



Establish a National Task Force dedicated to enhancing Productivity, Quality and Innovation (PQI) across all sectors of the economy for revitalizing Pakistan's economic landscape

Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor
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Ishaq Dar re-affirms the govt's commitment to implementation of the Privatization Programme with transparency, efficiency & whole of govt approach

Chairs meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Privatization



ISLAMABAD: Meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Privatization (CCOP) was held on Friday with the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar in chair. The meeting was also attended by other members of the Committee including the Finance Minister, Minister for Privatization, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Power, Minister for Industries & Production, Minister of State Finance and Revenue besides Federal Secretaries of various Ministries and Division. CCOP was presented with a phased Privatization Programme (2024-29) by the Ministry of Privatization, based on the recommendations of PC Board, in terms of Section 5(b) of the Privatisation Commission Ordinance 2000. The CCOP recommended that priority shall be accorded to reducing Federal Footprint in commercial space and limiting it to the Strategic and Essential SOEs only. CCOP emphasized that even SOEs making profits shall also be considered for privatization. After deliberating on the privatization policy guidelines, CCOP considered 84 SOEs reflected in the Federal Footprint State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) Consolidated Report FY2020-22 in detail in light of SOE Act and Policy. CCOP, while approving 24 entities for the Privatization Programme (2024-29), decided that inclusion of other SOEs in privatization programme will be taken upon completion of the review by the Cabinet Committee on State-Owned Enterprises (CCoSEs) regarding categorization of Strategic/Essential SOEs. The entities not categorized as strategic or essential will be placed before CCOP for decision regarding their inclusion in the Programme. CCOP also considered the proposal for transfer of shares of OGDCL lying with Privatization Commission to Sovereign Wealth Fund or Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division). It was decided that status-quo may be maintained for the time being. In addition, the CCOP granted approval for the Budget Estimates of the Commission for the fiscal year 2024-25, amounting to Rs. 8,169 million. The Chairman while concluding the meeting re-affirmed the government's commitment to implementation of the Privatization Programme with transparency, efficiency and whole of government approach. He emphasized the importance of support and cooperation from all stakeholders in implementation of the programme. SABAH



ISLAMABAD: A high level delegation of Chinese experts calls on PM Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Public fury to boil over if zionist state not held accountable for bloodshed in Palestine: PM warns

Reducing electricity prices a top priority for PML-N, allies: PM

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday strongly condemning the unabated bloodshed of Palestinian people by the Israeli occupation forces and the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, warned that the lava of public anger would get out of control if the Zionist state was not held accountable. "The Zionist state has crossed all the limits of crimes... The lava of public anger is boiling... If justice does not prevail and the Zionist state killing innocent people is not held to account, the lava of public fury will be in no one's control. It will risk the annihilation of world's peace and development," the prime minister said addressing the National Assembly after the House unanimously passed a resolution calling Haniyeh's killing a 'deliberate conspiracy to sabotage' Gaza ceasefire efforts and condemning the ongoing Israeli "state oppression and brutality" in Gaza. The prime minister, who earlier also highlighted the issue in the cabinet meeting chaired by him a while ago and coalition parties meeting on Thursday, said the whole Muslim world including the Pakistani nation was grieved over Ismail Haniyeh's killing. Thanking the members from both sides of the aisle for evolving a consensus on the resolution, he said the parliament's voice would

resonate the world over to shock the enemies of Pakistan and strengthen its friends. He highlighted that the Palestinian people were suffering the worst bloodshed by the Zionist state for the last nine months which killed around 40,000 people including thousands of women and children. "The cities have turned into cemeteries. The cries have taken over the joys and smiles of the playing children. Palestine is giving a deserted look," the prime minister said and questioned the inaction and helplessness of the world to end the Israeli oppression. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stated on Friday that the government was focused on providing relief to electricity consumers, as reducing electricity prices was a key agenda for PML-N President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, the government, and its allies. In his initial remarks at the Cabinet meeting, Sharif emphasized that the government needed to lower electricity prices to boost the country's exports. He pointed out that without this reduction, neither the agricultural sector nor the industrial sector could expand effectively. Competitiveness in the industry was directly linked to lower electricity prices, he remarked. Sharif criticized the use of electricity issues for political gain, calling it disrespectful to the public. He highlighted that the nation sought a resolution to this problem. Addressing inefficiencies and corruption within the Federal Bureau

