised against permanent posts.

No further recruitment should be made until the implementation of recommendations of this committee, it added. However, instead of reinstating the terminated employees as per the directions of Mandokhel, IESCO has intimated to the power division that this matter will be presented before the board of directors (BoD) for its deliberations and considerations. Furthermore, CEO IESCO, in an office order dated March 6, 2023 has ordered all formations to ensure compliance of the power division Memo No.5(1) 2022-B&F dated February 25, 2023, and to observe austerity measures; a 15% cut in current expenditure on an annualised basis.

According to IESCO’s office order, the CEO ordered this 15% cut on fuel quota for each IESCO vehicle, a 15% cut on maintenance of vehicle, purchase of only locally made/brand tyres & batteries for vehicles and a ban on both purchase and installation of Alloy RIMS.

China remains Pakistan’s largest
trading partner in 2022-23BEIJING
STAFF REPORT

China remains Pakistan’s largest trading partner during the first quarter of the ongoing fiscal year 2022-23 and the leading investor in Pakistan in the first five months of FY 2022-23, contributing 23.83%, or \$102.5 million to its FDI. It is expected as special economic zones (SEZs) under the umbrella of CPEC are being established, they will attract more FDI for Pakistan in the near future not only from China, but also from other countries.

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

In the same period, China’s cumulative bilateral investment in BRI countries exceeded US \$270 billion, he added. He briefed the audience that fruitful results have been achieved since BRI was put forward ten years ago. By the end of 2022, Chinese companies had invested a total of \$57.13 billion in overseas economic and trade cooperation zones in BRI countries, creating 421,000 jobs. From

2013 to 2022, over half of China’s contracted projects abroad are in BRI countries, with the total value of new contracts signed and the total turnover of completed projects in BRI countries exceeding US \$1.2 trillion and US \$800 billion respectively.

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

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

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

“Silk Road E-commerce” pilot zones will be set up to foster a new mode of business. Data shows that despite the pandemic restrictions, trade volume has been on an upward trajectory in the past 3 years. In 2022, Pakistan’s exports of seafood to China increased by 42%, rice by 53%.

Imran Khan booked in
another two casesLAHORE
STAFF REPORT

As many as 150 people including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan have been booked for ‘threatening’ the police officials — who arrived at Zaman Park residence to arrest the former premier. The case was registered on the complaint of the Station House Officer (SHO) at Secretariat Police Station Islamabad. In the First Information Report (FIR), the SHO stated that when a team from Islamabad reached outside Zaman Park to arrest PTI chief, PTI workers — carrying batons — surrounded the officials and threatened them with serious consequences. The SHO accused Imran Khan of ‘planning the entire scene’, saying that the mob warned the police officials against arresting the former prime minister. Meanwhile, the PTI Chairman was booked in another case in Quetta on the complaint of a citizen — named Abdul Khalil Karak. The case was registered at Bijli road police station against Imran Khan’s recent speech. The PTI chairman was booked under Pakistan Penal Code — Section 505 [Statements conducing to public mischief], Section 124-A [Sedition] and Section 153-A [Promoting enmity between different groups].

Punjab Culture Day to be
observed on March 14RAWALPINDI
STAFF REPORT

In light of the orders of the Punjab government, Punjab Culture day will be celebrated in Rawalpindi on March 14. According to the Deputy Commissioner’s office spokesman, the district administration has organized various programmes highlighting Punjabi culture. In this regard, educational institutions will organise a walk to promote Punjabi culture while Punjabi traditional food stalls, tableaux and various programs will also be held in educational institutions. He said that banners would also be displayed across the city. At the same time, an awareness campaign will be conducted through social media regarding the celebration of Punjab Culture day.

FSC declares minimum 18 years age for marriage as Islamic

ISLAMABAD
TLTP

Declaring minimum age of marriage for both girls and boys at 18 years in Sindh in accordance with the injunction of Islam on Monday Federal Shariat Court (FSC) ruled saying fixation of this age limit objective is to provide reasonable time period for girls to complete basic education in order to develop mental maturity in a person.

A full bench of the FSC comprising Chief Justice Dr Syed Muhammad Anwar and Justice Khadim Hussain Shaikh ruled while hearing a plea challenging vires of the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013, which set

the minimum age of marriage for both girls and boys at 18 years in the province.

The bench said, “setting a minimum age for marriage i.e an act which is ‘mobah’ (permissible) and not absolutely ‘fard’ (mandatory) like marriage is in accordance with the injunctions of Islam, because such fixation of minimum age limit provides reasonable time period to girls to complete basic education at least, which normally helps in developing mental maturity (Rushd) in a person”.

The bench announced the judgment in response to a plea of a citizen who invoked the FSC jurisdiction challenging vires of the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013, which set

the minimum age of marriage for both girls and boys at 18 years in the province. The petitioner had contended that the Act was un-Islamic and violated the injunctions of Islam.

After providing ample opportunity to parties of the case, the full bench decided that the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013 is in accordance with the injunctions of Islam, and therefore does not violate any constitutional or Islamic provisions. The court further stated that the Section 2(a) of the Act is in line with the Islamic teachings of protecting the rights of children and ensuring their well-being.

It is pertinent to mention that the Act 2013 was enacted to prevent child marriages by fixing the minimum age

limit and promote the protection of children’s rights in the province. It sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for males and females.

It has been stated in the verdict of the FSC that fixing of an age limit to enter into marriage by the state or a government, as is done in the impugned law, is not against the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah. “The act of setting a minimum age limit for marriage and setting age for an adult eligible to solemnise marriage vide impugned Section 2(a) of the Sindh Child Marriages Restraint Act, 2013 is not against the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah,” read the judgement.

Government of Pakistan
Pakistan Ordnance Factories
Wah Cantt

INVITATION TO BID

1. POFs Supply Chain Management invites bids from the original Manufacturers / authorized Dealers / Suppliers registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Department for supply of **1 x items of D.O.S STOCK** against T.E. No. 0049-FP-FILL-53, dt.27-02-2023.

2. Bidding documents containing item wise detail, specifications and all other terms & conditions are available for the interested bidders at the office of the undersigned OR can also be downloaded from POF website (www.ebidding.pof.gov.pk) free of cost.

3. The bids completed in all respects, must be submitted online on above mentioned portal on or before **08-04-2023**, but not later than closing time **1130 hrs**. The Tenders will be opened at **1200 hrs** on the same date.

Director Supply Chain Management
Tel. No.061-9056-21088, Fax No.061-9314100
E-mail: procurement@pof.gov.pk

MARYAM RESOLVES TO MAKE YOUTH VIBRANT PART OF PML-N

LAHORE
STAFF REPORT

A MEETING of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Youth Wing Punjab chapter held here under the chairmanship of Senior Vice President and Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz, reviewed organizational structure and activities in detail besides taking decisions to further active the youth wing.

The meeting was attended by divisional, district presidents, general secretaries and other office bearers.

Recommendations to improve performance of the youth wing on social media as well as active presence on multiple social media platforms were given a final shape during the meeting. The youth wing office bearers were assigned the duties in that regard.

Speaking on the occasion, Maryam Nawaz termed the youth real strength of

the party and said that their participation in organizational matters would be ensured.

She regretted that negative thinking was deliberately promoted among the youth during the previous four years rule of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. Maryam Nawaz said the youth were future of the nation and expressed the resolve to bring them in decision making process in order to make them empowered.

The PML-N had become a youth

representative party in a true sense as the party had credit of initiating various schemes aimed at providing better employment and business opportunities to the youth. Shehbaz Sharif had introduced education friendly Punjab Education Endowment Fund project, whereas, interest free loan scheme was also a project of the PML-N.

Maryam Nawaz said that under the Small and Medium Enterprises, all out assistance was being offered to the youth



to start their own business. The youth were attracted towards latest technology by providing them laptops while local and international scholarships were also provided to shining and deserving students.



Imran attack: ATC extends judicial remand of suspects

GUIJRANWALA
STAFF REPORT

The anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Monday extended the judicial remand of four including a prime suspect in former prime minister Imran Khan attack case in Wazirabad attack. As per details, the anti-terrorism special court heard the case via video link. The prime suspects in Imran Khan attack, Naveed, Tayyab, Waqas, and Ahsan were presented before court from the central jail. The court extended the judicial remand for 14 days and adjourned the hearing till March 20. Earlier, the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) formed to probe the attack on former prime minister and PTI chairman Imran Khan in Wazirabad, revealed that the Prime suspect Naveed Meher was trained. It is pertinent to mention here that Naveed Meher was arrested after opening fire at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief and former premier Imran Khan on November 3 from the crime scene at Allahwala Chowk during the party's long march. The First Information Report (FIR) of the gun attack incident had been registered on November 7.

Tarar reiterates call for former judges to avoid politics

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Interior, Attaullah Tarar emphasized that former judges should stay out of politics and let the politicians handle the political affairs of the country. Addressing a press conference here on Monday, he said that false cases were registered against the government of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz in past. He cited that the undue delays in judicial orders during the tenure of Imran Khan had prolonged various projects that ultimately lead to increased costs. Furthermore, Tarar said that Imran Khan had received undue facilitation to disqualify the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. He said that Imran Khan was using all possible means to clear himself of the cases against him. Tarar also expressed disappointment about the delays in the important public interest project of the Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI) and other important projects.

NEPRA slaps additional surcharge of Rs3.39 per unit on consumers

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This surcharge is not sufficient to cover markup charges of total PHL loans.

The mark up of remaining loans is being paid from revenue collected through electricity sales and this constrains the payments of other financial obligations.

To summarise it all the total surcharge becomes Rs 3.82/unit for the said period and for new financial year, additional surcharge of Rs. 3.39/unit will be reduced to Rs. 1/unit to cover the additional markup charges of PHL loans which cannot be covered through the already applicable FC surcharge of 0.43/unit. This would yield a total

surcharge of Rs. 1.43/unit for the new financial year. Chairman NEPRA who presided over the proceedings asked whether the NEPRA can reject this proposed imposition of the surcharge to which officials from the Power Division replied "yes, it can".

The chairman said that the regulator has strong reservations about the imposition of this surcharge, as those who are loyal consumers and regularly pay their bills are to pay Rs 3.39/unit surcharge, while those who do not pay their bills are rejoicing.

The authority is neither accepting or rejecting this surcharge and linked it with the legal opinions and asked the Power Division to take legal views on it

and then come to us. "We need the legal position of the government regarding the imposition of surcharge," he said.

Chairman said that if NEPRA allows recoveries in this way, then other procedures will become redundant. If the government has the authority, then it should not shift the responsibility onto NEPRA. This situation did not emerge in one day, we had several times forewarned the government of deteriorating power management, but no heed was given. It indicates the inefficiencies of the Power Division due to which every year the situation becomes bad to worse.

Member NEPRA Rafique Ahmad Shaikh asked the division to do its

homework on the issue, take legal views regarding the surcharges and then come to us. He further said that the surcharge will not solve the issues of the government. He said that the industrial tariff could go up to Rs 32/unit. Followed by a question "if industries opt for an alternate option, then how can the government recover?". Ironically, the power division official had no answer and said that we have not looked into this question so far.

Chairman NEPRA said that our energy sector governance and recoveries are not settled while challenges of losses are increasing. We are pressing on the subsidy's surcharges, but are not willing to address the actual issues.

ECP restores membership of MNA Dr Fehmida Mirza

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Monday restored the membership of former federal minister Fehmida Mirza and allowed her to function as Member of the National Assembly on filing her mandatory statements of assets and liabilities to the commission.

According to an ECP official, the National Assembly membership of Dr Fehmida, MNA from NA-230 Badin-III was suspended over non-submission of her asset details, had now filed her statements of assets and liabilities and fulfilled the legal requirement in conformance with the relevant election laws.



