

# Independent

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## Pakistan, KSA call for immediate ceasefire in Gaza, regret int'l community's failure

Islamabad, Riyadh to work together for economic prosperity, regional security: There are various avenues to increase investment in Pakistan; Saudi FM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) on Tuesday, while regretting the failure of the international community to ensure ceasefire in Gaza, demanded its immediate enforcement, opening of a humanitarian corridor and averting of famine that was leading to a catastrophe.

Addressing a joint presser along with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said that Pakistan was deeply concerned over the catastrophic situation in Gaza.

Both the brotherly countries shared the same feelings on Gaza, he said, stressing upon the international community to help end the genocide.

More than 33,000 Palestinians had been killed,

the world conscience must wake up and enforce an immediate and unconditional ceasefire to ensure unimpeded humanitarian aid, he added.

More Palestinians should not be killed due to starvation, he said, demanding for a global probe into the crimes committed against humanity in Gaza.

Foreign Minister Dar said that different investigations had been carried out across the world over the war crimes against humanity so why it could not take place in Gaza.

He reiterated that Pakistan believed that the perpetual solution to the issue was in the establishment of an independent state of Palestine with its pre-1967 borders and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

He shared views of the



Saudi Foreign Minister that the world woke up after the killing of six aid workers from the West but not on the deaths of thousands of Palestinians. The foreign minister said that the world must act fast and quick.

famine like situation and starving to death as the international humanitarian aid is not getting in. It is a complete failure of the international community," he added.

Termining the situation unacceptable, he said there was no justification to it. In reality, he said, the two United Nations resolutions regarding immediate ceasefire in Gaza had

not seen implementation. Efforts were seen after six Western aid workers were killed but not when 33,000 Palestinians died which showed the double standards, he regretted.

Prince Faisal called for an immediate end to the killings and sufferings of the people of Gaza.

He said that they were already living in an unstable region leading to a catastrophe in Gaza and "there is no need for further confrontation", adding that "de-escalation should be everybody's priority".

Replying to various queries, both sides reiterated to further build up and convert the strong partnership into a strategic partnership and further promote economic cooperation for the mutual benefit of the two brotherly countries.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif hosted a banquet in honour of Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia H. H. Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud and the accompanying Saudi delegation

## CCC resolves to launch stern legal action against baseless propaganda about security forces

Baseless allegations on law enforcers part of larger design to drive wedge between people, security forces; Army vows providing support to govt for sustainable socioeconomic growth; Gen Munir directs commanders to pro-actively deny any space to terrorists;

RAWALPINDI (APP): The 264th Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC) presided over by Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir at the General Headquarters on Tuesday took serious notice of the baseless propaganda against the law enforcement agencies (LEAs) and the security forces, and resolved to launch strict legal action against the perpetrators.

"The forum noted with concern the malicious propaganda campaign meant to demoralise the armed forces and underscored that unfounded and baseless allegations on law enforcement agencies and security forces have become a fashion and are part of the larger design to drive a wedge between the people and the Armed Forces of Pakistan. We will not allow such efforts to succeed and as per the law

and Constitution, stern action will be ensured," an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

The forum paid rich tribute to the supreme sacrifices of Shuhada (martyrs) including officers and men of the armed forces, law enforcement agencies and the citizens who have laid their lives for peace and stability in the country.

The COAS appreciated the untiring efforts of Pakistan Army and LEAs in successfully thwarting several terrorist attacks and neutralising key terrorist commanders during the ongoing counterterrorism operations. He directed the commanders to pro-actively deny any space to the terrorists.

The Army Chief said, "The Armed Forces and LEAs of Pakistan, fully backed by the resilient na-

tion, remain determined to permanently eliminate this menace from Pakistan, INSHA'ALLAH".

The forum condemned the heinous terrorist attack against Chinese nationals in Besham as well as the killing of innocent civilians in Balochistan.

It was briefed on how terrorist groups operating from Afghanistan pose a threat to regional and global security, besides acting as proxies against Pakistan and its economic interests, especially the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

The forum expressed serious concern over the ongoing Indian aggression in the Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK), and reaffirmed that Pakistan would continue to provide political, diplomatic and moral support to the Kashmiri brothers and sisters.

## Saudi FM's visit to Pakistan will usher in new era of friendship: PM

Pakistan desires to enhance bilateral cooperation with Saudi Arabia

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says discussions with the Saudi delegation will usher in a new era of close cooperation, and in coming weeks and months we will be able to sign agreements worth billions of dollars.

Speaking at the dinner hosted in the honor of visiting Saudi delegation in Islamabad tonight, he expressed satisfaction over the progress on areas of interests from both sides.

The Prime Minister also expressed hope that the Saudi Crown Prince will visit Pakistan on the occasion of signing agreements between the two brotherly countries.

He thanked the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia for sending a high level delegation led by Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud to fast-track the Saudi investment in Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Faisal bin Farhan

Al-Saud thanked Pakistani side for warm reception and hospitality.

He also thanked for the cooperation that would initiate a new phase of partnership and brotherhood through tangible economic cooperation that can deliver for both the countries.

Online adds: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has expressed Pakistan's desire to further enhance bilateral cooperation with Saudi Arabia in the fields of trade and investment. He was talking to a high-level Saudi delegation led by Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud in Islamabad Tuesday.

The Prime Minister said Pakistan and Saudi Arabia should work closely to expedite the first phase of Saudi investments in Pakistan.

He said the visit of Saudi delegation marks beginning of a new era of strategic and commercial partnership between the two countries.



## Turkiye envoy calls on Defence minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey, Mehmet Pacaci called on Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif here on Tuesday.

The minister expressed that Pakistan and Türkiye have excellent bilateral relations based on common faith, culture, values, civilization and historical linkages," a news release said.

## Why EC is increasing suspicions about election: CJ IHC asks

ISLAMABAD (Online): Chief Justice (CJ) Islamabad High Court (IHC) has asked Election Commission (EC) as to why it is increasing suspicions about election forcibly.

The CJ IHC gave these remarks during the hearing of contempt of court plea filed by Shoaib Shaheen against EC on non-provision of certified copies of election documents including form-45 in NA-47 Islamabad and non-compliance of court's orders.

The petitioner and candidate from NA 47 Shoaib Shaheen and counsel for EC appeared in the court.

Shoaib Shaheen told the court's orders were not complied in regard to provision of certified copies. The court had ordered to provide certified copies of relevant documents which

have not been provided so far. The counsel for EC Zaigham Anees said the case has been discussed with provincial EC Punjab and the copies will be provided soon to them. One week time be given for providing certified copies.

