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Minister for Information Technology & Telecommunication  
**Dr Umar Saif**

## Govt achieves 13 goals, out of 15, set to promote IT sector within brief period: Dr Saif

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif has said the caretaker government had successfully achieved 13 goals, out of 15, set to promote the IT sector and increase its exports within a brief period of 5 months under the caretaker setup.

In a video message, he said, "We have achieved 13 out of 15 important targets for the promotion of the IT & telecom sector in a short period of 5 months in the caretaker set-up. The forum of SIFC will prove to be a great support for the upcoming elected government in the process of building and developing the country, and the elected government will also reap the benefits of the measures we have taken during the caretaker period."

"We worked with the SIFC and the State Bank to make a significant policy intervention, allowing IT companies to keep 50% of their export revenue in dollars in an account in Pakistan and make their international expenses without any restrictions from this amount," he further explained. He said that with this decision, allowing the retention of 50 percent in dollars, the country's IT exports have increased by 32 percent in the last 60 days.

Dr. Umar Saif highlighted that the establishment of the Telecom Tribunal fulfills a longstanding demand of the telecom sector. The specialized Tribunal will now handle telecom sector disputes and cases instead of the High Courts, aiming to expedite the resolution of legal issues and facilitate rapid progress in the telecom sector. According to the minister, the Ministry of Law will nominate the chairperson and members of the Tribunal.

The Chairperson must be a Judge of the High Court or a lawyer with 15 years of experience, he said. Similarly, the Tribunal will have 2-member technocrats, whose number may be increased or decreased from time to time. The minister believes that this specialized approach will lead to faster and more efficient resolution of disputes, contributing to the overall advancement of the telecom industry.

He said, "The effective implementation of the Right of Way Policy, the Special Investment Council has removed all departmental hurdles, and all decisions in the interest of the country and the nation have been approved without delay."

He said that the ministry is concurrently establishing a research and development fund to support mobile phone manufacturing companies and facilitate the growth of the mobile phone manufacturing sector.

Dr. Umar Saif said that the first standardized quality test for the 75,000 information technology graduates will be conducted soon. He highlighted significant decisions made to revamp IT education in collaboration with various entities, including HEC, the National Computing Accreditation Council, the Examination Testing Council, the Pakistan Software Export Board, and the Pakistan Software Houses Association. Dr. Saif said students who successfully pass the test will be offered job opportunities through the Industry Placement Program.



KARACHI: The Caretaker Federal Minister for Energy Mohammed Ali speaking in a session on 'The Big Picture: Future of Pakistan' of 15th Karachi Literature Festival at a local hotel. APP

## Mushahid in Moscow welcomes 'Russian goodwill for Pakistan', hopes Pakistan can join BRICS with Russian support, Pakistan core interests linked to region

VOM Report

MOSCOW: Senator Mushahid Hussain, Chairman Senate Defense Committee, is visiting Russia on the invitation of the ruling 'United Russia' party, during which he met Former President Dmitri Medvedev (who's number two to President Putin) and Foreign Minister Lavrov. He also attended the newly-formed International Forum for 'Freedom of Nations' where he was elected as Member of the Forum's 20-member Standing Committee.

The Forum was organized by the United Russia party. Senator Hussain Co-Chaired the Forum's plenary session where Foreign Minister Lavrov spoke and Senator Hussain had a comprehensive exchange with former President Dmitri Medvedev, now Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of Russia. Senator Hussain and Dmitri Medvedev discussed Pakistan-Russia relations, the situation in Afghanistan, the war in Gaza and the 'unlimited possibilities for Pakistan-Russian collaboration in the region, particularly on energy & economic connectivity', adding 'Pakistan core interests are linked to this region, where Russia is a key factor'.

Senator Hussain told Mr Medvedev that the probable election of President Trump in the US Presidential elections in November 2024 would qualitatively change the region's geopolitics. Senator Hussain said he found 'tremendous goodwill' for Pakistan in all official and popular circles in Moscow.

During the visit Senator Mushahid Hussain also delivered a lecture at the Russian Diplomatic Academy, the first prominent Pakistani to be invited to address the Diplomatic Academy in 50 years. The topic of the talk



was 'Pakistan and the changing regional scenario'. Senator Hussain during his talk also highlighted the fact that there's 'no fundamental conflict of interest' between Pakistan and Russia, therefore, 'Pakistan has remained neutral on Ukraine, abstaining on voting in the United Nations on this issue'.

He welcomed growing relations between Pakistan and Russia especially in the field of energy, connectivity, education, regional security including Afghanistan and cooperation at multilateral fora including SCO and UN. He also expressed optimism on Pakistan joining BRICS with Russian cooperation, as Russia is Chair of BRICS in 2024.

He said in the future 4 Muslim Middle Powers-Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia & Turkey, would play a decisive role in regional affairs. He also appreciated President Putin's stance on Islamophobia. The lecture was followed by a question and answer session from the students of the diplomatic academy. Sen-

ator Mushahid Hussain also met Senator Chizhov, President of the Russia-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Group. Senator Mushahid Hussain also met leading members of the small Pakistani community in Moscow plus had several interviews with the Russian media. Giving his impressions of his visit to Russia, Senator Mushahid Hussain met three fundamental points: a) both countries have 'Strategic Space' after ending of foreign intervention in Afghanistan, to build relations anew in various fields; b) Pakistan needs 'Regional Reset' in its foreign relations to take substantial initiatives for regional connectivity with Russia and other neighbouring countries; c) China is a common factor of unity & connectivity for Pakistan and Russia given both countries have close strategic ties with Beijing. Senator Mushahid Hussain was also invited to be part of International Observers who will visit to observe Presidential Elections during March 15-17, 2024.