The Election Rules, 2017 provides that every member of an assembly and Senate would submit to the ECP on or before December 31st each year, a copy

of his statement of assets and liabilities, including assets and liabilities of his spouse and dependent children, as on June 30 on Form B.

The election rules also provide that the Commission on January 16, by an order, suspend the membership of a member of the assembly and Senate who fails to submit the statement of assets and liabilities by January 15, and such member will cease to function till he or she files the statement of assets and liabilities.

It is pertinent to mention here that the ECP had suspended the membership of 271 parliamentarians for non-submission of their statements of assets and liabilities.

Ghandhara Nissan announces first plant shutdown since

CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE

COVID-19 LOCKDOWNS: "This has not only saved the industry but also the employment of thousands of employees," Shafiq Shaikh, Head of Public Relations and Official Spokesperson at Pak Suzuki Motor Company Limited, told Profit when the circular was originally released. Authorised dealers were, however, told to prioritise essential imports over those relating to conspicuous consumption. This clause raised concerns about the degree of relief that the automotive industry would receive in the months to come. Profit was told by Munir Bana, Chairman of the Pakistan Association of Auto Parts & Accessories Manufacturers, that "The auto industry is not an essential item and therefore our imports will continue to be controlled and rationed by SBB," when the circular was released.

Ghandhara's notice attests to the veracity of Bana's claims as the company has highlighted in

the letter how its vendors have been unable to provide the company with the requisite parts due to the circular. The inability of Ghandhara's vendors to cater to its demand is what Ghandhara has attributed its NPDs to.

ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST: Ghandhara's decision comes on the back of Agriauto Industries announcing a partial shutdown for the entirety of March last week. Earlier this year Saggar announced its first ever plant closure for its four wheel division from February 27 to March 4. Similarly, Suzuki has also announced plant closures from January 2 to January 6, from January 9 to January 13, from January 16 to January 20, and from February 13 to February 21. Toyota too observed plant closures from February 1 to February 14 with the decision to shift to a single shift upon the resumption of regular production from February 15. Finally, Millat Tractors also observed a plant closure from January 6 January 15.

Islamabad court upholds Imran Khan's arrest warrants in Toshakhana case

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

At the outset of the hearing, Bukhari told the court that his client wanted to be given a way to appear in court. He said the PTI chief had always implemented court orders, adding that the police could not detain him if he wished to appear before the court. "You could have approached the Islamabad High Court for the cancellation of arrest warrants," the judge asked the PTI counsel. The lawyer responded that the legal team wanted to approach the sessions court for the cancellation of warrants. Separately, Imran has also approached the Lahore High Court (LHC) for bail in three different cases pertaining to the Toshakhana reference, vandalism at the Islamabad judicial complex and violence outside the Islamabad High Court (IHC). It was worth mentioned here that the The 70-year-old former prime minister, who has been recovering from a gunshot injury from an assassination attempt in Wazirabad last year, has thrice skipped indictment hearings in an Islamabad sessions court in the case. Imran was set to be indicted in the Toshakhana Reference on Feb 28, but his lawyer had requested ADSJ Zafar Iqbal that he be exempted from the hearing because he had to appear in several other courts. His indictment was deferred twice before.

IHC reserves decision in plea seeking removal of name from ECL

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday reserved its judgment on a petition seeking to remove the name of accused Adam Amin Chaudhry from the Exit Control List (ECL) in a reference pertaining to looting the public in the name of investment. At the outset of the hearing, Justice Mohsin Akhter Kayani observed that there should be no dual standards in the country. If the names of some persons had been removed from the ECL then why the petitioner's name was not excluded. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) should treat the people equally, he added. The court, however, reserved its judgment in the case.

NEPRA publishes performance report on NTDC, K-Electric

CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE

VOLTAGE VIOLATIONS: The equipment's performance suffers from voltage fluctuations, which also make the internal voltages and currents of electrical devices unstable. This can lead to short circuiting and damaged equipment.

The rules prescribed by NEPRA call for limits in voltage variations. However the number of voltage violations for NTDC remained 185,497 for the year 2021-22 that indicates a 54.5% increase as compared to 120,092 violations in the preceding year.

Whereas KE has reported 46 voltage violations under normal conditions that indicates 100% increase with respect to the preceding year.

The highest voltage recorded beyond permissible limits at 500 kV voltage class was 564 kV, recorded at D. G. Khan. Similarly, at 220 kV level, highest voltage was 250 kV recorded at Muzaffargarh while at 220 kV level, the voltage remained as low as 150 kV, recorded at Kala Shah Kaku and 170 kV at Quetta.

FREQUENCY VIOLATIONS: Similar to the impact of voltage fluctuations, several electrical frequencies cannot coexist without causing device damage, hence maintaining a constant electrical frequency is crucial.

NEPRA has prescribed limits for frequency variations under the Rules. The frequency data as reported by NTDC indicated variation in frequency limits beyond the upper permissible limit of 50.5 Hz.

Whereas the highest frequency recorded was 50.66 Hz that comes out to be 1.3% variation against the allowed limit of 1%. However, NTDC has violated the prescribed limits 4 times for a total of 26 minutes.

According to the report, during 2021-22, in the KE

system there was only a single instance when frequency remained outside the prescribed limit (upper) i.e. 50.53Hz for 9 minutes and that comes out to be approximately 0.002% of the reported period.

It is pertinent to highlight that during the reported period two partial collapses occurred and KE's system collapsed as well that nullifies its stance of zero outages.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that KE being a vertically integrated utility having a generation fleet of around 2,817 MW has failed to survive during major incidents repeatedly which is a matter of serious concern. **SUPERVISORY CONTROL AND DATA ACQUISITION (SCADA) SYSTEM:** The complexity of the modern day power systems require automation for real time data acquisition enabling quick and intelligent decisions for supervision, monitoring and control of the transmission system.

NEPRA has long been emphasising a need to deploy a modern SCADA System by NTDC to supervise and control the economic despatch of electric power generation which is yet to be implemented.

The Authority has allowed Rs 3.4 billion to NTDC in the last three years for installation and commissioning of SCADA system and services as per request of the despatch company, which has yet to fully implement it. **SYSTEM CONSTRAINTS AND OVERLOADING OF TRANSMISSION NETWORK:** During the reported period, at several instances, the transmission system remained incapable of transmitting the electric power from efficient power plants to load centres to meet the demand.

NTDC is still requiring a longer period to fix the existing constraints which is a leading cause in the acquisition of electricity in violation of the merit order.

In the report NTDC has also been urged to take measures to remove constraints in its network to off-take electric power from existing power plants as well as upcoming power projects in light of the Transmission System Expansion Plan (TSEP) duly integrated with the plan for induction of new generation plants in accordance with Indicative Generation Capacity Expansion Plan (IGCEP).

Similarly, the data pertaining to system constraints revealed that most of the grid stations are overloaded and NTDC's progress on removal of system constraints is slow and around 11 projects have faced delays. NTDC needs to complete it on priority to avoid any adverse impacts on the power sector, said the NEPRA report.

INTERCONNECTION OF NEW POWER PLANTS: In various cases, NTDC was not able to complete the interconnection facilities for evacuation of power from new power plants as per the approved design, within the stipulated time period and thus caused under-utilisation of the available capacity.

It has also been observed that progress on evacuation projects is slow due to which cheap electricity located in Thar is not being supplied to the national grid. Such as the absence of dedicated transmission line for Shanghai Electric Company Limited (SECL) plant, leads to load curtailment of Engro Power Thar Limited (EPTL) and Thar Energy Limited (TEL) due to inadequate transmission capacity.

NTDC needs to complete its evacuations projects on priority so that any adverse impact on the power sector may be avoided.

HISTORY: K-Electric (KE) formerly known as Karachi Electric Supply Company was established on September 13, 1913 under the Indian Companies Act of 1882 as the

Karachi Electric Supply Corporation (KESC). The entity was nationalised in 1952 and privatised again on November 29, 2005. In September, 2008 it was renamed as Karachi Electric Supply Company (KESC). Thereafter, it was rebranded as K-Electric (KE). KE was granted Transmission Licence on 10th June 2010 by NEPRA to engage in the transmission business within the territory as specified in its licence for a term of thirty (30) years.

KE's transmission system comprises a total of 1,355 km of 220 kV, 132 kV and 66 kV transmission lines, 71 grid stations, 20 Auto Transformers and 175 power transformers, as of June 2022. K-Electric grid is interconnected with the NTDC grid system through four (04) 220 kV transmission circuits, namely;

**KDA-NKI
BALDIA-NKI
KDA-JAMSHORO-1
KDA-JAMSHORO-2**

NTDC was incorporated under the Companies Ordinance 1984 on November 6, 1998. The principal business of NTDC is to own, operate and build infrastructure for transmission systems of 220 kV, 500 kV and above transmission Lines and associated Sub-stations.

NTDC commenced its commercial operation on 1st of March 1999 and was organised to take over the properties, assets, rights, obligations and liabilities of transmission networks all over Pakistan previously owned by Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), except the area served by K-Electric. NTDC was granted Transmission Licence on 31st December 2002 by NEPRA to engage exclusively in the transmission business for a term of thirty (30) years, pursuant to Section 17 of the Regulation of Generation, Transmission and Distribution of Electric Power Act, 1997.

NTDC operates & maintains seventeen (17) 500 kV and forty-seven (47) 220 kV Grid Stations with 8,387 km of 500 kV and 11,611 km of 220 kV transmission lines as of June, 2022.

04 PAKISTAN TODAY COMMENT

Let them march!

The state's sorry attitude

ANOTHER 8th of March rolls near and, as always, a debate stirs up about the Aurat March, which takes place that day every year, in order to commemorate the World Women's Day. Sexism is a trait as old as time, so 'debate' shouldn't be a bad word, even if anti-feminist voices go more shrill at that time. That debate, the determined women who organise the march in different cities every year, can take on with aplomb. The problem, one that shouldn't rear its head in a civilised state, is that of security for the march and the near abdication of the state of its responsibilities.

TILL the filing of this editorial, the Islamabad and Multan administrations have not provided an NOC, with the former citing a possible security situation given the counter-movement's Haya March. The Aurat March in Lahore was initially not given the NOC, citing a similar security situation, but the Lahore High Court has issued a notice on a petition challenging this denial of permission.

This is a ridiculous response by the state, on more levels than one. Why is the Haya March seemingly being facilitated and not the other march? Is this an endorsement by the state of the nagging suspicion in everyone's mind that the state will bend to the will of those who have an implicit threat of violence in their demeanour as opposed to those who will undertake peaceful activities? Similar to the difference in the state's response towards the non-violent PTM versus its response to the TLP, which was anything but non-violent.

And even if the Haya March were being treated in the exact same manner as the Aurat March, why would the prospect of a potential clash be enough for the state to seemingly abdicate its responsibilities to protect its citizens who are exercising their right to free speech?

Perhaps the real reason is a general distaste for women asking for a better world to begin with. In a recent interview of the President on the difficulties the Aurat March organisers were facing in obtaining an NOC, the Symbol Of The Federation said there was no need for protests; that progress was't ever made through protests. Words that must have been running through his head during his party's bizarre 140-day-plus protest, during which he raided the headquarters of the state broadcaster, along with his party's henchmen.

PAKISTAN TODAY

Dedicated to the legacy of late Hameed Nizami

Arif Nizami (Late)
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HASAN AFTAB SAEED

APPARENTLY, the easiest way to sound pious these days is to replace in one's everyday conversation 'Thank you' by 'JazakAllah'. In that sense, 'Inshallah' has lost much of its charm since everybody has started repeating it all the time. On this count at least, 'Jazakallah' very much retains its utility and is likely to hold its own in the foreseeable future.