The CJ remarked don't say this. What is relevance of Islamabad with Punjab. Certified copies are their basic and legal right. Why they are not providing. As to why they are increasing the suspicions of the people about election forcibly, if EC has not to provide copies then should I order today. If a senior lawyer and former president Bar has to make such hectic struggle then what about the common man. It will take how much more time. One year, two years, three years or five years is period.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir presiding over the 264th Corps Commanders Conference at General Headquarters

## CJP visits LHC with senior judges

LAHORE (APP): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa, along with other senior Supreme Court judges, visited the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Tuesday.

The CJP, accompanied by Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, and Justice Athar Minallah, arrived at the LHC during the tea break.

LHC Chief Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmed Khan welcomed the distinguished guests upon their arrival. Justice Shujaat Ali Khan, Justice Shahid Bilal Hasan, Justice Aliya Neelum, Justice Abid Aziz Sheikh, and other judges working at the LHC Principal seat were also present on the occasion.

## Faizabad commission gives clean chit to Faiz Hameed, agencies

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: The inquiry commission probing the November 2017 Faizabad sit-in absolves former director-general of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), retired Lt Gen Faiz Hameed, of the charges.

The three-member commission, set up on the orders of the Supreme Court, has issued its 149-page report. According to sources, the commission cited various loopholes in the handling of the issue and drafted recommendations after evaluating the circumstances related to the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan's sit-in at Faizabad.

The report highlights the role of the Islamabad Police, the Ministry of Interior, the Punjab government, the ISI and the IB, and contains details of matters related to former

law minister Zahid Hamid.

The report stated that Faiz Hameed as Maj Gen DG ISI was authorised by the then army chief and the ISI director general to sign the agreement with protesters. Moreover, then prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and then interior minister Ahsan Iqbal also agreed on retired Gen Faiz Hameed's role as a mediator. The commission stressed on ensuring implementation of all the points of the National Action Plan and recommended that weaknesses in the command and control system of the police should be addressed. The inquiry commission pointed out that Faizabad-like incidents occurred because of flaws in the government policy. It stressed on "policymakers" to learn lessons from the Faizabad incident.

## ATC acquits 9 TLP activists in terrorism case

LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Tuesday acquitted nine activists of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) in a case registered over terrorism charges for creating disturbance and damaging state properties.

The court held that the prosecution failed to prove the charges against the accused. ATC Judge Arshad Javed conducted the trial proceedings and announced the decision after hearing detailed arguments from the defense counsel and prosecution.

## Consumers to get Rs 4.12 per unit reduction in electricity bills for May

ISLAMABAD (APP): The consumers will get Rs 4.12 per unit reduction in their electricity bills for the month of May as compared to March. A petition has been submitted to National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) for slashing fuel cost adjustment from Rs 4.92 per unit to Rs 2.94 per unit for May as compared to April, said a statement issued by Ministry of Power Division here Tuesday. The power tariff for April was also reduced from Rs 7.6 per unit to Rs 4.92 per unit as compared to March, the statement further said. Owing to the efforts of the government, the request for reduction in electricity bills has been submitted to NEPRA for the third consecutive month, it added.

Meanwhile, Minister for Power Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari said that benefits of reduction in fuel price would be provided to the masses.



LAHORE: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP), Justice Qazi Faez Isa in a group photo along with Malik Shahzad Ahmed Khan, Chief Justice Lahore High Court and other Senior Judges during his visit to Lahore High Court.

## Bilawal meets delegation of PPP from GB

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Tuesday met with the PPP delegation of Gilgit-Baltistan Chapter.

The delegation comprised Amjad Advocate, Jameel Ahmed, Engineer Ismail, Sadia Danish, Imran Nadeem, Ayub Shah, Shahzad Agha and Kulsom Mehdi, a press release said.

They informed Bilawal Bhutto about the overall political situation in Gilgit-Baltistan.

## Spokesperson Matthew Miller US support Pakistan's efforts to manage its daunting debt burden

WASHINGTON (Agencies): We welcome last month's announcement that the IMF has reached a staff level agreement with Pakistan.

This was stated by US Spokesperson Matthew Miller in a statement.

We understand the as you said the Pakistani Minister of Finance is in town here in Washington for meetings at the IMF and World Bank.

Pakistan has made progress to stabilize its economy and we support its efforts to manage its daunting debt burden.

We encourage the government to prioritize and expand economic reforms to address its economic challenges.

Our support for the country's economic success is unwavering.

And we will continue to engage with Pakistan through technical agreements as well as to our trade and investment ties, all of which are priorities of our bilateral relationship.

## FM Aurangzeb says Pakistan wants to get a new EEF package from IMF

ISLAMABAD (Online): Finance Minister (FM) Muhammad Aurangzeb has said Pakistan has completed IMF program successfully and there is plan for talks with IMF on Extended Fund Facility (EFF) Program. He held positive talks have taken place with IMF. We want to get the EFF (Extended Fund Facility) (EFF) from IMF as

quickly as possible," Aurangzeb said. "Muhammad Aurangzeb is there in Washington DC US to participate in IMF and World Bank meetings. Addressing his first Atlantic Council think tank FM demanded of World Bank (WB) and IMF to help countries like Pakistan to control climate change effects and promote financial participation.

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## Tough talks

No matter how painful, a larger, medium-term IMF bailout, with complementary financial support from 'friendly' countries, is imperative for Pakistan to address its balance-of-payments troubles.

However, the key to unlocking fresh IMF funds lies in convincing the lender that Pakistan is now ready to undertake real reforms. Seeking a bailout of \$6bn-\$8bn before the current fiscal year ends, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb is set to hold discussions with the Fund for new lending on the margins of the IMF and World Bank spring meetings in Washington, as well as muster the support of 'friendly' nations for its request.

Negotiations for the new loan will not be easy even though the Fund is, according to the minister, "very receptive" to Pakistan's request for a new programme. Indeed, it has expressed its willingness to help Islamabad navigate through its crisis ever since Pakistani authorities broached the subject of a follow-up programme with its mission last month during the final review of the just-concluded \$3bn Stand-by Arrangement. Yet it has made it clear that the new bailout hinges on Pakistan's readiness to implement tough, unpopular reforms the country had earlier circumvented. More recently, IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said that Pakistan was in discussions with the Fund for a follow-up programme to the previous SBA, but added that "important issues" needed to be solved, including "the tax base, how the richer part of society contributes to the economy, the way public spending is being directed and ... creating ... a more transparent environment".