of Revenue (FBR) and the Energy Sector, and making these institutions efficient, would set the country on the right path. He assured that the government was aware of the people's problems and doing its utmost to address them. Shehbaz noted that the PML-N government had resolved the 20-hour daily load-shedding issue. At that time, few were willing to invest significantly in electricity production, with China being the only country showing interest in investing in power generation. In 2015, the prime minister mentioned that some of the fastest power-producing plants in history were installed. The government set up four LNG plants, each with a capacity of 500 MW and a turbine efficiency of 64 percent. Credit for these cost-effective plants went to Nawaz Sharif. At that time, NEPRA's tariff was \$8.5, and the plants were built for just \$450,000. These agreements should not be criticized, as they represented a sincere effort to address Pakistan's most pressing challenge. He instructed ministers and government officials to inform the public about the steps taken by successive PML-N governments to eliminate load-shedding in the country. The government had extended the last date for paying electricity bills by 10 days, said the prime minister. Likewise, the electricity tariff for the country's industry had been reduced by Rs 8.5 per unit. A Rs 170 billion subsidy was being provided to the industry in this regard.

Federal cabinet approves financial assistance package for missing persons' families

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet has approved a financial assistance package for the families of missing persons. The Federal Cabinet has approved a support package of Rs 500,000 per family to provide legal and financial assistance to the heirs of missing persons. The was announced by Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, while briefing the media, about the decisions taken by the Federal Cabinet, which met in Islamabad today with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in the chair. The Law Minister said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced this package in light of the recommendations made by the previous committees on the issue of missing persons. He said the cabinet reviewed the final report of the committees and also approved the constitution of a special committee to examine genuine cases of families in need of support. Azam Nazeer Tarar said this is an amount being given to the families of missing persons and cannot be reclaimed if a person is reunited with his family. He added it has also been directed to do homework on taking relief and legislative measures, which include necessary instructions to the NADRA to take care of issues pertaining to their bank accounts and inheritance. The Law Minister said it has been recommended to take up one thousand out of over two thousand cases, which fall under a legal mechanism and identified by the commission, on a priority basis. He said these cases will be taken up on a first come first serve and beyond a five-year limit basis. Azam Nazeer Tarar further said finger-pointing is usually made toward the intelligence agencies, but it has been mentioned in the final report with utmost clarity that the intelligence agencies too extended positive cooperation. The intelligence agencies also want that the issue of missing persons should be resolved amicably under a legal framework.

Naqvi condemns attack on judges' convoy in Tank, pays tribute to martyred cops

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has strongly condemned the terrorist attack on convoy of judges in Tank resulted in martyrdom of two policemen. The interior minister paid rich tribute to the martyred constables Abdullah and Abdul Samad. Mohsin Naqvi expressed his heartfelt sympathies and condolence with the families of martyrs and said that the martyred constables thwarted the nefarious designs of the terrorists by laying down their lives. The interior minister further said that he salutes the great sacrifice of the martyrs. INP

Pakistan Navy & Turkish Navy conduct naval drills in North Arabian Sea



KARACHI: Upon completion of goodwill visit to Pakistan by Turkish Navy Ship TCG KINALI-ADA, Pakistan Navy and Turkish Navy ships conducted coordinated patrol and naval drills in North Arabian Sea. The drills comprised of various naval operations including defence against Asymmetric Threats, Visit Board Search & Seizure (VBSS) and Air Defence Exercises aimed to further hone professional skills and

enhance interoperability between the two navies. Earlier, during the port call, delegation of Turkish Navy led by Turkish Navy Chief of Staff, Vice Admiral Ibrahim Ozdem KOCER called on Pakistan Navy Field Commanders and other dignitaries to discuss matters of mutual interest and further avenues for collaboration. Turkish Navy delegation also laid floral wreath at Mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam to pay homage to the Founder of Pakistan. Pakistan and Turkiye enjoy historically very warm and brotherly relations, and the visit of Turkish Navy ship to Pakistan is a manifestation of strong bilateral ties between both countries. The recent visit will further enhance the existing ties between the two nations in general and collaboration between the two navies in particular. PR