Most people use everyday expressions like these without knowing what they mean; and even when they know the meanings in an abstract sort of way, they usually lack the consciousness of using them in that sense. No wonder ranked atheists are routinely heard saying 'Inshallah'. Many theists too, for their part, habitually repeat it without any appreciation of its true meaning.

A common misunderstanding about 'Jazakallah' is that it is considered the 'Islamic' way of expressing gratitude, and is therefore that much better as an expression. Reason, on the other hand, demands that if one expression is better than another, it must only be so because it expresses a superior sentiment; and not because it is couched in Arabic vocabulary, as many seem to believe. 'Jazakallah' is a supplication to God, a prayer for Divine reward in favour of the recipient for some virtuous act of his. In Islam, the very act of entreating God is a form of worship, and is therefore an immediate boon for the person doing it; whatever benefit the recipient ends up deriving from it. Provided, of course, that the man knows what his prayer means. There is just no escaping from what words mean, is there?

“Most people use everyday expressions like these without knowing what they mean; and even when they know the meanings in an abstract sort of way, they usually lack the consciousness of using them in that sense.”

Not knowing the meanings of words

An old human failing

Using words without knowing what they mean is an old human failing. It is the source of much misunderstanding and confusion. 'Assalamu alikum' is a case in point; not in its everyday usage but when it is addressed to those resting in their graves. There are those who argue that since there is this Islamic tradition of greeting the dead upon entering a cemetery, we can also 'donate' our good deeds to the dear departed. It is conveniently overlooked that 'Assalamu alikum' is simply a prayer, an act of wishing others well. There is absolutely nothing wrong with praying for the well-being of others in *this life and the next* — in fact, it is a sign of a Muslim to wish for others what he wishes for himself. On the contrary, the Quran explicitly rules out 'transference' of good deeds by making it clear that each man will be responsible for and the beneficiary of his own initiatives and actions and nobody else's.

Flimsy theological arguments have similarly been built on the premise that Muslims are encouraged to recite the Durood for the Prophet (pace be upon him). The fact of the matter is that the Durood (or its synonym, the 'Salam') is also a supplication. This is all the information that is needed to know that the premise by no means leads to the elaborate conclusions usually drawn and presented. Merely knowing what a word means often saves man from putting forward, or accepting, silly arguments that do absolutely no favour to anybody.

By far the most unfortunate manifestation of using language without knowing what it means occurs when the Quran is recited or heard by Muslims live, on TV/radio, or on some digital device. Since much of it is done for 'blessings' (whatever those are), it is deemed unnecessary to know what any of it means. The average Muslim is therefore spectacularly unaware of the contents of the Quran. He has all

sorts of preposterous ideas about what is in it and what is not.

Any wonder so many Muslims find their daily prayers so 'mechanical' and therefore so lacking in vitality? Having memorized some of the shorter chapters of the Quran, they simply repeat them after reciting the Fatiha. For the other portions of their prayers as well, they have learned by heart certain formulas without knowing what any of them means. No wonder the daily prayers fail to have a rejuvenating effect on most.

A further complication regarding the daily prayers is the almost universal failure to tell apart its mandatory phrases (which are limited) from the comparatively much broader portions in which there is freedom to choose one's own words, enabling one to thereby effectively talk to God. This means that a man neither expresses what is relevant to his situation on any given day, nor does he have any idea about the meanings of phrases he repeats from memory. Any wonder the daily prayers are a far cry from heart-to-heart talks where one shares all one's thoughts and feelings with God, and asks for His help and support.

The raison d'être of language is that it has the capacity to convey ideas through its words and turns of the phrase. Nothing abstract, nothing even slightly more complicated than the most primitive of sensations and impressions can be contemplated without the aid of language, let alone expressed. One does absolutely no favour to oneself when one uses words and phrases without knowing what they mean, effectively dispensing with most of the benefit they have to offer.

The author is a connoisseur of music, literature, and food (but not drinks). He can be reached at www.facebook.com/hasanajtbsaeed



Water Scarcity

National Security



MUHAMMAD HAROON SHAUKAT

IN an unprecedented and belligerent move, India issued a notice to Pakistan on January 25, 2023, seeking modifications to the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), signed in September 1960, that governs the utilisation of the waters of the Indus system of rivers by Pakistan and India. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) — the lending arm of the World Bank Group — that brokered this treaty is also a signatory to the treaty. The aforementioned notice was issued just two days before the hearing of a dispute at the request of Pakistan by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, over the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric power projects being constructed by India in the occupied Kashmir. India boycotted the Court of Arbitration's proceedings and gave a 90 days' notice to Pakistan, reportedly insisting on solving the matter bilaterally without involving any third party. India's unilateral notice sends a message to Pakistan that it does not consider IWT inviolable and if Pakistan does not want to put the treaty at risk, it must go along with the Indian projects.

Earlier in August 2016, Pakistan had initiated legal proceedings against the aforementioned projects, by requesting the constitution of an ad hoc Court of Arbitration citing Article IX of the IWT. Pakistan was obliged to do so as India was persistently refusing to address Pak-

istan's concerns. In response to Pakistan's invocation of an ad hoc Court of Arbitration, India belatedly requested the appointment of a Neutral Expert. In October 2017, following its responsibilities under the Indus Waters Treaty, the World Bank made the appointments in the two separate processes requested by India and Pakistan concerning the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric power plants. As such two parallel processes were initiated; Mr. Michel Lino was appointed as the Neutral Expert and Prof. Sean Murphy was designated as the Chairman of the Court of Arbitration.

The Indus River has been a cradle of civilisation and has been used for irrigation since time immemorial. The British had constructed a complex canal system for enhancing agricultural output. The partition left a large part of this infrastructure in Pakistan but the headwork dams remained in India. It is against this background that the World Bank brokered the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) between India and Pakistan after many years of intense negotiations, and settled the issue of the allocation of waters of the Indus River basin. According to the IWT, control over the waters of the three "eastern" rivers — the Beas, the Ravi, and the Sutlej — was given to India, while control over the three "western" rivers — the Indus, the Chenab, and the Jhelum — to Pakistan.

Since the ratification of the treaty in 1960, the IWT has survived wars and periods of intense tension between the two countries. However, India, being the upper riparian state, has a long history of taking advantage of that position and has misused the treaty provisions to the disadvantage of Pakistan, be it the Salal dam, Tulbul Navigation project, the Baglihar dam, Nimmo Bazgo hydroelectric project or the currently disputed designs of Kishenganga and Ratle hydropower projects. India is using water as a weapon of coercion as 78 percent of Pak-

istan's river water inflows from India.

Pakistan is faced with looming water scarcity. According to a recent report published by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), the country ranks 14 among the 17 "extremely high water risk" countries of the world. There is a serious risk that the country may face "water scarcity" by 2025. Water scarcity can become an existential threat to energy and food security, and therefore, to national security.

Campaigning in Haryana in 2019, Modi threatened Pakistan by saying, "The water which belongs to India was allowed to flow to Pakistan for 70 years...this will not happen now. We will divert the water which belongs to India, it will be given to the farmers of Haryana, and water should be given to the farmers of Rajasthan." A senior leader of the ruling BJP party, Priya Sethi, has called for building electricity dams and irrigation channels "to ensure the water flow into Pakistan is stopped". Joanna Slater, a staff writer for the Washington Post, asserts, "India wants to use water as a weapon against Pakistan."

Growing water scarcity has become an issue of national security, requiring the urgent attention of policymakers at the highest level.

“Growing water scarcity has become an issue of national security, requiring the urgent attention of policymakers at the highest level.”

services of leading legal and technical experts. The Indus Water Treaty has regulated the waters of the Indus basin for sixty years. Pakistan should make sure that India is not allowed to breach this treaty. International pressure should be brought to bear on India to respect IWT in the letter and spirit.

Ambassador Muhammad Haroon Shaukat (Retd) is Director Foreign Affairs at the Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), Lahore, Pakistan. He may be reached at info@casslhr.com



“The Indus River has been a cradle of civilisation and has been used for irrigation since time immemorial. The British had constructed a complex canal system for enhancing agricultural output.”

EDITOR'S MAIL

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The bright side

PAKISTAN is in the middle of a grave economic crisis. In these testing times, it is necessary to cultivate optimism than hopelessness among people. We all are aware of the critical value of being positive in our attitude and approach, but we are unable to practise it because we do not know how to exercise optimism the right way.

First, we need to understand that positive thinking is a mindset developed and nurtured gradually. The mind needs to be trained to see every situation positively. It then becomes inclined to see the bright side of everything. Our teachers, trainers and mentors can help us accomplish this.

Moreover, positive thinking has more to do with emotions than with our mind. We need to feel good to truly reap the fruits of positive thinking. Spirituality, exercise and music can help us be in the right frame of mind.

Besides, the best way to learn is through inspiration. We must imbibe things when we see practical examples of success. If we observe high achievers in our daily lives, we can easily see that the common trait among all such souls is their positive outlook towards life. By being around other happy, successful go-getters, we, too, can have some of that energy.

SYED ZOHAIB RIZVI
KARACHI

Medical allowance

THE federal government had changed the pay scales of the autonomous Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC), commonly called Radio Pakistan, in July last year. Under the rules, serving and retired federal employees up to grade 16 are entitled to 25 per cent of their salaries/pensions as medical allowance, whereas those above are paid 20pc under the head.

Despite the federal government decision, Radio Pakistan's serving and retired employees are not being paid the medical allowance to which they are now entitled. In view of the prevailing economic crisis in the country, it may not be possible for the federal government to pay six months' arrears now, but the medical allowance must and should be paid to the serving and retired employees with effect from January 1. This will help them cope with the ever-increasing inflation. Moreover, Radio Pakistan's serving and retired employees are not being reimbursed their submitted medical bills for months and months together. In view of the prevailing situation, some have already stopped submitting the medical bills for reimbursement, and are spending their limited resources on purchasing medicines for themselves and their families. The government must look into the woes of Radio Pakistan employees, and provide them some relief in the challenging times prevailing currently.

M Z RIFAT
LAHORE

Mother languages

THE world recently observed the International Mother Language Day (Feb 21) to celebrate linguistic and cultural diversity, and to promote multilingualism. The theme this year was, "Fostering multilingualism for inclusion in education and society". We must highlight the importance of a multilingual society, language plurality and reconciliation in the country. The state's unitary linguistic nationalism has marginalised all indigenous languages of Pakistan. There is an urgent need for the state to recognise linguistic plurality. The narrative of 'lingua franca' used by the state to create hegemonic space for a single language is a myth. It should be done away with, making adequate space for all languages being spoken in Pakistan to survive and flourish. Wider linguistic and cultural recognition is the very essence of federalism and will strengthen the country. The government should set up a national commission on languages to decide the matter.

DR MEHBOOB SHAIKH
KARACHI

Tuesday, 7 March, 2023

PAKISTAN TODAY
COMMENT 05

Integrated rural transformation

The missing piece of the puzzle



DR GHULAM MOHEY-UD-DIN

WHILE nobody can deny the fact that cities are the engines of economic growth and are essential for harnessing the benefits of agglomerations and economies of urbanisation, integrated and inclusive rural transformation is just as important as urban development in promoting sustainable and equitable growth. Urban development often receives more attention and resources than rural development — which must be given due priority in the development agenda — but not at the cost of rural development.

Neglecting rural areas can lead to a widening gap between urban and rural areas and can result in unsustainable migration towards cities, causing problems in both sectors. In cities, this can not only overburden the infrastructure and services in urban areas but also results in unplanned urban sprawl and the emergence of slums and shanty towns as well as distortions in the already under pressure property market.