Mr Aurangzeb is discussing a new programme at a time when global creditors like the Asian Development Bank are repeatedly warning that Pakistan will continue to face challenges from substantial new external financing requirements and the rollover of old debt, exacerbated by difficult global financial conditions. Pakistan's desperation to close a new deal with the IMF is reflective of the perilous state of its economy. In its April 2024 Asian Development Outlook report, the ADB describes Pakistan's economic prospects as uncertain, with high risks on account of the impact of political uncertainty on the sustainability of stabilisation and reform efforts. Noting that potential supply chain disruptions from the escalation of the Middle East war would weigh on the economy, it says: "With Pakistan's large external financing requirements and weak external buffers, disbursement from multilateral and bilateral partners remains crucial." It points out that the IMF support for the reform agenda would improve market sentiment and catalyse affordable external financing from other sources, but warns that "these inflows could be hampered by lapses in policy implementation". If anything, the report suggests that Pakistan has no time to waste and no room to avoid the long-delayed reforms without causing irreparable harm to its people and economy.

## Pakistan eyes clean energy with electrocatalytic water splitting

**By Dr. M. Sagir**  
Pakistan struggles with frequent power outages and load shedding due to insufficient generation capacity, transmission losses, and distribution inefficiencies. The country heavily depends on imported fossil fuels, such as oil and gas, for power generation, which exposes it to price volatility and geopolitical tensions. The production and distribution of energy in Pakistan are costly, leading to affordability issues for consumers and hindering industrial competitiveness. Many rural and remote areas lack access to reliable electricity, hampering socio-economic development and quality of life.

These challenges could be addressed by integrating new sources of energy into Pakistan's energy mix. Pakistan has significant untapped renewable energy potential, particularly in solar, wind, and hydroelectric power. Investing in these clean energy sources can diversify the energy mix, reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels, and mitigate the impact of energy shortages. Enhancing transmission and distribution infrastructure can help minimize energy losses and improve the reliability and efficiency of en-

ergy supply. This includes modernizing grid systems and investing in smart grid technologies to optimize energy distribution. Implementing energy efficiency measures in industries, buildings, and transportation can help reduce energy demand and lower overall energy costs. This includes adopting energy-efficient appliances, improving building insulation, and promoting public transportation and fuel-efficient vehicles. Building local capacity in renewable energy technologies through training programs and knowledge sharing can help accelerate the adoption of new energy sources. Additionally, fostering technology transfer and collaboration with international partners can facilitate the deployment of renewable energy solutions in Pakistan. No doubt, the correlation between energy supply and economic growth is undeniable; hence, addressing this issue is paramount for Pakistan's development trajectory.

To meet the projected growth targets, Pakistan aimed to significantly upscale its power production from 14,000 MW to 50,000 MW between 2009 and 2022. However, the heavy

reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation, estimated to cost \$12 billion USD in 2007-08 and projected to soar to \$41 billion USD by 2022, poses multifaceted challenges. Beyond economic strain, the unchecked utilization of fossil fuels exacerbates global environmental crises, including greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, and environmental degradation, impacting Pakistan's vulnerable ecosystems and contributing to economic losses due to natural disasters.

In response to these challenges, the scientific community has rallied around the quest for sustainable and renewable energy solutions. One such breakthrough avenue is electrocatalytic water splitting, a cutting-edge process poised to revolutionize renewable energy technologies. By leveraging catalysts composed of transition metals, metal oxides, or carbon-based compounds, electrocatalytic water splitting accelerates reaction kinetics, facilitating water electrolysis with enhanced efficiency and reduced energy thresholds. The allure of electrocatalytic water splitting lies not only in its capacity to generate hydrogen

as a clean and sustainable energy source but also in its versatility across various sectors. Hydrogen, often hailed as the "fuel of the future," offers a clean combustion alternative to fossil fuels, emitting only water as a byproduct. Despite its potential, the economic production of hydrogen remains a formidable challenge. Electrolysis of water emerges as a viable solution, offering efficient and environmentally benign hydrogen generation. Moreover, electrocatalytic water splitting holds promise for grid stability and energy storage integration with renewable sources like wind and solar power. By converting excess electricity during periods of low demand into hydrogen via water electrolysis, surplus energy can be stored and deployed during peak demand, bolstering grid resilience and reliability.

Beyond energy production, electrocatalytic water splitting presents opportunities for resource conservation and environmental remediation. By harnessing renewable energy to drive water electrolysis, this technique diminishes reliance on finite fossil fuel reserves and fosters the synthesis of hydrogen from abundant wa-

ter sources. Additionally, the oxygen byproduct finds applications in wastewater treatment, industrial processes, and medical treatments, contributing to cleaner air and water.

To unlock clean energy from electrocatalytic water splitting, Pakistan needs a multi-pronged approach. Researchers must develop efficient and affordable electrocatalysts, likely from abundant materials, while engineers design scalable and durable electrolyzers. Pairing these advancements with renewable energy sources like solar or wind is crucial. Additionally, integrating hydrogen production into the power grid and bringing down overall costs through strategic policies and economic incentives are essential. Collaboration between researchers, industry, and policymakers, along with public education on the benefits of clean hydrogen, can propel Pakistan towards a commercially viable electrocatalytic water splitting future.

However, hurdles remain on the path to widespread adoption of electrocatalytic water splitting, including the development of cost-effective catalysts, integration with re-

newable energy mechanisms, and scaling production to meet industrial demands. Collaboration among researchers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders is imperative to surmount these challenges and propel this transformative technology towards commercial viability. The pursuit of innovative solutions, such as electrocatalytic water splitting, holds promise for revolutionizing renewable energy technologies. This cutting-edge process not only offers clean hydrogen generation but also presents opportunities for grid stability, energy storage, resource conservation, and environmental remediation. However, overcoming challenges related to cost, scalability, and integration requires concerted efforts from the scientific community, policymakers, and industry stakeholders. By embracing such advancements and fostering collaboration, Pakistan can chart a sustainable and resilient path towards energy security and economic prosperity.

The writer is Chairperson Institute of Chemical & Environmental Engineering Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan

## Change his name if BJP wins

wading into major headwinds.

On the other hand, the survey finds Mr Modi ahead of the main opposition Congress and its INDIA alliance partners. It offers no assurance that the adverse equation for the opposition may change during the long hard trudge ahead. Also, there's no discernible hint about a likely voter response to the possibility of a last-minute divisive strike that the Modi campaign is well known for. Mr Modi won the 2014 elections riding communal polarisation triggered by his party's anti-Muslim campaign in Muzaffarnagar in voter-rich Uttar Pradesh. He won in 2019 by staging a military stand-off with Pakistan.