## Minister for streamlining economic system to resolve power crises

KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Energy Mohammed Ali on Sunday stressed the need for streamlining economic system to resolve and contain power crises in the country. Speaking in a session on 'The Big Picture: Future of Pakistan' of 15th Karachi Literature Festival, he said, 'We have to correct our economic system.'

He said that the country was facing many challenges including energy, gas, education, water and climate change.

'The minister said that the good governance was key to economic growth. He further said we have to empower people. Federal Banks Ombudsman Sirajuddin Aziz, CEO Infra Zamin Pakistan Maheen Rahman and President Habib University Wasif Rizvi also spoke on the occasion.

## EC announced names of 91 successful candidates in KP

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Election Commission on Sunday announced the names of the successful candidates of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly here. According to a notification issued by the Election Commission has been released the list of all successful 91 candidates after holding the election on Feb 8, 2024, said the notification. However, the announcement of success of the successful candidates of 8 constituencies of Peshawar could not be issued. The announcement of 22 constituencies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was not issued due to challenging the results in the court of law.

## Gala dinner hosted to celebrate Pak-China friendship, bilateral relations with Turkey

KARACHI: K H A Business and International Relations hosted a dinner in honor of the Consulate General of China, Yang Yundong, and the Consul General of Turkey, Cemal Sangu, to celebrate Pak-China friendship marking the completion of 73 years of diplomatic relations and also to celebrate the New Year of China. A cake-cutting ceremony was held during the event. Among the attendees were the President of K.H.A Business and International Relations, CEO Kafel Hussain Group, renowned architect Kafel Hussain, Consul General of Oman Engineer Sami Al Khanjari, Consul General of Indonesia Dr. June Kuncoro Hadiningrat, Consul General of Malaysia Herman Hadyinata Ahmad, Consul General of Japan Hattori Masaru, Diplomats from Qatar, UAE and Indonesia, President Pakistan Tax Bar Association Anwar Kashif Mumtaz, President Karachi Business Forum and Think Tank Rashid Ahmed Siddiqui, along with other prominent business personalities and dignitaries of the city. APP

## Matters settled, Pakistan People's Party agree to join the federal cabinet

### The positions of President & Speaker of National Assembly will be given to PPP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) have reached consensus over establishing a stable democratic government, which is imperative for the nation. The matters have been settled and PPP has agreed to become part of the federal cabinet. The positions of President and Speaker of National Assembly will be given to PPP. Two or three ministries will also be given to Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in Punjab government.

According to a private TV channel, for chairman senate, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Chaudhry Azam Nazir Tarar Advocate is the strong candidate; meanwhile PPP could again nominate Raja Pervez Ashraf for Speaker National Assembly position. The

agreement has been reached during a meeting of coordination committees of both the parties in Islamabad. During the meeting, several proposals regarding government formation were deliberated.

Both parties have agreed to meet again tomorrow (Monday) to further discuss recommendations and finalize their decisions. Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Senator Azam Nazir Tarar and Malik Muhammad Ahmed Khan represented the PML-N at the meeting.

The Pakistan People's Party was represented by Syed Murad Ali Shah, Qamar Zaman Kaira, Saeed Ghani, Nadeem Afzal Chan, Nawab Sana Ullah Zehri, Shuja Khan, and Sardar Bahadur Khan Sehara. SABAH

## President summons Senate session on today



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi has summoned the Senate session tomorrow on February 19 (today) Monday at 3 PM.

The president summoned the session of the Senate in the exercise of the powers conferred by clause (1) of Article 54 of the Constitution, said a notification issued by the Senate Secretariat.

The Senate was likely to take up questions, calling attention to notices, legislative business, and matters of public importance. INP

## Pakistan's earns \$1,454m from IT services' export in 6 months

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US \$1,454.881 million by providing different Information Technology (IT) services to various countries during the first six months of the current fiscal year 2023-24. This shows a growth of 8.98 per cent as compared with the US \$1,334.969 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the last fiscal year 2022-23, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. During the months under review, the export of computer services grew by 10.32 per cent as it surged from US \$1,064.579 million last year to US \$1,174.481 million during July-December 2023-24. Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed a nominal decrease of 180 per cent, from US \$3,394 million to US \$3,333 million this year while the export of hardware consultancy services surged by 3.401 per cent, from US \$391.570 million to US \$404.875 million.

The export of repair and maintenance services however decreased by 39.15 per cent from US \$1,530 million to US \$0,930 million whereas the

export and imports of computer software services surged by 2.79 per cent, from \$302.376 million to \$310.807 million.

Meanwhile, the export of information services during the months under review dipped by 19.72 per cent from US \$2,180m to US \$1,750 m. Among the information services, the exports of information-related services increased by 3.64 per cent, from US \$0.687m to US \$0.712m whereas the exports of news agency services however decreased by 30.48 per cent, from US \$1.493m to US \$1.038m. The export of telecommunication services increased by 3.89 per cent as these went down from US \$268.0210 million to US \$278.650 million, the data revealed. Among the telecommunication services, the export of call centres services increased by 12.14 per cent during the months as its exports increased from US \$107.006 million to US \$119.994 million whereas the export of other telecommunication services witnessed a decrease of 1.58 per cent, from US \$161.204 million to US \$158.656 million during this year, the PBS data revealed. INP

## Humanity's salvation lies in making a positive contribution, Jamal Shah

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Syed Jamal Shah is a renowned visual artist. He has used the Murgha symbolically in most paintings to create an ambience of lampooning, remorse, and mounting struggle. The Minister believes that humanity's salvation lies in making a positive contribution towards the well-being of the less fortunate, who are devoid of daily bread and healthcare.