Rural areas are still home to a significant portion of the global population. Without addressing the specific needs and challenges of rural communities, it is unlikely that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be met. In Pakistan, according to the Population Census 2017, 63 percent of the population lived in rural areas, which are mostly dependent on agriculture, livestock, small agro-based enterprises, and basic skill-based occupations.

According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2022, 39 percent of the total labour force of the country

is employed in agriculture, which contributes 22 percent of the national GDP. Despite the importance of rural areas in terms of population, employment, and share in GDP, the sector is plagued by low productivity, inefficiency, and stagnancy. A concentrated effort needs to be made in transforming the urban areas of Pakistan for sustainable progress.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in its report, "Rural Development Report 2016," describes rural transformation as a process that increases agricultural productivity, increases commercialisation, generates marketable surpluses, diversifies the cropping pattern and livelihoods, and increases off-farm employment and entrepreneurial prospects. The IFAD report also noted that agricultural GDP rises as labour is reallocated, and the report discovered — after analysing data from 86 countries — that GDP per capita rises as agriculture's share of GDP and employment declines. Furthermore, as GDP per capita rises, the gap between agriculture's share of GDP and agriculture's share of employment shrinks.

In the case of Pakistan, agricultural productivity is almost stagnant, as in 1991, Pakistan's per-worker agricultural productivity was US \$2,137, which still hovered around US \$2,634 in 2019. The share of agriculture in GDP was 23 percent in 1991 and was around 22 percent in 2022, and the share of agriculture in the workforce was 44 percent in 1991 and 39 percent in 2022, highlighting the stagnancy of agricultural productivity in Pakistan.

Pakistan requires a rural-inclusive transformation plan that can improve the livelihoods of rural residents while promoting economic development. The Rural Integrated Development Model (RIDM) can be a good policy option for Pakistan. The RIDM is a holistic approach to addressing the economic, social, and environmental challenges facing rural communities.

The RIDM approach typically involves a combination of different interventions such as microfinance, infrastruc-



ture development, capacity building, and community mobilization. Overall, the RIDM model is a comprehensive, community-based approach to rural development that aims to improve the standard of living and economic opportunities for people living in rural areas.

Micro infrastructure projects, microfinance, and rural integrated development programmes are all important tools for promoting economic growth and reducing poverty in rural areas. To be effective, these rural integrated development programmes must be designed and implemented with the specific needs and challenges of the local communities in mind. This requires working closely with local organisations and leaders to understand the unique strengths and weaknesses of the area and tailoring interventions accordingly.

In terms of policy recommendations, a nexus of public-private partnerships of governments and development organisations — such as Rural Support Programs (RSPs), NGOs, local communities, and microfinance banks — should be established which prioritise the provision of microfinance and implementation and monitoring of micro infrastructure

projects in rural areas.

Initially, a pilot project may be implemented in a small number of selected model villages where an integrated package of rural development needs to be introduced which is comprised of micro infrastructure projects (such as tube wells, brick lining of water channels, solar-powered off-grid electricity generation for household and on-farm uses), provision of microloans for pesticides and high-quality seeds, and farm mechanisation.

In addition, cooperative farming for joint ownership of machinery and equipment like tractors, laser land-levelers, threshers, and combine harvesters on a community-wide level may be introduced coupled with community mobilisation and capacity building. The government should also consider prioritising development spending on infrastructure related to health, education, drinking water, sanitation, and farm-to-market roads in these model villages to ensure the integrated and holistic development of the community.

By taking a holistic, community-based approach and working closely with local organisations and leaders, these programmes can be designed and implemented in a way that is effective and sustainable. With the right policies and support, these measures can help improve the lives of millions of people living in poverty and transform and modernise the Pakistani countryside.

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“Urban development often receives more attention and resources than rural development — which must be given due priority in the development agenda — but not at the cost of rural development.”

Saudi TV series about Islamic history triggers Iraq's sectarian divide

AL-MONITOR
ALI MAMOURI

THE SERIES, DIRECTED BY TAREK ALARIAN, COST NEARLY \$100 MILLION AND TOOK OVER TWO YEARS TO PRODUCE

“BROADCASTING SUCH SERIES IS CONTRARY TO THE NEW, MODERATE POLICIES PURSUED BY THE BROTHERLY COUNTRY OF SAUDI ARABIA,” SADR TWEETED

MBC Media Group has announced a drama series about Mu'awiya bin Abi Sufyan, the first Umayyad caliph, during the upcoming Islamic month of Ramadan, set to begin in about 20 days. The Saudi media conglomerate's decision has faced massive criticism in Iraq and other countries with large Shiite communities, due to the Shiite belief that Mu'awiya was an enemy to Islam.

Iraq's government media watchdog, the Communication and Media Commission, warned MBC Iraq, which is a part of MBC group, that the show went against the country's regulations. Consequently, MBC Iraq announced that it will not broadcast the series. However, other MBC channels will broadcast it due to commitments with the producer. MBC is currently referring to it as "Mu'awiya," but the official name will be released before it airs. The series, directed by Tarek Alarian, cost nearly \$100 million and took over two years to produce. It features several well-known Arab actors, including Lujain Ismail (playing Mu'awiya), Iyad Nassar (Imam Ali), Suhair bin Amara (Hind, Mu'awiya's mother) and Wael Sharaf (Amr Aas).

The controversial Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr demanded that MBC halt the series. "Broadcasting such series is contrary to the new, moderate policies pursued by the brotherly country of Saudi Arabia," Sadr tweeted Feb. 14.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SHIITES : Mu'awiya was the first caliph of the Umayyad Caliphate, which ruled a large part of what is today the Middle East from 661-

750 CE. He established Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus after a war with Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib, the first Shiite imam who was the caliph in Kufa, in southern Iraq. Imam Ali was assassinated in 661 AD and buried in nearby Najaf, which has become the heart of the Shiite religious institution, similar to the Vatican. Imam Ali occupies a similar authority and role for Shiites as St. Peter the Apostle does for Catholics. The enmity between subsequent Umayyad caliphs and Imam Ali's children and grandchildren continued for about 100 years.

Given this history, many Shiites hold a lasting grudge against the Umayyads in general and Mu'awiya in particular. However, for the Sunnis, the Umayyad period is considered a part of glorious Islamic history.

Iraqi Shiites were outraged at the plans for the series, sparking concerns that it could ignite a new wave of sectarianism in the region. The Iraqi Shiite TV channel Al-Sha'ar announced that it would not air the Mu'awiya series and that it had started producing a rival series about Abu Lu'lu'a Firuz, a Persian slave who assassinated the second Islamic caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab, in 644 AD.

Iraq's government media watchdog, however, also sent a directive to Al-Sha'ar against the series, stating that "licensed media organizations are prohibited from belittling, distorting, or denigrating the religious beliefs of other sects." In response, Al-Sha'ar confirmed that they will commit to the directive as long as MBC does not air the Mu'awiya series. Iraqi militia Telegram channels also slammed Saudi Arabia and the MBC group, calling for a demonstration in front of MBC's headquarters

if they go ahead with plans to air it.

The headquarters building in Baghdad was attacked and burned in 2020 by pro-militia groups after the channel broadcast a documentary about a terrorist attack targeting the Iraqi embassy in Lebanon in 1980s, accusing the former head of the Popular Mobilization Units, Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, of leading the attack.

HISTORY AS A WEAPON: During the last two decades, producing historical movies and series to be used against rival powers in the region has become common.

Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey in particular have produced dozens of dramas and TV series, in addition to documentaries, about Islamic history in order to glorify their nations and attack the rival powers in the region, not to mention the West.

Movies and TV series about Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, Marwan ibn al-Hakam and Umar ibn al-Khattab, who are rejected by the Shiite, had raised their anger. And movies and TV series about Shiites like Imam Ali and Imam Hassan that narrate their life (and insult against their enemies, who are mostly respected by Sunnis), raised Sunnis' discontent.

The Mu'awiya series has already woken up the sectarian conflict in the region that had been quiet in the last few years, particularly after the defeat of the Islamic State. Sufian Samarra'i, the chairman of BaghdadPostPlus, slammed Shiite figures who oppose the series.

Faisal Al-Farhoud, a famous Saudi blogger, also expressed support for the series in a tweet. He praised Mu'awiya and asked, "Who are you, Muqtada al-Sadr, the bucket?"

Twitter is dying a slow and tedious death

THE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM IS BECOMING MUCH LESS INTERESTING

FINANCIAL TIMES
JEMIMA KELLY

IF Elon Musk is right about Twitter being crucial to the future of civilisation, then things are looking bleak for us all. Outages are on the rise, advertising revenues have plunged, and a company that had a 7,500-strong workforce just four months ago now employs just 2,000, after yet another round of job cuts.

When Musk took over the social media platform back in October, the sometimes-richest person in the world said he was doing so not to make money, but to "try to help humanity". He was determined to make Twitter better, he said, because it was "important to the future of civilisation to have a common digital town square, where a wide range of beliefs can be debated in a healthy manner".

I haven't seen Musk take part in many serious debates of late — healthy or otherwise — though I have seen him posting a whole load of third-rate memes and re-sharing his own bad gags.

I do wonder, also, whether someone who is reported to have got 80 engineers to tweak the algorithm so his tweets would be more visible than those of the US president is really the person who will manage to save Twitter and (according to him) the rest of us.

In some ways, though, all of that is beside the point. I never expected Musk, when he took over Twitter, to suddenly resist the urge to make dumb jokes, nor to stop spouting unfounded claims to his 130mn followers in an irresponsible fashion, nor to refrain from using the platform for his own personal gain. Nor did I expect him to be able — or even willing — to allow unfettered free speech on the platform.

Furthermore, Twitter is more like some kind of ghoulish open-mic night than a "digital town square", so the idea that Musk could somehow use it to bring us all together always seemed rather far-fetched to me. What I really expected was that Twitter would simply carry on being just as bad, and just as good, as it had been before Musk took over.

But in the four months since the takeover, Twitter has felt like it has got decidedly worse. It's not so much,

for me at least, that the content has become more offensive, or more aggressive, or more fake. It's not even about the regular technical glitches — like the broken timeline many users found when they visited the site on Wednesday. It just somehow feels like a less exciting place than it used to be; it just feels a bit...boring.

In an attempt to get a sense of whether this view was held more widely, this week I ran a Twitter poll to get a sense of how people felt that the platform had — or hadn't — changed in the four months since Musk had bought it. I gave four possible answers (which admittedly might have been skewed slightly negative), guided by what I had seen and heard people say about it already: "It's so, so much worse"; "It's marginally worse"; "Better! Free speech baby!" and, finally, "Don't notice a difference".

After 24 hours, the results were in. Out of more than 2,000 people who voted, only 6 per cent said Twitter had got better since Musk's takeover, with just over 17 per cent saying they hadn't noticed any difference. That meant that more than three-quarters of respondents felt it had deteriorated: 31 per cent went for "so, so much worse", and the biggest group, 46 per cent, said Twitter had got marginally worse.

This is my experience too. Twitter is becoming a less interesting product. Aside from all the glitches, bugs and outages, the user experience of Twitter has declined noticeably. The algorithmically selected "For You" tab that Musk launched in January feels more like other social media platforms — lots of pictures, videos and other viral-ready content that might be kind of addictive, but also utterly devoid of substance. We already have Instagram for that.

Twitter has also stopped allowing third-party apps — which have been an integral part of the user experience and of Twitter's very development — to access its data freely, meaning most of these apps are now defunct.