The grand Ram temple in Ayodhya, as one has said earlier, had failed to become a national issue, be it for the Hindu electorate or any other. In a way, this represents a damning miscalculation for the Modi campaign given that the prime minister invested his prestige

in the saturated TV coverage of the event beamed to cities and villages. Images of the prime minister in the role of a Hindu high priest failing to strike a chord in these elections is just one more worry for the ruling party.

The pre-poll survey shows little to nothing that favours the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) even as it still sees that he remains ahead of rivals albeit subject to 'ifs' and 'buts'.

Unemployment and price rise are the key concerns of nearly half the electorate, the Lokniti-CSDS survey shows. Nearly two-thirds of those surveyed (62 per cent), with the highest among cities (65pc), said getting jobs had become more difficult. A significant section, 55pc — way higher than the 40pc of those surveyed in 2019 — said corruption had increased, with only 19pc saying that it had decreased (a fall from 37pc who felt so in 2019).

Ram temple and religious issues figure way down in single digits in the order of importance to the

voters. Two responses are evident to the state of play, one coming from Mr Modi, the other captured by the opposition's Kanhaiya Kumar, a Congress candidate in Delhi supported by the capital's ruling Aam Aadmi Party. Mr Modi has kept the divisive option warm. Not ready to respond to the questions on jobs and corruption, he has found references with communal slant more appealing. It seems that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi rustled up a mutiny with Bihar's opposition legend Lalu Yadav a few weeks ago. More recently, Lalu's son and former Bihar deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav posted a video of himself eating fish in a helicopter. Mr Modi has signalled these events as taunting his Hindutva supporters and as appeasement of Muslims. However, the claim seems to have drawn a yawn, even outright scorn as seen from a section of train commuters interviewed by NewsLaundry portal.

That the relatively tepid communal comment

may be testing the waters for a more vitriolic polarisation is not lost on Mamata Banerjee. The combative woman chief minister of West Bengal has cautioned her cadre to not fall into the BJP's trap by responding to communal needling with violence. West Bengal sends 42 MPs of whom the BJP took 18 last time, four less than 22 won by Ms Banerjee. She says she expects to win "twice the number of seats of the BJP" this time, which means a substantially reduced number for her main rival in West Bengal. If a communal assault does come its likely target would be West Bengal or Assam.

While Mr Modi has preferred to skirt the issues of unemployment and corruption, Kanhaiya Kumar, the former communist student leader from JNU, has kept his focus on jobs and electoral bonds, and on India's troubled secular spine. In a way, it's a summation of the opposition's stance. Kumar is one of three candidates the Congress is fielding in Delhi, the other four going to the Aam

Aadmi Party in a robust alliance that has worried the BJP. It's partly to breach this Congress-AAP alliance that the Modi government is accused of using its agencies to jail Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his senior colleagues. But that may have boosted the alliance, which will find an even greater echo in Punjab, Goa and, importantly, also in the prime minister's home state of Gujarat.

Kanhaiya is a candidate from north Delhi, which witnessed large-scale anti-Muslim violence in 2020 evidently orchestrated to disrupt a nationwide campaign against controversial citizenship laws. Abutting Uttar Pradesh, Kanhaiya hopes to heal the constituency's experience that saw support against Muslims from various caste groups in the neighbouring state. Nine seats going to polls in the first phase come from western Uttar Pradesh, a heartland of Jat farmers, Rajput powerbrokers and a clutch of other influential castes that are said to have replaced their blanket support to Modi with a grudging one.

## Early exits

**Dr Niaz Murtaza**

As the fractious new government fails to get a grip on matters, many already see its early demise, just a month after it was imposed via allegedly rigged polls. Early ends for civilian regimes and long innings for non-civilian ones is our norm, more so for rigged regimes/assemblies.

Four out of five largely legitimate Houses (1946, 1970, 1988, 2008 and 2013) completed their term though none of their seven prime ministers did so. But six out of eight rigged parliamentary-era assemblies and the nine prime ministers from them fell early and so did the four prime ministers from the two Houses completing their term (2002 and 2018). The reasons for early removals (except in 1977 when Bhutto called early polls and in 2012 when chief justice Iftikhar Chaudhry axed Yousuf Raza Gilani) were fallouts with the establishment. If the current dispensation falls early, it would not be unusual.

Past early exits varied much in their exact form (removal of just the prime minister, the ruling party or the Assembly itself) and modalities (martial law, no-trust vote, presidential dismissals or resignation under duress). So did the reasons for the fallout, ranging from minor policy or personality clashes to attempts by civilian prime ministers to clip the establishment's wings. Those axed on policy clashes often returned quickly, for example, the PPP and PML-N in the 1990s. Those daring to dream about clipping halloved wings had very ugly fallouts and were banished for long.

Bhutto was hanged

and his daughter came to power only briefly after more than a decade. Nawaz Sharif in 1999 was banished for several years. The MQM's Altaf Hussain, though not a national leader, had an ugly fallout in 2016. Imran Khan's fallout was perhaps the ugliest. Thus, a deeper analysis is needed to analyse the likely longevity of this wobbly, sorry-looking current set-up and the likely shape of an early end. We may even see a break from the past where both the prime minister and Assembly complete term or fall without an establishment hand in their collapse.

One unlikely way to this last option could be if election tribunals magically resolve the Form 45 saga in the PTI's favour. But the PML-N coalition's ranks have been contrived to reach a two-thirds majority and the number of election petitions filed by the PTI may be insufficient to reduce it to a minority. Street agitation may be a second way, especially if legal options to keep Imran Khan in jail run out, given the weak verdicts against him, and if a new judicial independence streak emerges in wake of the letter by six Islamabad High Court judges. This would put us in uncharted territory where a party having experienced an ugly fallout returns to power quickly against the establishment's wishes. Finally, the PPP and PTI may attempt to strike an alliance. But neither may want to be the junior partner. The PTI may not even want the PPP as junior partner and the PPP may not risk doing so without the approval of non-political elements.

Would this make an establishment-led early

removal of the government the likeliest scenario? Given the PML-N's earlier fallouts, it cannot be ruled out. The potential for policy clashes is vast even with a pliant Shehbaz Sharif as prime minister. He has few powers as persons widely perceived to be pro-establishment are running key ministries and Nawaz Sharif's loyalists like Ishaq Dar run other important areas and his daughter runs Punjab. Thus, policy clashes between Nawaz Sharif and those seen as establishment protégés are the biggest Achilles heel of this regime.