Acclaimed Miniature Painting Ustad Bashir Ahmed inaugurated Jamal Shah's set of works titled 'Celebration of a Dehumanized Existence' at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts. The collection, which bears universal interpretation transcending peace, positivity, and harmony, was praised for its profound symbolism and message. Mr. Shah's paintings and sculptures are



about themes so inquisitorial, soul-searching, and heartbreaking that it seems almost trite to describe his subject matter. His work inserts itself into the viewer's consciousness through the way he seems to fumble towards an understanding of how he should respond to the world he lives in. The return to painting reaffirms Shah's belief in the permanence and intellectual nature of the medium, and the

that the painted image necessitates a singular, uncompromising confrontation between the viewer and the object. He has been almost unique in reinventing the paradigm of socialist painting. Consequently, his account of the imagery focuses attention on the notion that the combined images present a history of the working class – the dispossessed and the disenfranchised. Hence, the new body of

paintings offers a memoir of the victory of British colonialism and reflects on the decline of working-class identity in confrontation with the right-wing programs. It is clear that these paintings, titled 'Celebration of a Dehumanized Existence,' on show at PNCA National Art Gallery, Islamabad, are a response to a particular set of historical circumstances. This helps explain both the polemics and the urgency of the imagery. In the first instance, Shah has saturated the pictures with symbols, allusions, and questions. There are the recurring emblems of working-class struggle: the spade and the axe, the monkeys, and labor cast as a murgha – a stress position used as corporal punishment. The punished assumes the position of a rooster, by squatting and then looping the arms behind the knees and firmly holding the ears. The figures take their cue from an earlier installation titled Situations 101, created for the Karachi Biennale 2017, and later re-installed at the

PNCA, Islamabad, that conflated the human figure with social realism as public art. The language of culture and art, he reckons, is an effective and equitable platform that gives voice and intellectual emancipation to the people.

In his welcome remarks, M. Ayoub Jamali, Director General PNCA, expressed his deep honor in hosting the first solo exhibition of Mr. Jamal Shah at the National Art Gallery. He described the show as amazing and emphasized the importance of showcasing Shah's work in a national space.

In his speech Mr. Jamal Shah, said "As an artist, my work is a reflection of the society I live in. It is an attempt to engage in a dialogue with my fellow human beings, to explore and confront the contradictions and struggles that exist within our society. Through my paintings, sculptures, and ceramic pieces, I hope to initiate a dialogue that can engage people towards the

best possible path for our society. I believe that art has a responsibility to serve humanity, to contribute to the betterment of society.

Ultimately, the goal of any creative individual is to achieve a level of existence that can be called aesthetic, where truth prevails over deception, and where there is total transparency. My work is a reflection of this struggle, and I hope that it can serve as a catalyst for positive change in our world.

Ustad Bashir Ahmed, renowned miniature artist of Pakistan and also the teacher of Mr. Jamal Shah was the Chief Guest while speaking at the occasion said that Jamal Shah's expression harbors neither riddles nor mystery and is spiritedly decipherable by almost any segment of society. The works portray the inherent urge of human beings to interact, notwithstanding differences and misgivings, creating crossroads between cultures, he added.

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## Fixing energy to fix growth

AMMAR HABIB KHAN

Pakistan is stuck in a low-growth trap. Consumption makes up almost 100 per cent of GDP, largely financed by imports, while the investment-to-GDP ratio continues to hover around 12 per cent, much lower than regional peers, and other economies at similar income levels. The population continues to grow at 2.5 per cent annually, effectively increasing consumption requirements annually, while our ability to produce either stays flat or diminishes.

We continue to consume more, while not producing much. The inability to produce at competitive prices, to either consume locally or export, results in greater reliance on imports, which necessitates the availability of foreign currency. Effectively, economic growth remains beholden to the availability of foreign currency (mostly through debt) to drive consumption. In the absence of foreign currency to drive import-financed consumption, the economic growth rate remains sub-optimal, and barely even covers the population growth rate – which effectively means that on a per capita basis, incomes continue to decline. As the population continues to grow, and the labour force continues to expand, there will be a dire need to create job opportunities for it. In the absence of investment in industrial capacities to enhance production, it will be difficult to generate such jobs.

The most fundamental factor required to increase production competitively is affordable energy. The unavailability of affordable energy has led to a scenario where it is not economically feasible to produce in the country, and increase exports. Any investment to establish industrial units also relies heavily on affordable energy. Without affordable energy, the business case to invest in the country is dismal at best and is worsened by an uncertain and volatile political environment.

The first intervention that is required to unlock growth is making energy more affordable. Electricity consumption on a per capita basis has remained unchanged in the last five years, as higher prices have discouraged consumption by both households and producers alike, eventually leading to sub-par economic growth. If prices continue to increase as per the status quo, producers will continue to move off the grid, and so will consumers who can, eventually leading to even more expensive electricity. This self-destructive loop needs to be broken, and that can only be done by optimizing electricity prices for economic growth, rather than for accounting identities as served through the prevailing cost-plus mechanism.

The cost of generation for Pakistan has been improving over the years and is fairly low through a mix of reliance on indigenous resources, such as coal, as well as hydel, and nuclear. The price of electricity is largely a function of fuel payments, capacity payments, transmission & distribution payments, and taxes and other charges mandated by the government. It is estimated that fuel charges make up around 18 per cent of electricity price, while capacity payments make up another 20 per cent, followed by transmission & distribution charges at 25 per cent, and taxes and other payments at 36 per cent. In this break-up, fuel charges and capacity price are influenced by PKR-USD parity – as PKR depreciates, these charges increase. As these charges increase, so do the tax payments, thereby exacerbating the cycle.