And despite ads seeming to crop up far more than before, many advertisers have fled, causing revenues to plunge. It seems like users might be following them: according to SimilarWeb, a data intelligence company, Twitter's total traffic declined by 2 per cent in January on a year-on-year basis. The complete data set for February is not yet available, but in the 28 days to February 25, traffic was down 5 per cent.

It might have felt like it was inevitable at one point, but Twitter was never going to last for ever — the network effect that has kept all of us on the platform until now was always going to give way to another network at some point. When Twitter's death does eventually come, we can't lay all the blame on Musk. We can, however, blame him for making it so tedious.

Russia's point of view

Lavrov may not be entirely wrong, but war certainly is

TRIBUNE

THE unscheduled brief encounter between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on the sidelines of the G20 ministerial meeting in New Delhi last week was the first time they met face-to-face since Russia sent troops into Ukraine on February 24 last year. There was not the slightest inkling of any climbdown. Just the reverse would be a more apt assessment. At his acerbic best at the Raisina Dialogue, Lavrov took on the US-led West while building a strong case for why Moscow did what it did, disregarding global appeals and opinion, and would continue to chart its own course. The US President and NATO secretary general, he pointed out, have publicly remarked that Russia must suffer a strategic defeat. If they say it is existentialist for them, it

is existentialist for us, too, he said, articulating a scary maximalist duel.

Lavrov's no-holds-barred diatribe against the West for its double standards drew applause for calling out the hypocrisy; a reflection, perhaps, of the shifting sands of global domination in the Indian public imagination. That said, his combative tone and attempts to whitewash facts left many surprised. In reference to deliberations at earlier G20 meetings, the Russian Foreign Minister was not far off the mark that nobody gave a damn, as he put it, over the situation in Iraq or Afghanistan and the entire focus would be on finances. Or while questioning why only Russia was being asked to enter into talks, given that the Ukrainian President had signed a decree making negotiations with Moscow under President Putin a criminal offence. These may be valid arguments from Russia's point of view, but fundamental questions remain unanswered amid the senseless killings and destruction. What is Russia trying to achieve? What does the West expect from continuing to prop up Kyiv? The war appears to be a modern-day projection of medieval imperialistic tendencies on both sides and, hence, the proxy war between the West and Russia should not be allowed to reach a point of no return.

New Delhi has been at the forefront of efforts to find a diplomatic solution. The work to broker peace must continue. Sergei Lavrov may not be entirely wrong, but the war certainly is.

CHINA'S ECONOMY SHOWS RESILIENCE AMID HEADWINDS

BEIJING
AGENCIES

CHINA overcame economic challenges and achieved hard-won feats in 2022, with a steady GDP growth of 3 percent, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday quoting an official statistical statement released by China's national bureau of statistics.

As per the statement, China's GDP hit a record high of RMB 121 trillion in 2022, surpassing the thresholds of RMB 100 trillion and RMB 110 trillion achieved in 2020 and 2021, respectively.

Experts noted, the Chinese economy kicked off the year with a better-than-expected growth rate of 4.8 percent in the first quarter, followed by a sharp slowdown in the second quarter due to unexpected shocks.

The third quarter saw the implementation of pro-growth policies totalling RMB 4.2 trillion, which quickly brought the economy back on track. The recovery momentum was sustained through the fourth quarter thanks to these efforts.

In 2022, China defied the impact of COVID-19 to maintain its position as the world's second-largest consumer market and largest online retail market, with a total retail sales value of RMB 44 trillion.

It also retained its position as the world's second-largest import market for the 14th consecutive year.

The achievement was attributed to a

more enabling business environment, enhanced mechanisms, and rising income levels for the people, said a "Two Sessions" deputy in an interview during China's 2023 Two Sessions.

The country remains a popular destination for foreign investment. As per the statement, China's foreign direct investment expanded 6.3 percent year on year to RMB 1.23 trillion in 2022, hitting a record high. Investment from the Belt and Road (BRI) countries surged 17.2 percent to RMB 89.1 billion.

China's consumer price index (CPI) rose 2 percent year-on-year, a moderate growth rate, showed the communiqué.

The country's CPI was kept at a low and steady range in contrast to the inflation seen in other major economies, including 8 percent in the US, 8.4 percent in the EU and 9.1 percent in the UK.

The rate is also much lower than that of emerging countries including India, Brazil and South Africa, which hovers around 6 percent to 10 percent.

Strides are also made in technological innovation in the country. As per the statement China's total expenditure on research and development (R&D) jumped 10.4 percent year on year to RMB 31 trillion in 2022, maintaining double-digit growth for 8 consecutive years.

This represents, experts said, an increased ratio of R&D expenditure to GDP in China, which rose 0.12 percent to reach 2.55

China says restrictions, suppression will never stop its growth

CHINA
STAFF REPORT

From "Two Bombs and One Satellite" project to manned space program, the quantum communication technology and BeiDou Navigation Satellite System, those facts have proved that restrictions and suppression cannot stop China's growth, but only strengthen its determination and capability of innovation in the field of science and technology, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a regular press conference on Monday.

"The development of China has always been built on the base of its own strength," Mao said.

The spokesperson's remarks came after Microsoft founder Bill Gates said last Thursday in an interview that U.S. attempts to stop China from developing chips are futile and will only reduce U.S. jobs and cut off product sales.

Meanwhile, the American economist David Goldman stated

that the "U.S. idea of decoupling with China is silly" and said sanctions will not destroy China's semiconductor industry.

Since the introduction of the Chip and Science Act, many U.S. business institutions and business people have raised concerns that the U.S. semiconductor industry is highly dependent on the global supply chain, the spokesperson said, adding that "decoupling" is not only against the law of industrial development but will also come at a huge cost to the United States.

Mao said the key for the U.S. to maintain global leadership in high-tech industries is fair competition. The spokesperson reiterated that the U.S. should neither maintain scientific and technological hegemony by any means nor destroy the global production and supply chain for selfish interests, which she cautioned would only worsened the already fragile global economy.

According to Boston Consulting Group forecasts, a complete "decoupling" with China would cost the U.S. semiconductor industry 18 percent of global market share and 37 percent of revenues, with 15,000 to 40,000 highly-skilled job lost, she said.

percent. With such investments, China emerges as the global leader in innovation, boasting a total of 4.21 million valid invention patents by the end of 2022.

Energy-saving and low-carbon develop-

ment is also advancing in the country. China's energy consumption per RMB 10,000 of GDP decreased by 0.1 percent from 2021, and CO2 emissions decreased by 0.8 percent in 2022, stated the communiqué.

In an encouraging sign, the country's afforestation area reached 3.83 million hectares in 2022, of which artificial afforestation area takes up 1.2 million hectares.

Blinken welcomes S Korea's historic plans for Japan

WASHINGTON
AGENCIES

US top diplomat Antony Blinken on Sunday applauded plans announced by South Korea to compensate victims of Japan's forced wartime labour, as Seoul looks to forge closer ties with Tokyo. South Korea and Japan are "two of the United States' most important allies, and we are inspired by the work they have done to advance their bilateral relations," the Secretary of State said in a statement. The trilateral relationship is "central to our shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific region," he added. "We applaud [Seoul and Tokyo] for their courage and vision, and call on the international community to join our commendation of this momentous achievement." The decision by Seoul comes as South Korea and Japan have ramped up security cooperation in the face of growing threats from nuclear-armed North Korea. But bilateral ties have long been strained over Tokyo's brutal 1910-45 colonial rule of the Korean peninsula. Around 780,000 Koreans were conscripted into forced labour by Japan during the 35-year occupation, according to data from Seoul, not including women forced into sexual slavery by Japanese troops. Seoul's plan is to take money from major South Korean companies that benefited from a 1965 reparations deal with Tokyo and use it to compensate victims, South Korea's Foreign Minister Park Jin said. Victims have criticised the proposal because it falls far short of their demand for a full apology from Tokyo and direct compensation from the Japanese companies involved.

China sets GDP target at around 5pc for 2023, eyes quality growth

ISLAMABAD
MIAN ABRAR

China has set its annual GDP growth target at around 5 percent for 2023, as the country embarked on a rapid economic recovery after a decisive victory against COVID-19, while putting emphasis on ensuring economic stability and high-quality growth, sustainable development amid global economic volatility and geopolitical uncertainty.

While the growth target is reportedly the lowest in dozens of years, it still means China will continue to be one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, as the global economy is widely expected to further slow down this year and major economies such as the US and the EU are grappling with the risks of recession, analysts noted.

Many economists said that the world's second-largest economy will likely outperform the target despite facing a series of external risks and challenges, pointing to the country's accelerating recovery and solid economic fundamentals, as well as sufficient policy tools to tackle those risks and challenges.

Prioritizing stability

The GDP growth target, along with other economic development goals, was released in the Government Work Report delivered by Premier Li Keqiang on Sunday to the first session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC).

"This year, it is essential to prioritize economic stability and pursue progress while ensuring stability. Policies should be kept consistent and targeted, and they should be carried out in a more coordinated way to create synergy for high-quality development," Premier Li said in the Government Work Report.

The economic target reflects policymakers' confidence in the country's economic performance this year, as China's economy has rebounded at a pace faster than anticipated in the two months after the country optimized its COVID-19 response, but authorities have taken potentially unexpected factors into consideration given the toughened geopolitical situation and global economic weakness, officials and experts said.

Zhang Yansheng, chief researcher of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges, told the Global Times on Sunday that China's economy might outperform the 5 percent target this year, and that the IMF is likely to further raise forecasts for China's economic growth to 5.8-6 percent this year.

The IMF recently forecast a GDP growth of 5.2 percent for China this year and 2.9 percent for global growth. Cao Heping, an economist at Peking University, agreed with the assessment that China's economic performance will in all likelihood exceed the government target due to the country's strong growth momentum.

'It feels like yesterday': Turkey quake overturns lives

KAHRAMANMARAS, TURKEY:
AGENCIES

Before the Turkish earthquake, Abdullah Senel had nerves of steel. But these days, just being inside a house makes him nervous — and it only takes the sound of a plane flying overhead to put him on edge.

"I was fearless in the past, but now a single noise is enough to freak me out," the 57-year-old former weightlifter told AFP. "Everything reminds me of the earthquake — even the sound of a plane," he said.

Last month's devastating 7.8-magnitude earthquake flattened entire cities, killing more than 50,000 people across southeastern Turkey and parts of Syria.

In Kahramanmaraş, a Turkish city near the quake's epicentre, survivors remain haunted by the trauma one month on. "It's been a month now but for me, it feels like yesterday," said Adem Serin as he watched heavy machines remove the piles of rubble in the complex of high-rises where hundreds lost their lives.

"We couldn't get over the shock. I was caught by the quake on the 11th floor of a high-rise building," said Serin, whose wife is five months pregnant.

"I can still hear the screams of people crying for help on every floor. This pain will never go away." Efforts to remove

the ubiquitous rubble now dominate the city of 1.1 million people.

Workers who arrived from all over Turkey spray water on the debris and rubble-laden trucks trundle along the road waiting to dump the waste into a landfill outside the city.

Clouds of dust: Columns of dust emerging from the clean-up cover the horizon, carried by the wind and generating grey clouds seen from kilometres away, blurring the visibility in the region surrounded by mountains.

"200 to 250 tons of debris is removed here daily, we are irrigating so that it will not disturb the environment and not create dust," said Eren Genc, of the forestry directorate in the eastern Sivas province. He said: "We didn't spot any bodies but yesterday there was a strong smell," directing a hose at the concrete slabs. "I think it will be done here in 10 days."

perators sometimes come across precious objects while working to remove the rubble. Levent Topal, from the waterworks authority in the Black Sea region, said his team spotted a safe deposit box in the rubble full of dollars, euros, gold and documents.