The establishment had policy clashes with the PTI, but still waited over three years before allowing an in-house change. Earlier, prime ministers and even assemblies were removed even before two years. Easy ways to implement the removal and put in place an acceptable alternative set-up were present.

While easy options to replace the prime minister from within the PML-N may not be possible, non-political circles may look to other options.

The binding constraint would be finding an alternative set-up which is more pliant and competent. The PTI would be neither and PPP not the latter. This may force the establishment to tag along with the PML-N despite policy clashes. The PML-N's hands are tied too given its contrived win.

Thus, the fear of Imran Khan's return may force some give and take. Also, the PML-N is too weak to try to clip halloved wings. Perhaps an uneasy cohabitation may persist for at least two to three years until one side is strong enough to jettison the other.

## Finnish recipe

**Mohammad Ali Babakhel**

Finland has been ranked as the world's happiest country for the seventh straight year. It is also the 13th safest in the world. In the Global Terrorism Index, it is ranked 89th, placing it at the bottom of the list. Yet, even though it is one of the safest countries, preventing violent extremism (VE) is one of Finland's top priorities.

Finland's first National Action Plan (NAP) to prevent VE was drafted in 2012, the second version in 2016. Its implementation was assessed by an external reviewer, and the assessment report published in 2019. The objectives of the plan were to reduce extremist violence and its threat, promote the implementation of equality, freedom of speech, and other constitutional rights, and detect and investigate hate crimes.

The Finnish interior ministry now coordinates the prevention of VE and leads the National Cooperation Network, while the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service works with the police and international partners to combat terrorism. The Finnish plan also recognises the power of politicians in determining a direction for society and in defining values that influence public opinion and attitudes about VE.

Considering the productive role religious communities can play in the prevention of VE, the plan gave them immense importance. It aimed to strengthen the knowledge of imams and community leaders so that they could support their communities with the correct information. Militant groups attempt to use local incidents to support their ideology and spread their

own interpretations of religion through social media. Finnish authorities realised that religious leaders can prove effective in countering militant ideology if they can strengthen the immunity of their communities against messages that encourage violence.

The plan also recognised that families are in the strongest position to prevent radicalisation. Strong emotional ties within families can play an important role in preventing a person from joining militants. Likewise, the Finnish saw that their municipalities can also play an effective role. In multi-professional "anchor work", the police, social workers, psychiatric nurses, and education officers were asked to work with young people. "Anchor work" also acted as a contact point for anyone if they had concerns about radicalised individuals.

The plan also recognised that young people can help prevent VE and build peace. They can support other young people and apply their experiences and expertise to preventive work. During the last few years, the focus in Finland has been on improving the media literacy of young people, while less attention has been paid to that of adults. Increasing knowledge and the ability to identify the concepts used by extremists is essential, so training materials are being prepared for the public.

Hate speech is linked to violent extremism, as it divides people into "us" and "them" — friends and enemies — thus strengthening the possibility of confrontation. The Finnish plan aimed to increase the understanding of its public and professionals about communications related to hate speech and strengthen the ability of people working with young citizens to talk

about propaganda and hate speech, as well as support the victims of hate speech.

The gender perspective in the prevention of VE is often overlooked. Militant groups have both male and female members. Mothers play a more important role in raising children and are faced with the difficult task of protecting children in conflict areas from the influence of violent groups. Women, as mothers, can play an important role in saving children from being re-converted by militants. The plan focused on increasing knowledge and awareness of the ways in which VE affects women in Finland and what can be done to support them.

Combating violent radicalisation in prisons was a key objective of the Finnish plan, as many of the individuals who had committed terrorist attacks in Europe became radicalised during imprisonment.

Before release from prison, the release plan now covers housing, education, job opportunities, and family situations. Information about released prisoners is exchanged with the intelligence service, police department, social services, and municipality so that the released persons may be assessed and monitored.

Since the education sector plays an important role in supporting the well-being, development, and learning of children, enhancing teachers' knowledge of extremist ideologies was part of the prevention measures identified.

From Finland's experience, militancy-infested societies can learn that the kinetic option can kill terrorists, but extremism may still multiply. It is, therefore, not enough to simply counter terrorism: we must work actively to prevent it.

## IT, Telecom sector having vast investment opportunities: Shaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja has said that there are vast opportunities for investment in the IT and Telecom sector of Pakistan. She said that the present government, under the vision of the Prime Minister, is committed for the promotion of investment in the country. Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja was talking to CEO Taavun (Pvt) Limited Muhammad Shahbaz Khan, and CEO

Wateen Adil Rashid who called on her here on Tuesday, said a news release. She said that private sector will be fully supported as it has vital role in increasing our exports. About youth, she said youth are our great asset and the steps are underway for their development. Shaza Fatima appreciated Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan of UAE for his special interest in further investment in Pakistan's Telecom sector.



WASHINGTON DC: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, met with Hela Cheikhrouhou, Regional Vice President for MCT, International Finance Corporation (IFC).

## Finance Minister seeks foreign investments in IT, Agriculture, mining, energy sectors

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb urged the influential Pakistani American businessmen and tech entrepreneurs to capitalize on the growing opportunities in Pakistan in key sectors of agriculture, Information Technology (IT), mining, and energy.

The minister during a meeting with businessmen and tech entrepreneurs, on the sidelines of the IMF/World Bank Spring

meetings in Washington D.C. lauded the important role of the Pakistani diaspora in the socio-economic development of Pakistan.

He termed them as bridge-builders in deepening trade and investment ties between Pakistan and the United States.

The Minister highlighted various initiatives taken by the government to improve the business-friendly environment and attract foreign investment in

Pakistan. He specifically highlighted the potential of Pakistan in the IT sector as it hosted a community of over a million freelancers, ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> globally in the freelance market, and annually produced over 75,000 IT graduates from 250+ recognized universities.

On the occasion, the participants appreciated the government's efforts to improve the investment climate in Pakistan and expressed their keen interest in taking Pak-U.S.

economic ties to a new level. Meanwhile, in a meeting with the members of the U.S. Pakistan Business Council (USPBC), the minister appreciated the important role of the U.S. corporate sector in strengthening Pak-U.S. economic ties. He said that despite the challenges, the government was committed to implementing difficult but necessary reforms to ensure long-term economic growth and macroeconomic stability.

## LCCI identifies key issues hampering economic growth

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan has all the abilities to emerge as an economic leader once the key economic issues including devaluation, closure of industries, high utility prices, inflation and high mark up rates are controlled with a collective approach, besides addressing the reservations of business community on rapid implementation of SROs for those who are already in the tax net including Tajir Dost Scheme. These all are discouraging the confidence of local investors. Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) President Kashif Anwar expressed these views while addressing the participants of 35<sup>th</sup> Senior Management Course of the

National Institute of Management (NIM) here on Tuesday. LCCI Senior Vice Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry also spoke on the occasion while the delegation was headed by NIM Faculty Advisor Amir Fayyaz.