NA resonates with unanimous fervour against assassination of Hamas Chief

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Friday resonated with unanimous fervour extending sincere sympathies and solidarity to the Palestinians resistance against Israeli occupation and the assassination of the Hamas Chief Ismail Haniyeh. The Lower House of the Parliament here during the second meeting of the eighth session passed the resolution, to express complete solidarity with the Palestinian brethren and extended condolences to the bereaved family of the martyr Ismail Haniyeh and the people of Palestine, in complete agreement of the Opposition and the Treasury benches. Taking to the floor during the debate on the resolution, Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui vehemently condemned the killing of the Hamas Leader and Palestinian Resistance Leader, Ismail Haniyeh. He underscored that the House had declared Israel a terrorist state responsible for mass killings and unbridled human rights violations. Siddiqui called for stock taking of the role of OIC in response to the months long conflict going in Gaza. APP

Import of 100,000MT urea approved for smooth supply, price stability

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb on Friday chaired a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet which approved the import of 100,000 Metric Tons (MT) urea. The committee decided on a proposal submitted by the Ministry of Industries and Production aimed at ensuring sufficient supplies of urea in the market. "This will also ensure stability of prices of fertilizer during the cropping season," a Finance Division news release said. Among others, the meeting was attended by Minister for Industries and Production Rana



Tanveer Hussain, Minister for Petroleum Musadik Masood Malik, Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Governor SBP, Chairman SECP, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, MD PASSCO, Chairman TCP, Federal Secretaries and other senior officials of the relevant ministries.

Ahsan announces National Task Force on Productivity, Quality and Innovation

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday announced to establish a National Task Force dedicated to enhancing Productivity, Quality and Innovation (PQI) across all sectors of the economy for revitalizing Pakistan's economic landscape. "This initiative, set to be launched in August 2024 — coinciding with the month of Pakistan's independence — signals a significant step toward addressing the nation's critical economic challenges, fostering a culture of innovation, and unlocking new avenues for growth," a news release said. The Task Force, which initially gained widespread support from global and domestic stakeholders during its conceptual phase in the previous tenure, faced setbacks due to political disruptions in 2018. However, with renewed determination and a clear vision, Ahsan Iqbal said he

was committed to steering this initiative back on track, fostering an environment where innovation and productivity advancements can drive substantial economic progress. The Task Force's mandate is the promotion of innovation as a driving force behind economic growth. By encouraging creative solutions, new technologies and cutting-edge practices across industries, the Task Force aims to position Pakistan as a leader in innovation. This includes fostering a culture of entrepreneurship, supporting research and development (R&D) initiatives, and facilitating collaboration between academia, industry, and government. It also aims to leverage innovation and productivity improvements in the agriculture sector to significantly reduce rural poverty. By enhancing productivity, the initiative seeks to increase yields, lower costs, and



improve essential services such as healthcare, education, agriculture, and infrastructure, directly benefiting rural communities. The planning minister emphasized that elevating rural living standards was central to his government's agenda. Under the initiative, universities will be encouraged to prioritize research and innovation that enhances productivity across various sectors. Ahsan Iqbal highlighted the crucial role

of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in addressing local challenges and driving national progress. With increased funding allocated to the Higher Education Commission (HEC), universities will be pivotal in transforming Pakistan into a knowledge-driven economy, contributing to advancements in fields such as veterinary sciences, engineering, agriculture, and medicine. Besides, the Task Force will support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by building their capacity for innovation and fostering their growth, drawing lessons from successful models in China and other Asian countries. By helping SMEs develop robust value chains and adopt innovative practices, this initiative aims to propel them into larger market segments, enhancing their contribution to the national economy. Developing and implementing benchmarks for productivity and innovation will be a core function of the Task Force.

These benchmarks will serve as critical tools to identify areas requiring attention and drive sector-specific improvements, ensuring that innovation becomes a cornerstone of Pakistan's economic strategy. According to the press release, the Task Force will focus on developing national quality and innovation standards to bolster Pakistan's global reputation and achieve economies of scale. "These standards will enhance the national brand, foster international competitiveness, and position Pakistan as a leader in quality and innovation on the global stage." Following launch of the initiative, awards program will be an annual feature to recognize and reward entities that exemplify outstanding productivity, quality, and innovation. "This initiative aims to foster a competitive spirit and drive excellence across sectors, highlighting the importance of innovation in achieving economic success."