"We never touch them, we deliver it to the police who find the owner," he said. A 54-year-old man took a big risk and climbed to the seventh floor of his building to retrieve items — despite the danger and the more than 11,000 after-



shocks that followed the earthquake.

"I know it's risky," admitted Veli Akgoz as he loaded a door and curtain rods onto the roof of his car.

His entire family of 13 people, who used to live in five different flats, will now squeeze into a village house.

Officials say nearly two million people left homeless by the quake are now housed in tents, container homes, guest-houses or dorms in and beyond the region — but this is far from meeting the needs of many others.

Some people spend the night in damaged houses because of a lack of tents, despite the authorities' warnings.

"We are scared but we have no other choice," said Solmaz Tugacar, desperately looking for a tent with her neighbours in the city's main square, where quake survivors line up to get food or tea

from aid trucks.

Some residents are mobilised at the neighbourhood level.

one part of Kahramanmaraş offering a panoramic view of the city, a dozen tents are housed in the garden of a local authority's two-storey offices.

Locals cover the ground of the tents with carpets they pulled from a historic mosque whose minaret fell from the quake. Ibrahim Yayla, a 31-year-old electricity technician, is one of the survivors sheltered in those tents with his two children and wife.

"We are okay now as the weather is nice, but what will happen if it rains?"

he asked, holding his two-month-old baby. Hairdresser Arif Guckiran took the matter into his own hands in this neighbourhood when the local mukhtar, or head man, ran away after the quake.

Taliban's persecution of women could be 'crime against humanity': UN report

GENEVA
AGENCIES

The Taliban's treatment of women and girls in Afghanistan could amount to a crime against humanity, according to a UN report presented on Monday at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. The Taliban seized power in August 2021, drastically curtailing women's freedoms and rights, including their ability to attend high school and university. In a report covering July to December 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, found that the Taliban's treatment of women and girls "may amount to gender persecution, a crime against humanity". "The Taliban's intentional and calculated policy is to repudiate the human rights of women and girls and to erase them from public life," Bennett told the United Nations Human Rights Council. "It may amount to the international crime of gender persecution for which the authorities can be held accountable." A spokesperson for the Taliban-run information ministry did not immediately reply to a request for comment. The Taliban have in the past said they respect women's rights in line with their interpretation of Islam and Afghan culture and that they plan to open schools in future once they establish certain conditions for girls. Bennett said the Human Rights Council should send a strong message to the Taliban that the "abysmal treatment of women and girls is intolerable and unjustifiable on any ground, including religion". "The cumulative effect of the restrictions on women and girls has a devastating, long-term impact on the whole population, and it is tantamount to gender apartheid," he said. In December, the Taliban banned most female aid workers, prompting many aid agencies to partially suspend operations in the midst of a humanitarian crisis unfolding during the cold winter months.

Cristiano Ronaldo sends relief items to Turkey, Syria quake victims

AGENCIES

Al Nassr footballer Cristiano Ronaldo has sent a plane loaded with relief items to the earthquake victims of Turkey and Syria, Sky Sports reported. Powerful earthquakes of about 7.8 and 7.6 magnitudes jolted both countries and claimed over 50,000 lives last month. Aid from the international community started trickling in soon after the tragedy. Ronaldo — who has over 500 goals — paid for tents, food packages, pillows and blankets, beds, baby food and medical supplies for those affected by the devastating quakes. Earlier, football legends including Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappe, and Neymar Jr auctioned their signed jerseys in a bid to help those affected by the quake, Menafin reported. "The initiative started when Merih Demiral, a Turkish football player for Italian club Atalanta, reached out to his fellow athletes and asked for signed gear he could put up for bidding to raise funds," it said. Last week, Ronaldo met a boy from Syria who was affected by the devastating earthquake. Nabil Saeed made the request to rescue workers in Syria in a video shared on social media last month following the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria on February 6. Saeed, wreathed in smiles, met the Portuguese forward briefly before the match, giving him a high-five and a big hug.

Foreign players reach Pakistan for Women's League exhibition matches

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Six overseas female cricketers have arrived in the country to play the three exhibition matches of the Women's League.

According to the details, Lauren Winfield, Danni Wyatt, Maia Bouchier and Tammy Beaumont from England, South Africa's Laura Wolvaardt, and Ireland's Laura Delany reached Islamabad on Monday.

The exhibition matches will be played between Bismah Maroof-led Amazons and

Nida Dar-led Super Women at the Pindi Cricket Stadium on 8, 10 and 11 March ahead of the Pakistan Super League season 8 fixtures.

A total of 10 leading foreign players from seven countries will represent the two teams during the women's exhibition games, which are billed as the soft launch of the Pakistan Women's League, which is tentatively planned for September.

Ireland's Laura Delany, England's trio of Lauren Winfield-Hill, Maia Bouchier and Tammy Beaumont, and Australia's Tess Flintoff are part of Amazons, while Sri

Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu, Danni Wyatt of England, Jahanara Alam of Bangladesh, South Africa's Laura Wolvaardt and Lea Tahuhu of New Zealand represents Super Women. These foreign stars will be accompanied by Pakistan's 20 elite players, four U19 players who featured in the recently held ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup (Areesha Noor, Eymaan Fatima, Shawaal Zulfiqar and Syeda Aroob Shah) and two emerging cricketers (Fatima Khan and Syeda Masooma Zahra).

The 36 cricketers have been equally divided into two sides with the playing line-

ups to include a maximum of four and minimum of three foreign players and a minimum of one emerging or U19 player.

Of the 10 foreign players, eight cricketers recently featured in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2023 in South Africa with Delany and Athapaththu captaining Ireland and Sri Lanka, respectively.

South Africa's Laura Wolvaardt is one of the biggest stars in women's cricket. She was selected in the Team of ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2023 and is the sixth-ranked batter in the world. Similarly, Danni Wyatt is one of the recognisable names in women's

cricket following her 1,776 ODI and 2,369 T20I runs. Along with Suzie Bates of New Zealand, Wyatt is the second most capped T20I player with 143 matches, eight matches behind India's Harmanpreet Kaur.

Amazons: Bismah Maroof (c), Aliya Riaz, Anam Amin, Areesha Noor, Eymaan Fatima, Fatima Khan, Fatima Sana, Ghulam Fatima, Gull Feroza, Kainat Imtiaz, Laura Delany (Ireland), Lauren Winfield-Hill (England), Maia Bouchier (England), Nushra Sundhu, Sadaf Shamas, Tammy Beaumont (England), Tess Flintoff (Australia) and Umm-e-Hani.

CORPORATE CORNER

DeafTawk, Kingfisher partner to promote digital inclusion for marginalized deaf community

ISLAMABAD: DeafTawk, a startup scaled under Pakistan's premier accelerator program Jazz xlr8, dedicated to improving the lives of deaf individuals, has partnered with Kingfisher, a next-gen mobile experience (MX) company, to promote digital inclusion and create a positive socio-economic impact for the deaf community in Pakistan. GSMA, an organization that represents the interests of mobile network operators worldwide was instrumental in bringing both organizations together. Under this partnership, Kingfisher will provide smartphones to be distributed among the marginalized deaf community in Pakistan every year, enabling them to connect with the outside world and access employment opportunities. This initiative will help millions of deaf persons to overcome the barriers to communication, achieve their full potential and become contributing members of society. **PR**

The BOP hosts Asian Development Bank's delegation



LAHORE: The Bank of Punjab hosted a roundtable between a delegation of key officials of ADB and business & industry leaders including Bank's customers and senior management. The high powered ADB delegation, who are on a week-long visit to Pakistan, was headed by Mr. Takahiro Yasui - Executive Director for Japan and Dean of Board, Asian Development Bank (ADB). Mr. Takahiro's delegation comprised of Mr. Weihua Liu - Executive Director for China, Mr. Sangmin Ryu - Executive Director for Korea, Mr. Noor Ahmed - Executive Director for Pakistan, Mr. Shunsuke Sakugawa - Director's Advisor for Japan, Mr. Ronald San Juan - Director's Advisor for Japan, Mr. Yong Ye - ADB's Country Director for Pakistan, Mr. Yusuke Sekiguchi - JFPR Fund Manager & Mr. Asad Aleem - ADB's Deputy Country Director for Pakistan Page 2 of 2 The roundtable lunch, held on March 3rd, 2023, was attended by leading business figures, including Mr. Yawar Ali, Mr. Shahid Hussain, Ms. Roshaneh Zafar, Mr. Kabeer Naqvi, Ms. Maheen Rahman, Mr. Ghazanfar Abbas Jilani, Mr. Anees Khawaja, Mr. Rashid Bajwa, Mr. Farooq Nasim, Mr. Tariq Saigol as well as the key management of The Bank of Punjab. **PR**

Khushhali Microfinance Bank announces new President

Khushhali Microfinance Bank is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Aameer Karachiwalla as its new President/CEO. Mr. Karachiwalla brings with him over 30 years of experience in the financial industry, having held leadership positions in both banking and microfinance institutions. Mr. Karachiwalla is joining Khushhali Microfinance Bank at a crucial time, as the bank looks to expand its presence in the microfinance sector and improve its offerings to underserved communities. His extensive knowledge of the industry and his commitment to social impact will be invaluable in achieving these goals. "We are thrilled to welcome Mr. Karachiwalla to Khushhali Microfinance Bank," said the bank's Board of Directors. "His vision, leadership, and experience will be instrumental in guiding the bank towards sustained growth and impact. **PR**

ESUP eulogizes Past Presidents at Memoriam



KARACHI: Byram D Avari and Naveed A Khan, both past Presidents of the English Speaking Union of Pakistan, were fondly remembered by members at a Memoriam organized by the Forum in Karachi. The family members of both families were invited besides a large number of the Karachi luminaries. Addressing the gathering, the President of ESU International Council and Patron in Chief Aziz Memon and President Kalim Farooqui spoke about their contributions to the ESUP. Besides, they also narrated personal stories on the occasion, highlighting their own experiences with the two. Others from the Executive Committee of ESUP who spoke were Pervaz Madraswala, Irfan Qureshi, and Majid Aziz. Past President ESUP, Abdul Kader Jaffer also shared his friendship with both. The meeting was held to find solace in the loving memories they have left behind. Both were iconic figures in their own right and contributed to the society they lived in and cherished. **PR**

Science is winning the contest against cigarettes

Like most of the world, Pakistan is also currently faced with the worrying challenge of cigarette smoking. Many countries have taken innovative actions to curb the use of cigarettes by introducing regulatory measures that encourage smokers to make better choices, like the introduction of technologically-improved alternatives to smoking.

Today, a wide variety of products are available in the market for adults to choose from, like nicotine pouches, E-Cigarettes, vapes, and heated tobacco products. Designed as a stepping stone towards a future without cigarettes, these innovative products offer enormous potential when it comes to guiding cigarette consumers towards making better, healthier choices. Modern science and research are already providing valuable evidence of the effectiveness of smoking alternatives. Observations in some Asian countries, where smoke-free products have been introduced, also lend support to this. These alternatives, coupled with the right regulatory measures, hold the potential to significantly reduce the nation's 24 million adult smokers. With the recent regulatory developments in Pakistan, there is a significant opportunity to follow in the footsteps of other countries' success and put an end to cigarettes altogether.

As the single greatest preventable cause of death in the world today, smoking claims seven million lives every year. However, thanks to scientific advancement, it is now possible to choose a less harmful path that is designed to lead to a completely smoke-free life. Now is the time to accept change and bid farewell to cigarettes, once and for all.