Government taxes and charges making up more than one-third of electricity price effectively make the electricity price a fiscal policy tool. On the one hand, the government wants to achieve growth, while on the other, it bridges its perpetual fiscal deficit through taxes on electricity consumption, thereby restricting growth.

Through such a structure, the government, whether by design or inadvertently, has created a structure where an expansionary fiscal policy for non-productive segments is financed by a contractionary fiscal policy for productive segments. Effectively, as government expenditures increase (through an expansionary fiscal policy), the same is partially funded by an increase in taxes on electricity prices, which results in a contraction in production (mimicking a contractionary fiscal policy). As an expansionary fiscal policy stimulates consumption, this inadvertently leads to PKR depreciation, which further increases electricity prices, and reduces consumption even further, thereby further reducing production. The government through its overarching influence has made electricity prices an economic policy tool, without realizing the same. This contradictory link needs to be broken. Taxes and other government charges embedded in electricity prices need to be reduced, while the fiscal deficit that emerges needs to be plugged through more rigorous tax policy (which actually engages in direct taxation, rather than lazy indirect taxation). Reducing electricity prices will eventually result in a pick-up in consumption of electricity, and eventually production, which can stimulate growth. As growth increases, so does the overall economic pie, and eventually taxes. However, restricting growth, just so more taxes can be collected will be akin to killing the hen that lays golden eggs – in this case, even the golden eggs have lost their aura, and then the hen is already dying. This is the quickest fix that the government can do, by delinking fiscal policy from electricity prices. Another intervention that can further delink PKR depreciation from electricity tariffs, is swapping out the foreign currency debt of power producers, with local currency debt – such that any dollar-based indexation of electricity prices can be avoided. The objective here is to optimize electricity prices such that electricity consumption can increase, inadvertently increasing production. If the status quo continues, electricity prices will only increase further, making it more expensive, while further restraining production. It is time to have a plan for economic growth in place, and this cannot be done without enabling the availability of affordable electricity.

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Dr Naazir Mahmood

# The powerful four

its people. For any new government in Pakistan to effect a transformation that could have a positive impact on the people of Pakistan, there will be a need to rejig the four major ministries and their priorities that must be different from the policies that the Pakistani state has been following for decades. A repetition of the same policies and priorities and the dominance of the same forces will keep producing the same results that have been disappointing for the people of Pakistan, to say the least. So what are the changes that must take place? Let's begin with the defence ministry which has seen 32 defence ministers in the past 77 years with an average of just 2.5 years for each. In the 24

people who actually end up paying for both: debt and defence. These two heads are mostly non-productive expenses that we must revise and revisit to reflect any change in our policies to take Pakistan out of its economic shambles. But no defence policy – and the resultant finance policy – can change unless there is a change in foreign policy. That brings us to the million-dollar question of normalizing relations with our neighbours. Pakistan has had topsy-turvy relations with nearly all its neighbours sharing long borders. With Pakistan's total border length stretching over 6,000km, Pakistan shares with China around 500km. Other than that, our relations

the US bidding. SM Qureshi turned hostile in the cypher case and is now in jail. But overall, Pakistan's foreign policy has not been able to deliver dividends in the shape of friendly relations with its neighbours. Unless that happens, defence spending will keep spiralling and the finance ministry will have little room to manoeuvre.

The finance ministry has had the longest-serving federal ministers such as M Shoaib (eight years under Gen Ayub Khan), Ghulam Ishaq Khan (eight years under Gen Ziaul Haq) and Shaikat Aziz (eight years under Gen Musharraf) and all could not improve the lot of the people of Pakistan apart from claiming some growth in GDP. This proves that the so-called stability under military dictatorships did not produce the desired results for various reasons – such as an increased concentration of wealth in the hands of the elite, and civil and military bureaucracy. This finally needs to change.

Finally, the interior ministry has also had long-serving federal ministers such as Abdul Qayyum Khan (five years with Z A Bhutto), Mahmood Haroon (six years with Gen Ziaul Haq), Maj-Gen Naseerullah three years (with Benazir Bhutto) Rehman Malik (five years with Zardari), and Ch Nisar Ali (four years with Nawaz Sharif).

All failed to reduce internal conflicts in society by negotiation and reconciliation. Be it problems in Balochistan, erstwhile Fata, or Karachi, the interior ministry – either on its own or under somebody else' command – has nearly always appeared paralyzed. To top it all we had interior ministers such as Ijaz Ahmed and Sheikh Rasheed.

With Imran Khan, they pushed Pakistani society to the brink. All this shows that we need much more capable and intelligent ministers for defence, finance, foreign affairs, and interior. In the past, both long-term and short-term appointments failed to make any major changes in the four most significant ministries and their policies and practices. Now is the time to reformulate and embark on a new journey.

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The PML-N and the PPP have taken the right step by aligning together to form the next government. Though there are allegations of stolen mandate from the PTI, it appears to be a regular phenomenon now as no elections in the history of Pakistan have been free from controversies. The PTI has emerged as a victim but its track record has been even worse in comparison with other parties that have lost elections in the past due to the undue meddling from certain quarters.

Irrespective of who is to be blamed and who is to reap the benefits of less-than-fair elections, it is time to outline a possible trajectory for the future. There are at least four ministries in any government that bear the brunt of policymaking and ultimately affect people and their wellbeing.

These are the ministries for defence, finance, foreign affairs, and interior. Though other ministries such as education and health have a direct bearing on people's lives, they have become more or less provincial matters and the federation has little to do with them. Indirectly, all federal and provincial ministries depend on the four major ministries and their decisions at the federal level.

The defence and finance ministries are perhaps the most significant and the other two – foreign and interior – appear to take their shape in the light of the decisions taken by the defence and finance ministries.