Minister Iqbal said: "As Pakistan approaches its 77th year of independence; it is imperative that we break free from historical constraints and position ourselves for a future of sustained growth, innovation, and prosperity." He said the launch of this Task Force under the 'Uraan Pakistan Campaign' was a crucial step in this journey. "We are committed to overcoming the challenges of political instability and economic constraints to create a thriving, innovative, and productive Pakistan." The National Task Force, he said, would begin its work this August, marking a new chapter in Pakistan's quest for economic revitalization and national progress. "As part of the broader Uraan Pakistan Campaign, this initiative represents a bold commitment to securing a brighter, more prosperous, and innovative future for the nation," the minister remarked. APP

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Dr Ayesha Razzaque

When education meets land grab

with a number of public universities – Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Agriculture University Mardan, Bacha Khan Medical College, and an engineering university. Even by the standards of that time, the Rs2,800 per marla compensation that landowners were offered was laughable. If land in any habitable part of this country was as cheap as that, almost everyone could have afforded to own a house.

After multiple appeals in the district courts and the Peshawar High Court, the rate of compensation was revised to Rs20,000; Rs45,000; Rs75,000; and most recently reached Rs125,000 per marla. These revisions by various courts were justified because even the rate at which the seized land was assessed was flawed and did not take into account all relevant factors listed in the LAA of 1894, suggesting malintent.

In addition, given that the land had been acquired years earlier in 2008 (award made in 2010), the judgment specified a 6.0 per cent (per annum) interest rate for the years of delay in payment. Some universities appealed the high court's ruling in the Supreme Court of Pakistan. In 2022, the SC ruled on the matter and upheld the high court's judgment. It is pertinent to note here that according to the SCP judgment, the word 'interest', according to the LAA of 1984, is not 'interest' stricto sensu, but is compensation for financial loss landowners have continued to suffer since the award was made.

As of today, universities and their associated departments (Education, Agriculture, Industries, etc.) are collectively on the hook for an estimated Rs30 billion. For perspective, that is roughly half the annual federal budget allocated to higher education nationwide (which has been frozen in place for the last eight years). As anyone who keeps even one eye on higher education news knows, many major public universities in KP have been unable to meet their salary and pension obligations for years and are practically bankrupt. There are no Rs30 billion to be had to settle this matter – not in Islamabad and certainly not in KP. Being bankrupt, the KP government came up with a brilliant plan to sell off a part of the seized land at market rate, but just enough to pay back

the owners. This is where the humiliating part begins. Such a sale would have to follow the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Land Acquisition Rules of 2020. Paragraph 34(3) of those rules specifies that if land so acquired is no longer required, "... the provincial government may give the option to the previous owners or their legal heirs to purchase the land on payment of its present market value." If the previous owner declines, it will be sold at an open auction.

Put simply, the government plans to make universities hand back small parts of their land, or the proceeds from their sale on the open market, to the original owners and call it even and rid themselves of the financial liability the court's judgment has imposed on them.

According to some people familiar with the matter, even a conservative present-day market estimate of this land approaches 20-25 lacs per marla. Furthermore, let us not forget that when the government sells land, that typically attracts vultures. The credit for architecting this mess goes to all KP governments from 2008 (the ANP), when it all began, to the present (the PTI), but you would not know it if you looked at it in the (social) media discourse of today. ANP members are laying the blame for the decision to sell part of the land at the feet of the PTI, while conveniently glossing over the fact that they created this mess in the first place, by never closing the purchase of land in the first place. Similarly, one might question why the PTI government is so determined to have universities sell their land, despite being aware that such actions will provoke public backlash. Who stands to benefit from this sale that the government is willing to risk its reputation, something most governments would avoid under normal circumstances?

Consider how poorly the actions of political parties (while in power) square with their rhetoric about access to quality education for the public good. Schools and universities are still closed for summer, but once summer vacations end, you can bet your bottom rupee that the political parties in the opposition will mobilize student groups to agitate against the planned

sale of land. Once again, youth will be deployed to meet political ends. Never let a crisis go to waste. The universities got their applause for opening yet more universities, and the vultures are probably already circling and salivating at the prospects of a sale of a big chunk of land by the KP government and universities, ready to swoop in. The blue-ribbon losers in this tale are the original owners who saw their assets taken away, have still not been meaningfully compensated, and are offered a fraction of the land they owned in return.