NOT-BY- PROFIT

AUSTERITY MEASURES ALONE WON'T LEAD TO PROSPERITY

ISLAMABAD
NEWS DESK

WRITING for Tribune author Ali Salman highlights that the federal cabinet has recently announced an "austerity package" in Pakistan, which includes a ban on luxury vehicle purchases by the government, early office openings and closures of shopping centers, as well as the sale or lease of government-owned properties. Additionally, ministers are expected to forego pay and perks, while also traveling on economy class. The estimated annual savings from these measures could reach Rs 200 billion.

While these steps towards reducing

government expenditure are commendable, the writer questions whether austerity necessarily leads to prosperity. They argue that governments have a monopoly over economic resources, allowing them to overspend without going bankrupt. In contrast, households and private firms already operate within their means and would quickly go bankrupt if they overspent.

Instead, the writer advocates for an end to government ownership and control over primary urban properties, agricultural, commercial, and industrial businesses, and trade of commodities. They propose a prosperity policy that would allow for competitive ownership and control of these economic resources. This policy would help to

achieve both government austerity and social prosperity.

However, the writer acknowledges that giving up control and ownership is difficult and politicians may feel powerless once their power to give contracts and jobs through government businesses is taken away. Instead, the government continues to ask businesses and citizens to "do more" and increases the GST as a tool for the same.

The writer argues that shutting down businesses at 8 pm and energy conservation through administrative measures are also futile ideas. Instead, changing the incentive system can encourage people to conserve as a result of pricing. The writer provides an example of the Changa Pani model, a com-

munity-managed project of drinking water supply through a pipeline in Bhalwal, which prices water through meters and encourages households to conserve water.

Finally, the writer questions the government's emphasis on curbing imports as a means to manage the country's accounts. They argue that restricting imports can strangle trade flow and create a parallel exchange market. Instead, the government should focus on unintended consequences and bring in long-term solutions that promote prosperity rather than just austerity.

To read the full article visit www.tribune.com.pk

Different ways for Pakistan to boost dollar earnings

ISLAMABAD
NEWS DESK

Writing for Tribune author AAH Soomro cites plenty of deep-rooted problems in Pakistan that are becoming more and more exposed with each passing day. Among these issues, the most pressing is the country's inability to earn enough dollars to pay for its import bills. This problem has been persistent for years and has only worsened with time.

Despite these challenges, there are solutions that can be implemented to attract dollars and mitigate the country's financial crisis. Murtaza Syed, a former deputy governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, has been contributing his insights to help the masses understand the situation and encourage policymakers to take action. One key point that he highlights is the need to delineate the issue of "spending beyond means" and focus on how to "earn as per means."

One of the solutions is the Naya Pakistan Certificate (NPC), which offers returns on both PKR and USD instruments. However, there has been an inordinate delay in revising the returns offered on these instruments. While domestic T-bill yields are at an all-time high, rupee NPCs still yield a paltry 15% for a year. It is cru-

cial to link the NPC rates to the monetary policy rate and re-price them immediately to make them more attractive to investors. Similarly, the dollar-yielding NPC rates need to be revised to optimize them in conjunction with the current global market dynamics.

Another solution is the Loyalty Remittance Card program, which rewards Pakistanis who spend a certain amount of money back home via remittances with credits. The program offers tax credits on incremental inflows, along with concrete benefits. Instead of just offering VIP queues at airports and NADRA offices, a more comprehensive plan is needed to lure overseas Pakistanis to put their money back into the country. The program aims to use Pakistan for their banking needs and make it easier for them to borrow from the country.

In addition, remittances received by each council, district, and tehsil should be reinvested for the betterment of the local area in terms of infrastructure, economic zoning, education, and healthcare. The masses should visibly see the impact of their work benefiting their immediate family and the community at large.

Pakistan should also establish Overseas Pakistanis Justice Courts to hear legitimate legal cases of overseas Pakistanis pertaining to civil and criminal matters with a time-bound trial to be concluded. Attorneys and

judges should be monetarily incentivized further to address the grievances with digital e-courts, saving precious dollars of people residing abroad who find it difficult to secure holidays to come back and rot within our inefficient judicial system.

The government should also focus on boosting IT exports. Relentless efforts are needed by all government departments to grow IT exports. Pakistan's educational system is not producing enough good-quality IT graduates with exportable skills. To carry the burden of 240 million people, it is vital that hundreds of thousands of graduates are produced each year by top-tier IT institutes and hired by global or domestic IT giants to integrate with the global workforce by remaining competitive and efficient. IT schools deserve much more tax credits and subsidized loans than inefficient textile giants. Each student with a globally certified skillset should get cashback, and so should the teaching body training these young minds. A dedicated comprehensive webpage needs to be developed where the entire Pakistan can showcase their skill set similar to Fiverr, Upwork, and other websites. Pakistan should also work on bringing PayPal to the country to facilitate online payments.

To read the full article visit www.tribune.com.pk

MD FFC visits Goth Machhi & Mirpur Mathelo

PR

Fauji Fertilizer Company (FFC) is always at the forefront to assist the community in humanitarian disaster, Corona outbreak and flood relief efforts. The Company has extensively provided succor to flood victims as part of its CSR program.

MD&CEO Fauji Fertilizer Company, Mr. Safraz Ahmed Rehman visited Mirpur Mathelo and Goth Machhi to hand over recently constructed houses to flood affectees as part of Flood Relief Rehabilitation drive. Affectees lauded the spellbinding contributions of FFC and appreciated their concerted efforts towards community uplift.

MD&CEO also inaugurated Girls Section of Sona Public



School & College, Mirpur Mathelo, with a vision to provide better education facilities in the area. He also inaugurated a RO plant at a cost of Rs. 3.5 million for the underprivileged community at Basti Varand. He proudly

shared that FFC has always preferred investing in the community and has therefore spent huge amounts to enhance health, education and sport facilities in the rural areas of Goth Machhi and Mirpur Mathelo.

Unilever Pakistan and Brand Protection System organize conference to highlight economic impact of counterfeits

KARACHI
PR

Unilever Pakistan has partnered with Brand Protection System (BPS) to organize a conference to highlight the economic impact of counterfeit products in Pakistan. The conference fostered a discussion among industry leaders and experts on the current laws, regulations, and practices in IPR and explored possible solutions to tackle this critical issue.



Dar chairs meeting for establishment of passport offices

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired a meeting at the establishment of Passport offices, at Finance Division, today. Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan, SAPM on Revenue Mr. Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Secretary Interior, Special Secretary Finance, Chairman NADRA, DG Passport & Immigration and senior officers from Finance, NADRA and Passport office attended the meeting. The meeting was apprised of the performance of the Passports & Immigration office and reviewed the existing setup of passport offices in the country and abroad. The meeting was informed that more than 26 billion rupees have been deposited in the national exchequer due to issuance of 4.5 million passports to date. **STAFF REPORT**

Agri Connections to connect stakeholders for agricultural development

"For three major crops in Pakistan's one billion dollars is being lost annually due to the use of poor seed and outdated methods," said Strategy Advisor of Pakistan Agricultural Coalition, Kazim Saeed. He said that annual production of corn, wheat and rice is worth \$12 billion, of which \$1 billion a year is lost due to supply chain and storage problems, while adding, "PAC believes that Pakistan's agriculture must become private sector-led, technology-driven, entrepreneurial and globally competitive." Pakistan's first 'Agri-Connections Event 2023' will be held on March 16th in Karachi organized by the PAC aimed at connecting Pakistan's agriculture to industry, finance, government, and the world. This is the 1st edition of PAC's annual conference and exhibition in which different sessions will be held that include Pakistan's agriculture and opportunities in the global economy; Investment opportunities in agriculture; Increasing growers' profitability; Sustainable agriculture and climate change; Access to capital; Maize for poultry, dairy. **PR**

Anti-encroachment operation by CDA on request of QAU admin

ISLAMABAD: On the request of the Quaid-e-Azam University administration, Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Monday, with the assistance of ICT administration and Islamabad Police, demolished several illegal constructions near the gate of Quaid-e-Azam University. The encroachments were demolished with the help of heavy machinery and more than 25 kanal of state land was retrieved from illegal occupants. According to the details, 83 illegal shops, 2 newly constructed houses and 2 boundary walls constructed on state land were demolished with the help of heavy machinery. During this operation more than 25 kanals of state land was retrieved. It is pertinent to mention that for the last several months, the CDA has been conducting continuous operations against encroachments and illegal constructions in the Federal Capital, which has resulted in the retrieved of state land worth billions of rupees. Furthermore, CDA is also providing support to various institutions for the elimination of encroachments from the land allotted to them. Operation at Quaid-e-Azam University was also conducted in the same context. **PR**

FoFC holds free veterinary medical camp at Sibi Cattle Show

STAFF REPORT

Where expert veterinary doctors provided free treatment, consultancy and awareness to the local cattle farm owners and breeders, for the prevention of different diseases many vaccinations were also done. And animals with different disease conditions were also provided with treatment and medication. The cattle breeders from all over Balochistan thanked the foef for their kind and humanitarian gesture and trusted that Pakistan china friendship is so unique and pure that such gestures of kindness truly enhances the love for pak china friendship in the hearts of the people of Balochistan.



NEPRA SLAPS ADDITIONAL SURCHARGE OF RS3.39 PER UNIT ON CONSUMERS

ISLAMABAD

AHMAD AHMADANI

NATIONAL Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on Monday approved the imposition of additional surcharge of Rs 3.39 per unit on the power consumers of the all power distribution companies (DISCOs) including the K-Electric.

As per details, NEPRA has taken decision over the application submitted by the federal government, seeking to jack up the surcharge by Rs 3.39/unit which will be collected from the power consumers during March to June 2023.

Currently the power consumers are paying 43 paisa/unit surcharge while total surcharge to be paid by the power consumers will be Rs 3.82/unit with effect to recent NEPRA’s approval. How-

ever, this surcharge will stand at only Rs 1.43/unit during the next financial year.

Earlier on 2nd March (Thursday) 2023, NEPRA raised serious questions over the federal government’s request for imposition of additional surcharge of Rs 3.39 per unit on the power consumers of the country.

NEPRA held public hearings under the chair Tauseef H. Farooqi on the federal government’s motion seeking the regulator’s approval for putting the burden of an additional surcharge of Rs3.39/unit on the electricity consumers.

According to sources, applying this surcharge to the bills of the consumers will allow the government a collection of an additional Rs 76 billion from March to June of the current year.

During the course of hearing, NEPRA said that the regulator is not

clear whether the unprecedented increase in consumer pricing is within their domain or not and has sought legal opinion on the matter.

The NEPRA officials said that already, Rs 0.43/unit is being charged to consumers and now the government wants to increase it to Rs 3.82/unit.

The additional surcharge of Rs 3.39/unit is to be applied in the billing of consumers from March to June 2023, to cover the markup charges of Power Holdings Limited (PHL) loans which are not covered through the current applicable financing cost (FC) surcharge of Rs 0.43/unit for the current financial year.

After four months the additional surcharge of Rs 3.39/unit is expected to be reduced to Rs 1/unit to cover the markup charges of PHL; the total surcharge would then become Rs 1.43/unit

for the new financial year.

The levying of additional surcharge in electricity tariff will enable the government to pay off interest on the loans of PHL valued at Rs 120 billion.

With the application of additional surcharge, the total surcharge will peak at Rs3.82/unit for the four months (Mar-June).The current surcharge being paid by power consumers at a rate of Rs 0.43/unit is earmarked to clear an interest amount of Rs 44 billion accrued on loans of the PHL.

Out of the total outstanding finance facilities of Rs 800 billion, as of June 30,2022, servicing of loans or interest charges amount to Rs 246 billion.

It is pegged to be paid back through imposition of the FC surcharge at a rate of Rs. 0.43/unit.