No matter which party comes to power, the four major ministries have followed a similar path through decades. This is perhaps because these ministries have rarely been under independent civilian control in Pakistan. Even if the ministers have been civilians, their steps have been betrayed an influence of forces not entirely under their control.

This is one reason for Pakistan's declining fortunes and the constant mess it finds itself in. The facade keeps changing but there has hardly been any major change that could herald a new era for the country and

## There are at least four ministries in any government that bear the brunt of policymaking and ultimately affect people and their wellbeing

years from 1947 to 1971, there were 11 defence ministers – most of them were also the head of government.

Out of the first 24 years of Pakistan, for 14 years the defence ministry was under the direct control of not a politician but uniformed defence personnel. General Ayub Khan was defence minister for nine years (in two separate terms), Admiral Afzal Rehman for three years, and Gen Yahya Khan for another three.

In the two wars of 1965 and 1971 – up until the dismemberment of Pakistan after a crushing defeat in the 1971 war – the defence ministry remained under Gen Ayub Khan and Gen Yahya Khan. These two wars – and the blunders before and after these wars – set the course for a defence policy that no civil or military government in the past 50 years has been able to change.

In the 21st century, we have had civilian defence ministers such as Ahmed Mukhtar, Khawaja Asif, and Parvez Khattak but their performances have had nothing remarkable to display. What we do – or do not do – in defence, directly affects our decisions in financial allocations. Two of Pakistan's major outlays in every budget are for debt servicing and defence. That leaves little room for the development and welfare of the

with Afghanistan, India, and Iran have remained strained to varying degrees.

It is easier to blame others and shift responsibilities but it is harder to acknowledge one's acute sense of insecurity, backdoor conflicts, and devious efforts. Fundamental change is the need of the hour to normalize relations with neighbours without pinning blame on them.

Our Afghan policy has been backfiring for over 40 years now; India has emerged in our textbooks as an 'eternal enemy'; Iran has not been one of our favourites since the dark days of Gen Ziaul Haq. From Zafarullah Khan (seven years), Manzur Qadir (four years), and Z A Bhutto (eight years in two terms) to Lt-Gen Sahibzada Yaqub Khan (nearly nine years in three terms), Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri (five years) Sartaj Aziz (five years in two terms) and Shah Mahmood Qureshi (seven years in two terms) nearly all foreign ministers followed – or had to follow – a similar policy.

While Zafarullah Khan and Manzur Qadir were instrumental in placing Pakistan in the US fold, Z A Bhutto tried a slightly neutral policy. Then Yaqub Khan and KM Kasuri – serving under Gen Zia and Gen Musharraf respectively – once again did mostly

Disclaimer: Views expressed by writers in this section are their own and do not necessarily reflect The Asian Telegraph's point-of-view

## Today in History

### Pakistan

#### TOWARDS A SEPARATE MUSLIM HOMELAND

The 1930s witnessed awareness among the Muslims of their separate identity and their anxiety to preserve it within separate territorial boundaries. An important element that brought this

simmering Muslim nationalism in the open was the character of the Congress rule in the Muslim minority provinces during 1937-39. The Congress policies in these provinces hurt Muslim susceptibilities. There were calculated aims to obliterate the Muslims as a separate cultural unit. The Muslims now stopped

thinking in terms of seeking safeguards and began to consider seriously the demand for a separate Muslim state. During 1937-39, several Muslim leaders and thinkers, inspired by Allama Iqbal's ideas, presented elaborate schemes for partitioning the subcontinent according to two-nation theory.

#### PAKISTAN RESOLUTION

The All-India Muslim League soon took these schemes into consideration and finally, on March 23, 1940, the All-India Muslim League, in a resolution, at its historic Lahore Session.

To be continued....

# Henry Cavill 'accepts' mystery role in MCU; fans pour in wild guesses

Henry Cavill has been reportedly hired by Marvel franchise after losing his contract with DC

Henry Cavill fans have been sent into a frenzy following reports the actor will be joining the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The 40-year-old actor has reportedly been tapped to play esteemed villain from Marvel Comics, Doctor Doom in the franchise. Journalist Matt Reeves took to X, formerly Twitter, to tease the casting in a post earlier this week. "From the greatest superhero Superman, to our greatest Marvel villain Doctor Doom...Henry Cavill," posted Matt Reeves alongside a photo of Marvel boss Kevin Feige at the Comic Con. "Nah this would be the most insane casting announcement probably of all time #TheFantasticFour," he added.



Film insider, who goes by username @MyTimeToShineHello on the social media platform corroborated the enlistment of Cavill to the franchise, however, denied his casting as Dr. Doom. "He was offered something else and he accepted," they quote-tweeted Reeves' post. Fans rallied in to weigh in on the potential casting, with their guesses varying from Hyperion, an Eternal, X-Men's Cyclops or Sentry and Captain Britain. Should the rumour bears fruition, it will be a major blow for MCU rival franchise, DC who abruptly terminated the actor's contract as Superman following the leadership overhaul in 2022.

# Ancient viruses helped shape our bodies, brain millions of years ago: study



Remember the time when COVID-19 locked us all in? Well, according to scientists, viruses are critical in bringing about a change in human nature, Science Alert reported. Similarly, millions of years ago, vertebrates were infected by a virus, which played an important role in the evolution of human beings and the development of brains and human bodies. The study, published in the Journal Cell, explored the beginnings of myelin, an insulating layer of fatty tissue that surrounds neurons and speeds up electrical impulses. According to the researchers, the formation of myelin depends on a gene sequence derived from retroviruses that

invade the DNA of its host and has been found in fish, amphibians, and contemporary mammals.