Kashif Anwar called for a business friendly taxation system saying that it would pave way for economic development of the country. To a question regarding Tajir Dost Scheme, he said that LCCI has reservations over this issue as the stakeholders were not taken into confidence before launching the scheme and there were issues in this scheme which needed to be addressed in consultation with stakeholders.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja in a meeting with CEO Taavun (Pvt) Limited Muhammad Shahbaz Khan and CEO Wateen Adil Rashid.

## POL price hike caused by upward trend in int'l market: Finance Ministry

ISLAMABAD (APP): The fortnightly increase in prices of various petroleum products was caused by upward fluctuation in the international oil market, said Spokesperson of the Finance Ministry on Tuesday. During the last fortnight, the prices of petrol and high-speed diesel in the international market increased by US\$ 3.82 and US\$4.30 per barrel, the spokesperson said in a statement.

Regulatory Authority (OGRA) had proposed to increase the price of petrol by Rs 4.53 and the price of high-speed diesel by Rs 8.14, the statement said adding the prices of petroleum products depended on the price fluctuations in the global market and the exchange rate.

The prices of petroleum products in the global market have also increased due to the uncertainty in the Middle East. Oil and Gas



ISLAMABAD: A review meeting of the Fertilizer Review Committee held under the chairmanship of Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister for M/O Industries & Production and M/O National Food Security & Research.

## President IWCCI says: No future of Pakistan sans tax policy reforms

ISLAMABAD (INP): Founder and President of the Islamabad Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IWCCI), Samina Fazil has said that Pakistan's future appears to be dismal if significant improvements to the country's tax policy are not implemented. Addressing the business community here on Tuesday, she said that the harmful impacts of inflation and the sharp increase in energy prices can be ascribed to the failure of a large number of small and medium-sized businesses.

Samina Fazil said that there was possibility of increase in inflation as a result of the allowing sugar

exports; therefore, she urged that this practice be prohibited.

She said that Pakistan could not continue to exist with the current tax system, dismally low revenue and irresponsible spending which results in continued borrowing.

Therefore, the county needs short-term and long-term tax policy reforms while taxes on non-essential and luxury items should be increased.

The IWCCI President said that the government must make tough decisions to fix economic problems and implement recommendations of lenders to come out of the current economic mess.

## Rupee sheds 07 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 07 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.29 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.22.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs277.5 and Rs280.25 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 89 paise to close at Rs295.53 against the last-day closing of Rs296.42, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs1.80, whereas a decrease of Rs1.17 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs346.01 compared to the last closing of Rs347.18.

## NJHP generation restricted to 530MW

LAHORE (APP): Electricity generation from Neelum Jhelum Hydel Power Station (NJHP) has been restricted to 530 MW due to decrease in Head Race Tunnel pressure on April 03, 2024.

This precautionary measure has been taken to observe the behaviour of pressure fluctuation. Generation from the Power Station will be increased gradually after analysis and deliberations with the Project Consultants, WAPDA spokesman told media here Tuesday.

## Pakistan, Saudi Arabia finalise implementation mechanism to execute investment matters

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Tuesday finalized a bilateral implementation mechanism to closely coordinate and execute investment related matters at the functional level to turn the sovereign commitments into tangible economic outcomes.

The matters related to the investment opportunities in Pakistan's multiple sectors were discussed at Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Investment Conference held here and attended by the visiting high-level Saudi delegation led by Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin

Farhan Al Saud, according to a Foreign Office press release.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar warmly welcomed the Saudi delegation at the SIFC emphasizing the deep-rooted ties and mutual strategic interests between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

He highlighted the significance of enhanced bilateral strategic and economic partnership and the crucial role of Saudi investments in nurturing this relationship.

He explained how Pakistan through the SIFC

platform aimed to streamline investment processes and ensure rapid decision-making, fostering a flourishing investment-friendly environment in Pakistan.

The foreign minister showcased Pakistan's abundant opportunities in agriculture, IT, and mining sectors, inviting Saudi investors to engage in mutually beneficial partnerships.

He expressed confidence in the strengthened bonds between the two countries, envisioning significant economic growth and lasting benefits.



FAISALABAD: Labourers busy in unloading sacks of onion from delivery truck at Vegetable Market.

## CCP issues policy note disclosure on 'Cement Packaging'

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has issued a policy note recommending mandatory disclosure of manufacturing and expiry dates on cement packaging.

The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has issued a policy note under Section 29 of the Competition Act, 2010 to the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA), according to a press release issued here on Tuesday.

The Policy Note recommends they amend the Pakistan Standard Specification for all five

types of cement and make it mandatory for the cement manufacturers to disclose the 'manufacturing/packaging and expiry/best before' dates on their cement bags.

The CCP observed that cement is inherently hygroscopic and begins to significantly lose its strength after 4 to 6 weeks of storage in bags in normal conditions and considerably sooner under adverse weather conditions or high humidity.

The CCP has, therefore, noted with great concern that the cement manufacturers do not voluntarily print the manufacturing, packaging,

## Finance Minister brief IFC on economic reforms in Pak

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb on Tuesday briefed the International Finance Corporation (IFC) team on the government economic reforms in Pakistan.

He briefed on the ongoing reforms in the taxation, energy and privatization sectors, said a press release issued here.

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb on Tuesday met with Ms. Hela Cheikhrouhou, regional vice President for MCT, International Finance Corporation (IFC).

He briefed her on the ongoing reforms in the taxation, energy and privatization sectors, said a press release issued here.

Moreover, he expressed the resolve of the Government of Pakistan to work closely with IFC in the priority areas of securitization of remittances, mining, airport management and capacity-building.

## NPO to organize two-day online workshop on 'Advance Excel'

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Productivity Organization (NPO) is going to organize a two-day online workshop on "Advance Excel" from April 24 to 25.

The workshop aimed at providing skills and knowledge which would allow the participants to learn MS Excel tools, techniques and create lookup functions, set Excel working options, enhance charts, protect worksheet data, perform advanced data operations using summarizing, Pivot Tables, create data consolidations and use macros, said an NPO document shared here on Tuesday.

On the first day, the workshop highlights understanding basic

## SECP issues report on Pakistan's potential for micro & inclusive insurance

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has published a report titled "Unlocking the Potential of Micro and Inclusive Insurance in Pakistan," which provides an overview of the current landscape and vast untapped potential market for inclusive insurance. The report's draft version and synopsis were presented at the International Insure Impact Conference, 2023, held in Karachi.