»» CONTINUED ON PAGE 03

Imran Khan challenges PEMRA ban notification in LHC

LAHORE

STAFF REPORT

Former Prime Minister and Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chairman Imran Khan has challenged the PEMRA notification to ban his live speeches telecast in LHC. As per details, the petition was filed by Ahmed Pansota and Ishtiaq A Khan saying that the PEMRA notification is the violation of Article 10(A) as the constitution of Pakistan gives the right to free speech. The Imran Khan Counsel maintained that PEMRA has banned Imran Khan on the directions of government. He termed all the PEMRA allegations baseless and they have no authority to ban an individual from live broadcast. Furthermore, the petition stated that the PEMRA order is the violation of Islamabad High Court (IHC) verdict.

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

LAHORE

STAFF REPORT

A team of National Accountability Bureau (NAB) officials on Monday visited Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan’s residence to serve summon notices in prohibited funding case. According to details, a two-member NAB team visited the former premier’s Zaman Park residence to serve summons notice in prohibited funding case. After serving the notice, the bureau team left the residence and denied answering questions from journalists.

Ghandhara Nissan announces first plant shutdown since Covid-19 lockdowns

LAHORE

DANIYAL AHMAD

Ghandhara Nissan Limited has notified the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) that it will observe non-production days (NPD) from March 6 to March 10. Furthermore, the company has also stated that it will switch to an alternating bi-weekly production schedule from March 13. Ghandhara has stated that the decision was made in light of the State Bank of Pakistan’s (SBP) letter of credit policy for imports, as outlined in EPD Circular Letter No. 20 of 2022. The company has cited that the new mechanism has disabled it from building the inventory levels needed to sustain production, and thus it has opted to observe NPDs. This marks the first plant shutdown the company has observed since April 1 2020, when it did so on account of the outbreak of Covid-19.

COMPANY PROFILE: Established on August 8, 1981, Ghandhara Nissan Limited is a subsidiary of Bibojee Services (Private) Limited. It was a private limited company that later became a public limited company on May 24, 1992. The company’s registered office is at F-3, Hub Chowki Road, S.I.T.E., Karachi, with manufacturing facilities at Port Qasim, Karachi, and regional offices in Lahore and Rawalpindi. The company’s primary activities include vehicle assembly, importing and selling Nissan, Dongfeng, and Renault vehicles, and assembling other vehicles under contract agreement. Most recently, the Gandhara entered into an agreement with Chery Automobile Co.,Ltd on February 4, 2021, for the manufacturing and distribution of Chery’s passenger vehicles. As part of the agreement with Chery, Ghandhara has been locally manufacturing the Chery Tiggo 4 Pro and Chery Tiggo 8 Pro since March 31, 2022. What is the EPD Circular, and why has it forced Ghandhara to shut its plant? The SBP unveiled EPD Circular Letter No. 20 of 2022 on December 22, 2022, as an alternative to the oversight that it had over the import of products under Chapters 84, 85, and certain items of Chapter 87. The new system, per the EPD Circular, allowed authorised dealers (banks) to authorise all transactions for these imports. The decision originally seemed to be the lifeboat the struggling automotive industry needed as it had been crippled by the mechanism the SBP had in place prior to the Circular.

»» CONTINUED ON PAGE 03



Election to be held after completion of Census: Rana Sanaullah

ISLAMABAD

STAFF REPORT

Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah on Monday said that general elections would be held after the completion of Census in the country. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), is responsible to organize the elections in a transparent manner, he said while talking to a private television channel. He said the process of “Digital Census” is underway so that the next elections could be made error-free. Replying to a question about the exact date for elections, he said after completion of Census, it is up to the the CEC to hold elections in 90-days. About delimitation, he said that delimitation is imperative to satisfy all the stakeholders. To a question about preparation of elections, he said, we have directed party workers to launch the campaign. the minister said that Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI), leader Imran Khan would go to jail for foreign funding, Toshakhana and other cases. To another question about the acquittal of PTI leader from courts, he said, we accept courts decisions.

Rabbani argues if Pakistani nukes, friendship with China is under pressure

ISLAMABAD

MIAN ABRAR

Former Senate chairman and senior PPP leader Senator Raza Rabbani said on Monday that the people of Pakistan have a right to know if the country’s strategic relationship with China or its nuclear assets were under strain.

“[The] people of Pakistan have a right to know if our strategic relationship with China or our strategic nuclear assets are under threat or pressure .. or if we are being called up to play role in the region which will facilitate the military presence of an imperialist power,” he said.

The statement comes amid questions being raised in media that due to the pressure on the country’s dwindling forex reserves, the IMF, other international financial institutions and the US were pressurising the government to make some commitments on the country’s nukes and its strategic partnership with China.

“These and other questions require a policy statement by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the floor of a joint sitting in the parliament,” he added.



While talking about the desperately-needed deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the senator furthered that the parliament needs to be taken into confidence on the issue as well as the matter of reluctance of friendly countries, except China, to help Pakistan sans the global lender.

“The dragging of the feet by the IMF on signing the agreement and reluctance of friendly countries, except China, to help sans the IMF, Parliament needs to be taken into

confidence.”

“It appears Pakistan is being softened up to play a role which is against its national and strategic interests,” he added.

The senator further pointed out that the government has failed to discuss the issues pertaining to Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the increase in terrorism.

“It seems be it the PTI or present governments want azadi [freedom] from Parliament and the Constitution, 1973,” the senator concluded.

Pakistan will continue to advocate specific steps to advance sustainable development in LDCs: PM Shehbaz

DOHA

STAFF REPORT

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has stated that Pakistan will continue to advocate several specific steps to advance sustainable development in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to move towards the implementation of Doha Programme of Action.

Addressing the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Doha on Monday, he said Pakistan fully supports and expresses solidarity with the developing countries in their quest for social progress and economic

prosperity. However, meeting its ambitious target, will require revitalize global partnerships based on effective means of implementation in the priority areas.

The Prime Minister said it is timely and important to revisit implementation of the vision and strategy for the sustainable development of the Least Developed Countries, charted out at the end of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

He called for addressing vaccine inequity through advocating and its timely access for Least Developed Countries. The Prime Minister said historical commitment of official development assistance comprising 0.7 percent of the gross

national income of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development’s countries must be fulfilled of which 0.15 to 0.2 percent must be allocated to the Least Developed Countries.

Shehbaz Sharif said we must address the increasingly unsustainable debt burden of many Least Developed Countries. He said it is matter of great concern that six Least Developed Countries are classified as suffering from the debt burden while seventeen are at high risk of debt distress. He said we must provide universal access to social protection in order to support most needy and vulnerable.

The Prime Minister said we also need

to reform the unequal international financial architecture and make it people-centric. He said an international technology compact aligned with the SDGs should also be adopted and offered easy access to the developing countries to relevant advance technologies to develop their productivity and bridge digital divide.

He noted that Doha Program of Action sets an ambitious target to enable fifteen additional Least Developed Countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2031. Shehbaz Sharif thanked Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani for hosting the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

NEPRA publishes performance report on NTDC, K-Electric

PROFIT

AHMAD AHMADANI

National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has released the performance evaluation report 2021-22 of National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) and K-Electric.

The report provides information on the performance of NTDC and K-Electric (KE) taking into account system reliability, security of supply and quality of supply of the transmission network of the licensees during the reported period.

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) is the regulator of the power sector in Pakistan. Provision of safe, reliable, efficient and affordable electric power to the electricity consumers is an integral part of NEPRA’s regulatory regime. In order to ensure safe, efficient and reliable transmission services, NEPRA has framed the Performance Standards (Transmission) Rules (PSTR)1 2005. Under PSTR, a transmission licensee is required to submit to NEPRA an Annual Performance Report (APR) in a manner as prescribed in PSTR. The APRs for the FY 2021-22, submitted by NTDC and K-Electric were reviewed and analysed in light of the performance parameters such as system

duration of interruption, system frequency of interruption, energy not served (ENS), loss of supply incidents along with its financial impact, amount allowed for improvement, voltage and frequency violation limits prescribed under the PSTR, and highest and lowest voltage recorded at NTDC 500 kV and 220 kV grid stations under Normal system conditions. In its recommendations given in the report on NTDC and KE, NEPRA suggests that the equipment which has exhausted its useful life should be replaced with new machinery and equipment at all the grid stations, as and when required.

Similarly, short circuit studies should be carried out at all grids to determine the actual fault level for proper primary equipment selection and installation.

Likewise, event fault recorders should be installed for better fault analysis to avoid outages. Furthermore behavior of bus-bar protection relays should be reviewed and tested thoroughly to avoid cascaded outages. Adding that, NTDC should complete the system constraints removal projects to eradicate the financial impact caused due to merit order violation.

In the report NTDC was also urged to focus on power evacuation projects to bring in most economical power into the national grid at the earliest. A recent example of it is

the issue of evacuation of energy being produced by power plants using Thar coal due to infrastructure constraints.

Moreover, the KE being the responsible entity for providing reliable power to the city of Karachi, the economic hub of the country, “it is of paramount importance to take measures/steps to operate in island mode in the event of external major incidents to avoid unnecessary power cuts”, stated the NEPRA report.

Performance of the NTDC and KE

The report is structured to understand the overall performance of the energy supply chain. The performance is judged by various indicators prescribed by NEPRA. **SYSTEM DURATION OF INTERRUPTION:** System duration of interruption is a reliability indicator that measures the average outage duration that an interconnection point observes in a year. The interruption for NTDC was witnessed around 0.15 hours (9 minutes) in the year 2021-22 indicating 15.4% increase as compared to preceding year i.e. 0.13 hours (8 minutes).

System duration of interruption was not witnessed in the KE system during the recorded period, which shows 100% reduction as compared to preceding year’s average of 0.06 Hours (4 minutes).

SYSTEM FREQUENCY OF INTERRUPTION:

RUPTION: System frequency of interruption is another reliability parameter that measures the average number of outages per circuit in a year. During 2021-22 the average number of outages per circuit for NTDC remained 0.10, showing an improvement of 10% over the previous year i.e. 0.11. In the jurisdiction of KE, System frequency of interruption was observed as 0 number of outages per circuit. It indicates a decrease of 100% over the previous year which stood at 0.02.

ENERGY NOT SERVED (ENS): In order to gauge system security, the estimates of total ENS during the year as reported by the licensees have been analysed. The total ENS as reported by NTDC in 2021-22 is 9.4 million kWh whereas in the case of KE the total ENS reported is zero.

Looking at the data of NTDC this indicates an improvement of around 93% compared to the previous year i.e. 130.2 million kWh. Based on the average sale rate of DISCOs, the financial impact amounts to around Rs 93 million.

LOSS OF SUPPLY INCIDENTS: NTDC reported 51 loss of supply incidents during the year 2021-22 which translates into a total duration of 80 hours. NEPRA took serious notice of the partial collapses.

The reports submitted by NTDC also

revealed serious lapses on the part of the despatch company. Based on the reports, NEPRA initiated legal proceedings and imposed a fine of Rs.10 Million on NTDC.

It was also observed that after the blackout of 9th January 2021, NTDC was directed to make certain improvements in its transmission network for the improvement of system reliability, stability and security of supply.

However, recent events and multiple outages in NTDC’s network during the FY 2021-22 indicates that adequate measures have not been taken by NTDC in this regard, said NEPRA report.

Transmission network being the backbone of the country’s electric power supply system, the Authority allowed a colossal amount of Rs 790 million to NTDC under repair and maintenance (R&M) to ensure and attain optimal level of network reliability and sustainability. However, the monitoring activities carried out by NEPRA during the period revealed that the southern part of the network is vulnerable to frequent outages that lead to major system disturbances owing to aging of equipment and tower collapses, which has been highlighted in the NEPRA report.

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