Neuroscientist and senior author Robin Franklin of Altos Labs-Cambridge Institute of Science said, "The thing I find most remarkable is that all of the diversity of modern vertebrates that we know of and the size they've achieved, elephants, giraffes, anacondas, buffaloes, and condors, wouldn't have happened if it weren't for viruses."

This finding is a breakthrough in itself, as viruses were generally considered a nuisance to society; however, the truth is much more complicated. Over history, retroviruses have inserted themselves into the genomes of numerous animals and been integrated into their reproductive cells, enabling them to be passed on to succeeding generations.

One of the most well-known instances is the placenta, which is one of the traits that most mammals share. It was acquired from a disease that was ingrained in our genome millions of years ago.

## Health

# Animal or plant source — which protein helps lose weight faster?

People are more concerned than ever with reaching their protein targets but where your protein comes from is just as essential as how much of it you consume. The body requires protein to function, and it may be found in a wide range of foods, from tofu to low-fat dairy. But not every source of protein is made equal. In general, there are two ways that people can obtain protein: either from plant-based sources like nuts, lentils, beans, or whole grains, or from animal sources like chicken, fish, and eggs. Furthermore, despite the fact that most people identify protein with meat, experts suggest that plant-based solutions can be the healthiest choice, especially for those trying to control or reduce weight. "The data has started to demonstrate more and

more that plant protein is equally efficacious in terms of providing the nourishment needed for the human body," Amanda Velazquez, MD, director of obesity medicine at Cedars-Sinai, told Health. "With plant-based protein, there's more benefits as a whole compared to animal protein." Experts concur that obtaining protein from plant sources is generally better for the body as a whole. To start, compared to animal protein, plant-based protein sources typically contain more fibre. "When it comes to weight loss, it's especially important to be not only having high protein in the diet, but also a high fibre diet," said Velazquez. "Animal protein is not going to have as high fibre as plant-based proteins." According to Amber Schaefer, MS, RDN, clinical nutrition lead and nutrition instructor at the Mayo

Clinic College of Medicine and Science, while plant-based protein may be the best choice, this does not imply that a person must become a vegetarian or vegan right once. Instead, whenever you can, create substitutions. "We do recommend at least getting three servings of some form of legume, whether that be lentils or chickpeas, or if you like, beans," said Schaefer. "Just switching out maybe the red meat from that week so you're reducing the amount of saturated fat that you're getting." In general, people should try "leaning towards plant-based proteins," Velazquez said, but leaner proteins such as fish, seafood, chicken, and turkey are also good options if people do want to stick with some animal protein. "The important thing to know is that quality matters," she said.





## Country needs political & economic stability, says Shehbaz

Says they took country out of crisis in past & now will strengthen it again

ISLAMABAD: President Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has said that the country needs political and economic stability. He said they took the country out of crisis in the past and now will strengthen it again. Shehbaz Sharif expressed these views while meeting with former federal minister for religious affairs and newly-elected member of National Assembly Sardar Muhammad Yousaf Zaman. On this occasion, Prof. Sajjad Qamar and Abbas Hussain were also present. Shehbaz Sharif congratulated Sardar Muhammad Yousaf and said that he is well-known personality of the area and remains in close in touch with the people. He said that Pakistan Muslim League has played important role in the progress and development of the country.

During the previous period, they had two options either to see their own reputation or safeguard the country and they selected the second option, he said. "Likewise the past God-willing we will take the country out of crisis," he noted.

Sardar Muhammad Yousaf congratulated Shehbaz Sharif for his success from two constituencies and being nominated as the prime minister, terming him an asset of the country. He further said that Shehbaz Sharif will play his vital role to tackle the situation the country is facing nowadays. He further said all the mega projects were executed during the government of PML and now it will take the country out of anarchy under the leadership of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. Prof. Sajjad also congratulated Shehbaz Sharif for being nominated as the prime minister of the country and said that he would take the country out of inflation and unemployment. SABAH

## Fly Jinnah inaugurates first int'l flight connecting Islamabad & Sharjah

KARACHI: Pakistan's low-cost carrier, Fly Jinnah celebrated the inaugural flight of its first international route from Islamabad, Pakistan, to Sharjah, UAE with a dual ceremony at Islamabad International Airport before departure and at Sharjah International Airport, where the aircraft received a warm welcome upon arrival. The inaugural flight carried onboard Fly Jinnah's senior leadership along with a group of travel agents, media, and social media personalities among others. The inaugural ceremony at Sharjah International Airport was welcomed with a traditional water cannon salute and followed by a welcome ceremony at Sharjah Airport attended by Pakistan's Ambassador in the UAE, Faisal Niaz Tirmizi in addition to senior management representing Sharjah International Airport and Air Arabia. Speaking on the occasion, the spokesperson of Fly Jinnah said: "Yesterday marked a significant milestone for Fly Jinnah as we inaugurated our first international flight after a successful year of domestic operations. INP



LARKANA: Delegation members of Japanese tourists visiting the world famous archeological site of Moen-Jo-Daro. APP

## FAFEN urges ECP to audit election results, proposes three-stage methodology

ISLAMABAD: The Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) has proposed a three-stage methodology for the audit of election results, urging the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to scrutinize the results of constituencies that have been duly challenged by political parties and candidates at the appropriate legal fora using data analytics and forensics to establish the legitimacy of the outcome of General Election (GE) 2024. Such an audit must include representatives nominated by the political parties concerned as well as independent observers to ensure the transparency and credibility of the process.

FAFEN has been advocating since 2013 for the Election Commission to conduct scrutiny of results of all constituencies before the notification of winners in an effort to strengthen the integrity of election outcomes and to minimize the post-election disputes that linger on in election tribunals beyond legally stipulated deadlines.