The SECP's report explores inclusive insurance in Pakistan,

highlighting its untapped market potential, comparing it to other jurisdictions, analyzing gaps, and proposing a future course of action.

The data collected indicates a concerning status of inclusive insurance market in Pakistan. A total of 12.56 million insurance policies were sold through microfinance banks/institutions. Out of these, 89 percent are credit life insurance, indicating a primary focus on covering the underlying credit risk. Moreover, of the 20 insurers offering inclusive insurance,



HYDERABAD: A farmer busy in leveling his field with help of bulls for next crop.

## LESCO collects over Rs 6.05m from 326 defaulters in 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has recovered more than Rs 6.05 million from 326 dead defaulters in all the five districts - Lahore, Sheikhpura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara - on the 198<sup>th</sup> day of its recovery campaign.

LESCO spokesman told media here Tuesday that on the 198<sup>th</sup> day, SE (Superintending Engineer) Nisar Sarwar has recovered outstanding dues of Rs 0.77 million from 40 defaulters in Northern Circle; SE Umar Bilal recovered Rs 0.72 million from 64 defaulters in Eastern Circle; SE Shabbir recovered Rs 0.68 million

from 35 defaulters in Central Circle; SE Zafarullah Saanghi collected Rs 0.11 million from 27 defaulters in South Circle; SE Muhammad Hussain recovered Rs 0.52 million from 27 defaulters in Nankana Circle; SE Najamul Hassan recovered Rs 2.10 million from 82 defaulters in Sheikhpura Circle; SE Jamsheed Zaman collected Rs 0.46 million from 25 defaulters in Okara Circle and SE Ahmed Shahzad Chughtai recovered Rs 0.69 million from 26 defaulters in Kasur Circle. During the 198 days, the spokesman added that the LESCO has recovered a total of Rs 2.85 billion.



SARGODHA: Farmers are busy in harvesting wheat crop in their field.

## Saudi FM meets President Zardari Pakistan, KSA resolve to build strong partnership, promote economic cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) on Tuesday reiterated their resolve to build a strong partnership and further promote economic cooperation for the mutual benefit of two brotherly countries.

This was discussed during a meeting between President Asif Ali Zardari and Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

Welcoming the delegation, the president said that Pakistan and KSA enjoyed a long-standing and decades-old relationship and Pakistan intended to transform the existing ties into a long-term strategic and economic partnership.

The two sides discussed the regional dynamics and recent developments in the Middle East and called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and end to the Israeli atrocities in Gaza.

Both sides also ex-

changed views on issues of bilateral importance and the challenges being faced by Muslim Ummah.

The Saudi foreign minister was accompanied by a high-powered delegation, comprising the Minister of Water and Agriculture, the Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources, the Assistant Minister of Investment, the Head of the Saudi

Special Committee and senior officials from the Ministry of Energy and Saudi Public Investment Fund.

Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Minister for Foreign Affairs Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Privatization and Board of Investment Abdul Aleem Khan, Minister of Petroleum and Water Resources Musadik Masood Malik, Minister of Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain, Foreign Secretary Syrus Sajjad Qazi and senior government officials attended the meeting.

President Zardari also highlighted that the Government and the people of Pakistan had the highest regard for the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and would continue to stand with KSA.

He said that the prosperity of the Islamic world was linked to the progress of KSA.

The president lauded the courageous and visionary leadership of Crown Prince and Prime Minister of KSA Muhammad Bin Salman and the remarkable progress being made under the Vision 2030.

He also thanked the leadership of KSA for its support to Pakistan in difficult times.

The Saudi Foreign Minister said that KSA considered its relations with Pakistan very critical and was committed to building a strong partnership with Pakistan. He highlighted that both countries enjoyed strong bonds and had helped each other for decades.



ISLAMABAD: NDMA & IRC representatives exchanging documents after signing LoU for Cooperation on Disaster Resilience & Preparedness at IRC Headquarters.

## NDMA, IRC sign LoU for cooperation on disaster resilience, preparedness

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) on Tuesday signed a Letter of Understanding (LoU) to foster disaster resilience in Pakistan.

NDMA Chairman Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik witnessed the signing of LoU. Shabnam Baloch, Country Director of IRC-Pakistan and Raza Iqbal signed the LoU on behalf of their respective organisations.

"This initiative marks a significant collaboration between the NDMA, Pakistan's leading disaster management authority and IRC - a global humanitarian organisation," as NDMA news release said.

The NDMA chairman, in his remarks, said that the Authority's National Emergencies Opera-

tion Centre (NEOC) had provided a comprehensive outlook on potential hazards and emergencies expected in next six months.

"This crucial information serves as a foundation for the country's disaster management organizations to strategize and outline their response plans effectively, ensuring readiness and swift action in the face of adversity," he added.

He called for incorporation of anticipatory actions for resilient interventions in humanitarian organisations' annual plans.

Ms Shabnam Baloch of the IRC-Pakistan on the occasion expressed her organization's commitment to the newly formed partnership, stressing the critical significance of collaborative initiatives, tackling the multifaceted challenges presented by climate change and natural disasters

specifically in the context of Pakistan.

Both the NDMA chairman and the IRC Pakistan Country Director expressed their resolve to advancing the resilience agenda through tri-party partnerships involving relevant state institutions, civil society, and community voices into decision-making processes.

The scope of the IRC-NDMA collaboration encompasses joint efforts in strengthening community-based disaster risk management/reduction models, creating toolkit of best practices and the outlook for anticipatory actions. This includes consultations on innovative programmes and stakeholder engagement for strengthening resilience in communities, civil society organizations (CSOs), and other local institutions.

Second position in fifth class was secured by Mashal Fatima, Aina Munah and Ayesha Iman with 586 marks.

Zainab of G-10/2 Model College bagged the third position in fifth class with 585 marks.

Maryam Shafi of CDA Model School bagged the first position with 679 marks in the 8th class centralized examination.



ISLAMABAD: People purchasing stationary and school bags for their children as new session starts in schools at H-9 Weekly Bazaar in Federal Capital.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud along with his delegation called on President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-i-Sadr.

## FM Aurangzeb highlights Pak roadmap to address economic challenges

WASHINGTON (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, who is leading a Pakistan delegation in the IMF and World Bank-2024 Spring Meetings in Washington DC, on Tuesday highlighted the country's roadmap to cope with the confronted challenges and put economy on sustainable growth trajectory.

In an interactive session with Atlantic Council's Geo-Economics Center and South Asia Center titled "Opportunities and Challenges for the Pakistani Economy through 2024 and Beyond", he outlined Pakistan's key measures to achieve economic stabilization by increasing tax-to-GDP ratio, undertaking end-to-end digitalization of FBR, reforming State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), boosting exports, increasing

remittances, improving business environment and attracting foreign direct investments.

Sharing Pakistan's current economic landscape, he said the country had entered in a much better shape this year than the beginning of the last year, adding it had to do a lot with the nine-month SBA programme which in turn "ushered in a macroeconomic stability for the country."

He said the country's overall GDP was moving in the right direction, although the headline number was not that significant, however different sectors were performing well.

He said, agriculture witnessed 5 percent growth owing to bumper crops; services sector was moving quite well and inflation had come down from the peak of 37-38 percent to closer

to 20-22 percent while the exchange rate was stable.

"So all of this has moved us in the right direction, now we will take it forward from here [for which] we need, in the first instance, permanence in the macroeconomic stability," adding the government had initiated discussion with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the larger and extended programme that would help put economy on sustainable growth path.

The finance minister was of the view that the "timely decisions and timely executions" were the key aspects to run even a smallest institution or the largest country on the planet. . . .

He said Pakistan does not need too many policy prescriptions as "we have known what and why, not for years but the decades."

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## At UN Pak calls for countering disinformation, fake news to safeguard rights

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan has underscored importance of combating widespread cases of disinformation and fake news in order to safeguard human rights, and promote equitable access to digital resources.

Speaking in the final 'Interactive Dialogue on the Code of Conduct for Information Integrity on Digital Platforms', Ambassador Usman Jadoon, Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, referred to the recent instances of disinformation employed by the Israeli military occupation authorities, such as the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and called for ensuring information integrity, particularly in digital spaces.

The dialogue was sponsored by the Department of Global Communications (DGC) of the United Nations.

The Pakistani envoy stressed the imperative of protecting the rights of people under foreign occupation, condemning censorship, internet blackouts, and the spread of fake news by occupation forces and attempts to discredit legitimate freedom movements.

He also voiced concerns over the marginalization of minority communities through the weaponization of digital media platforms, emphasizing the violation of human rights conventions.

Ambassador Jadoon identified key challenges in regulating online content, including the decentralized nature of the internet, commercialization of online platforms prioritizing profit over accuracy, and the increasing use of AI tools for spreading false information. He called for the global principles that denounce digital imperialism and uphold core principles such as human rights, dignity, and equality.



WASHINGTON: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb spoke at the Atlantic Council on the "Opportunities and Challenges for the Pakistani Economy through 2024 and Beyond".

## IHC rejects Bushra Bibi petition for her shifting from Bani Gala to Adiala jail

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has dismissed Bushra Bibi petition in connection with her shifting from Bani Gala to Adiala jail.

The court dismissed her plea being not persuaded.

Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb remarked even they do not want this that she should go to jail from home. What relief they have sought it is not known whether they want it or otherwise. I had said we will decide this case after hearing it today. Even they did not come.

The court while addressing the state counsel said this side too is not working correctly. You are not doing correct too.

Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb remarked Shoaib Shaheen had come and he too had returned. He has not come back.

He gave these remarks.

Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb issued the order. The court while expressing annoyance over non appearance of lawyers of Bushra Bibi remarked they too don't want that she is shifted from home to jail. What relief they have sought it is not known either they want it or otherwise. They are playing politics with the court. They have made it joke. I had asked them but even then they did not come.

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## PPP CEC will decide on offer to join govt, says Faisal Karim Kundi

ISLAMABAD (INP): The People's Party's central executive committee will decide on the offer to join the PML-N led government, a PPP spokesman said.

"The CEC of the party will decide about joining or not to join the government, Faisal Karim Kundi said. He said that the People's Party wants to give the PML-N an open opportunity to rule the country.

"If the PTI has reservations over elections it should come for dialogue,"

PPP spokesperson said.

There is the PTI government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it first form a judicial commission in the province. "It should demonstrate moral courage and return the seats won by Fazal ur Rehman's JUI candidates," he said.

According to reports, after formation of the PTI-led opposition alliance, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) would request the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) again to join the federal cabinet.



ISLAMABAD: Women traffic wardens giving Chalan ticket to motorist during checking people drives without wearing safety belt, at 9th Avenue in the Federal Capital.

## Tandoors/Nan-bais defy govt's Roti, Naan price reduction in ICT

ISLAMABAD (APP): In response to this initiative of the Punjab government, the federal capital has also reduced the prices of bread and naan by fixing their prices at Rs 16 and Rs 20 respectively, however, Tandoor and Nanbai kept their prices while refusing to obey the government order.

The district administration issued a notification fixing the prices of Roti and Naan at Rs 16 and Rs 20 for a standard serving size of 120 grams.

Assistant Commissioners and Price Control

Magistrates have been tasked with ensuring the enforcement of these new prices across Islamabad.

In line with Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon's instructions, Assistant Commissioner Secretary Abdullah Khan convened a meeting with the Nanbai Association to discuss the implementation of the revised prices.

Despite these efforts, Tandoors/Nan-bais in the twin cities are standing firm on their prices, declining to reduce them as per the government's rates.

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## River Kabul runs in high flood: FFC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Flood Commission (FFC) on Tuesday said that River Kabul was flowing in very high flood at Nowshera with water discharge of 212,000 cusecs.

According to FFC report, River Swat was also flowing in medium flood at Munda Headworks with decreasing trend.

Rivers Kabul, Swat and their respective tributaries have been experiencing flash flooding due to torrential rains in the catchment areas, it further said.

## LHC nullifies notification of success of PML-N MNA from NA-81 Gujranwala

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) has nullified the notification about success of PML-N leader Azhar Qayyum from NA-81 Gujranwala besides restoring the membership of Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) candidate Bilal Ejaz Chaudhry. The petition filed by SIC candidate Bilal Ejaz Chaudhry came up for hearing before Justice Shahid Karim Tuesday.

Rana Usman Ghani and Sardar Latif Khosa appeared in the court on behalf of the petitioner.

The counsel for petitioner took the plea in the court that Bilal Ejaz Chaudhry was declared success with lead of 8000 votes on recounting the Returning Officer (RO) decreased 2500 votes of the petitioner. It is requested to court to suspend the notification about success of PML-N candidate Azhar Qayyum from NA-81. The court declared the notification about success of PML-N candidate Azhar Qayyum from NA-81 Gujranwala besides restoring the membership.

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