The post-GE-2024 situation warrants an urgent and prompt response by the Election Commission to ascertain the veracity of the claims of illegals and irregularities by political parties and candidates, and as a prerequisite to establish that the GE-2024 results truly reflect the will of the people.

FAFEN's proposed audit was a technical investigation that was purely based on the physical evidence i.e. official election documentation available with the Election Commission under Section 99 of the Elections Act, 2017. These documents include: tamper-evident bags containing (a) the packets containing the ballot papers each of which shall be sealed with the seal of the Presiding Officer or, if opened by the Returning Officer, with the seal of the

Returning Officer; (b) the packets containing the counterfoils of issued ballot papers; (c) the packets containing the marked copies of the electoral rolls used in the poll; (d) the packets containing the Ballot Paper Account; (e) the packets containing results of the count, provisional and final consolidated statement of results of the count and final consolidated results; (f) the packets containing the Tenders Tendered Ballot Papers included in the count; the Tendered Ballot Papers excluded from the count; the Challenged Ballot Papers included in the count; the Challenged Ballot Papers excluded from the count; the Challenged Votes List; and the Spoilt Ballot Papers; and (g) such other papers as the Commission may direct. FAFEN's election result audit methodology comprises the following three stages:

The first stage involves assessing the availability, authentication, completeness and correctness of the election documentation including the result forms, and the consistency of information within and amongst these forms.

The second stage involves ascertainment of material effect of unverified forms on election outcome and taking corrective action.

The third stage involves determination of the omission and commission and accountability of election officials. For the conduct of election, the Commission performs its duties through its staff as well as with the support of the human resources taken from the executive and judiciary. The extensive logistical undertaking involved in conducting general elections for both federal and provincial assemblies requires the deployment of hundreds of thousands of officials seconded by the federal and provincial governments. For

GE-2024, nearly 1.5 million election and polling officials were appointed. These officials managed the election operations including the counting, tabulation, and consolidation of results, which has led to controversies and disputes.

The election process entails an exhaustive list of forms to be maintained to document every step of the process including the results. This documentation establishes an entire trail of the results to refer to in case of any controversy. However, these forms are never referred to after their preparation, save in case of an election petition that also remains undecided in many cases for several years.

Since most challenges to election results revolve around Form-45 and their subsequent consolidation, FAFEN urges the ECP to also clarify the legality of multiple copies of the forms that are generated on the Election Day. Under Election Act, 2017 and corresponding rules, there are multiple copies of Form 45: 1) copy sealed by the Presiding Officer in a tamper-evident bag that is placed in the bag of election material; 2) picture of Form-45 transmitted by the Presiding Officer to the Returning Officer through mobile app; 3) original copy sealed in a tamper-evident bag by the Presiding Officer for physically delivering it to the Returning Officer; 4) copy that is affixed by the Presiding Officer outside the polling stations; 5) copy that is retained by the Presiding Officer for own record; 6) copy sealed in a tamper-evident bag by the Presiding Officer for dissemination to the District Election Commissioner; 7) copies that are given by the Presiding Officer to polling agents at the polling stations; and 8) copy that is given by the Presiding Officer to the observer. INP

## Bilawal Bhutto says Asif Ali Zardari would be the PPP's nominee for the presidency

Urges fellow politicians to prioritise the interests of the people over their own

THATTA: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari declared on Sunday that former president and party co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari would be the PPP's nominee for the presidency, vowing that Zardari would bring unity to the country and address the pressing issues facing its citizens. Speaking at a rally in Thatta, Bilawal emphasised Asif Zardari's potential role in extinguishing the "fire of hatred" and safeguarding the nation's unity, particularly in light of the PPP's recent electoral success, notably in Sindh province. "I had no stubbornness to sit on the prime minister's chair. I contested for you, for my people," Bilawal stated, highlighting the challenges Pakistan faces, including inflation reaching record levels and the prevalence of divisive politics.

PPP chairman urged fellow politicians to prioritise the interests of the people over their own, lamenting the detrimental impact of self-serving politics on the federation and its provinces. "All political parties should ponder over Pakistan's future rather than their individual gains," he remarked, addressing the ongoing protests against election results and the prevalence of rigging allegations. Regarding the PPP's approach to addressing grievances, Bilawal Bhutto outlined the party's commitment to resolving issues through appropriate channels, including the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), courts, or Parliament, before resorting to protests. "We aim to tackle the challenges faced by the people, particularly flood victims in Balochistan and Sindh," he asserted, underlining the party's dedication to serving the populace. Rejecting offers of power-sharing arrangements by PML-N, Bilawal affirmed that the PPP's focus remained on addressing the people's concerns rather than securing ministerial positions. "I was offered that they [PML-N] make their prime minister for the first three years, and I become prime minister for the next two, but I refused. We don't work for ourselves but for the people," he stated firmly, emphasising the importance of democratic principles and accountability. SABAH



MULTAN: Security official checking spectators during the PSL 9 T20 match between Multan Sultans and Karachi Kings at Multan Cricket Stadium. APP

## Contribution of Nawab Sadiq in promotion of education commendable: Baligh

BAHAWALPUR: Governor of Punjab and Chairman of the Board of Governors of Sadiq Public School, Muhammad Baligh ur Rehman has paid rich tribute to contributions of Sir Sadiq Muhammad Khan Abbasi for promotion of education in the country.

This was stated by him while speaking as chief guest of 70th Founders Day (Platinum Jubilee) of Sadiq Public School here on Sunday. Addressing the participants, Muhammad Balighur Rehman mentioned, "Sadiq Public School reflects the vision, dedication, and determination of Sir Sadiq Muhammad Khan Abbasi, who is a great humanitarian responsible for the establishment of this unparalleled institution for great educational purposes and contributed with resources, effort, steps, and words of cooperation."

He said, "This institution can take pride in its glorious traditions and remarkable past. Prominent personalities who have graduated from this institution have excelled in every field of life. Even today, I see many outstanding individ-

uals in this ceremony who have acquired education from this great alma mater."

Governor Punjab said, "All this is due to the significant historical role of this school, which the nation expects will continue to produce individuals of high caliber and maintain the highest standards of moral, intellectual, and physical education that are the hallmark of Sadiq."

He said, "His connection with Sadiq Public School is longstanding. As the Chairman of the Board of Governors, it is a heavy responsibility for him to play a role in the betterment of this institution."

"Sadiq has played a crucial role in bringing me to this position," he added.

The governor emphasized the importance of both curricular and extracurricular activities in his speech. Additionally, Governor Punjab stated, "Today's event, the speeches of the head boy and head girl of this great institution, have been extremely impressive." "On the occasion, he congratulated the students, staff, and especially the parents. INP

## Wheel jam strike of four alliance failed, says Achakzai

QUETTA: Caretaker Provincial Information Minister

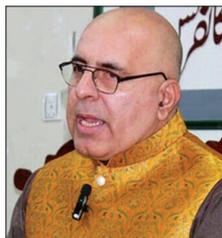
Balochistan Jan Achakzai on Sunday

said that the wheel jam strike of the alliance of 4 parties has failed.

"All major highways are open. Traffic is light on some national highways due to Sunday," he said in a statement issued here.

He deplored that Sardars and Nawabs of Balochistan are punishing the common people to reject the 2024 elections.

He said that the alliance should not harm the welfare of the state and people but should resort to legal forums. The people of Balochistan have rejected ethnic nationalism, CM further maintained. APP



## PPP, PTI, JI, PML-N demand transparent investigation of Commissioner's statement

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and Jamaat-e-Islami have collectively called for an investigation into the statements made by Commissioner Rawalpindi, raising concerns over the integrity of the electoral process.

PML-N's Spokesperson, Maryam Aurangzeb, demanded a thorough investigation into Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chhata's allegations, asserting that accountability should extend to his contacts and activities during the period of the alleged misconduct. Aurangzeb accused the Commissioner of undermining stability in the country. Leaders from the Tehreek-e-Insaf parliamentary party expressed confidence in PTI's ability to lead the government once more, emphasizing the importance of exercising their electoral rights. PTI's Ali Muhammad Khan reiterated the party's stance on claiming its rightful position.

Senior PPP leader, Sherry Rehman, called for Commissioner Rawalpindi to substantiate his claims with evidence, stressing the urgency of a swift investigation into the serious allegations. Newly elected Member of the National Assembly for the People's Party, Shazia Marri, expressed concern over the events of polling day and emphasized the party's commitment to stability and forming a government.

In response to Commissioner Rawalpindi's statements, Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi, Hafiz Naem-ur-Rehman, urged the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to take notice of the matter and establish a high-level committee to investigate. He highlighted ongoing legal battles and demonstrations as part of their efforts to address electoral concerns. As demands for accountability mount, political parties remain vigilant in their pursuit of fair and transparent elections, seeking to uphold democratic principles in Pakistan. INP

## PR collects Rs 74.8 mln from ticketless passengers

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has collected an amount of Rs 74.8 million from ticket-less passengers in a crackdown during the three months with the help of railway police and train staffs.

"Around 58,446 passengers found travelling without tickets in different trains and collected the said amount from them, which is deposited in the official bank account of the department," sources in the Ministry told APP. They said that it was not the first time that action was taken on a large scale against ticket-less passengers, adding that these types of crackdowns had taken place daily.

The sources said that ticketless travelling is illegal, and those who were caught without a ticket were charged a ticket price for the whole journey of the train besides the penalty. Those who do not pay are handed over to the railway police. To a question, they said that Pakistan Railways Police claimed to have arrested a total of 3,923 accused due to their involvement in

violations of rules and laws and also registered some 3,625 cases against them in eight Railways divisions over one year.

"Around 658 cases were registered in Peshawar Division, 577 in Rawalpindi, 1,044 in Lahore, 326 in Mughalpur workshops, 393 in Multan, 208 in Sukkur, 346 in Karachi, and 73 in Quetta Division," they added.

They said the Railways Police Help Desks had been established at all the major railway stations across the country, and the performance of the Railways Police has been quite

satisfactory during the last year. Regarding the performance of the railway police, they said, "Police are performing duties efficiently despite the limited resources, and the performance of the railway police will be further improved to the optimum level during the next year."

They said the Railways Police Help Desks had been established at all the major railway stations across the country, and the performance of the Railways Police has been quite



SIALKOT: Former Minister Defence Khawaja Asif, addressing media persons at his residence at cantt. APP

## UNSC expected to vote on Gaza ceasefire Tuesday, as US again threatens veto

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is expected to vote Tuesday on an Algerian resolution for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Israel's deadly war against Gaza, although the United States again appeared set to block it. Algeria, the only Arab member of the Council, circulated an initial draft resolution more than two weeks ago. But U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Linda Thomas-Greenfield lost no time to say that the Algerian move could jeopardize "sensitive negotiations" aimed at brokering a pause in the war.

The latest version of the text "demands an immediate humanitarian ceasefire that must be respected by all parties." It also "rejects forced displacement of the Palestinian civilian

population," and it "demands the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages." Israel's relentless attacks on Gaza have killed at least 28,775 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and wounded 68,552 since October 7. The Algerian move follows last month's decision by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordering Israel to prevent death, destruction, and any acts of genocide in besieged Gaza. The court asked Israel to do everything it could to "prevent the commission of all acts within the scope" of the Genocide Convention. According to the ruling, Israel must take "all measures within its power to prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide". APP