It was a long road that got universities to this point. The federal and KP governments have not adequately funded public universities for years while simultaneously rules prevent universities the latitude to adopt initiatives (that are well short of selling off their land) to grow their endowment funds and generate income to meet expenses. However, when the provincial government is ultimately on the hook, it becomes acceptable to sell off university assets. This is the dysfunctional context in which universities operate and, against this backdrop, all political parties claim to provide expanded access to higher education.

This convoluted mess is neither the universities' creation nor the original landowners. The credit for hurriedly seizing land and not even paying the pittance that is the compensation and rushing to build universities on those lands without first ensuring they own the land fair-and-square goes to successive KP governments. This might still be excused if it all had been for something, an achievement in the interest of the public good. Instead, public universities up and down the country have been abandoned financially and with rules tying one hand behind their back if they try to raise tuition fees to meet costs or use their resources for some commercial activity.

Something had to give, and it now looks like everyone has chosen the most unsustainable and set the most unimaginative precedent to help public universities out of their financial holes.

The writer (she/her) has a PhD in Education.

I imagine this: A bully enters a man's dwelling and forces him to sign over ownership of a large piece of his land at gunpoint. To lend this theft the thinnest air of legitimacy, the bully throws the landowner a bone and puts a sale price on the papers that is far less than its true worth. The bully then proceeds to divide up the land among his associates. But the original landowner does not relent, and takes the matter to court.

The court does not reverse the sale but rules that the thug must pay the owner a higher price. But the bully is penniless and cannot pay the higher price. Time keeps passing and the disputed land keeps getting more valuable with rising market prices and inflation. Almost 20 years go by and, after multiple bouts in the courts, the price the bully owes (still well below market value) has risen even further.

The bully comes up with a plan – he convinces his associates to sell a small parcel of the land they seized by force at market rate and use the proceeds to pay the owner at the rate the court has mandated, which is still a well-below-market rate and a bargain for anyone with deep enough pockets. To add insult to injury (and long delay), the bully will offer the original owners to 'buy' back a small piece of their land at market price, just large enough to cover all dues, as determined by the courts.

Set aside for a few minutes what is legal and what is not and answer me this: Does this sound fair to you? If your moral compass is not broken, it is absurd to seize someone's assets and then, two decades later, be offered a small piece of that asset back as compensation for the whole. And yet, this is what is happening in district Mardan to owners of land on which now stand a number of public universities.

In 2008, the KP government invoked eminent domain to seize land in district Mardan in the name of the larger public good, enabled by the Land Acquisition Act (LAA) of 1894. The stated purpose was the establishment of the Bacha Khan Greater Educational Complex in Mardan

Hooked on hopium

SARMAD KHAWAJA

Though commonly used by stock traders to describe the tendency to keep holding a stock as it plummets in value, the word 'hopium', a portmanteau of hope and opium, nicely captures our current economic dynamic: the tendency to keep hoping private players will step forward to do the government's job of growing the economy even when they do not do so year after year after year. Data tells that public investment has been falling since 2017 – the key marker of hopium. Now it is just 43 per cent of its level at that time. But crucially, in all these years, private investment did not step forward but fell by 18 per cent. Hopium remained constant even as regimes changed. Since investment drives growth, less investment begets less growth, which means that by reducing public investment, the governments have been, at best, complacent about growing the economy.

Nothing encapsulates this complacency more than the negative industrial growth in four of the past six quarters. And it explains why the present government has come this far without settling on the big issues that will define it. Hence, building roads and economic infrastructure, or 'bricks and mortar' economics which defined previous PML-N governments, and the other key issues we must address immediately: poverty, illiteracy, and child malnutrition, are nowhere on the government's list of to-do things. This is an awful lot of reality to set right. Not addressing it directly and proactively with the mighty hand of the government, also called industrial policy, is just a bad choice. Its absence since 2017 and the hope that the private sector will 'step forward' explain how a country with a vast pool of hard-working people can go downhill so fast in just seven years. And made our country the world's sad story.

So, if you are looking for a strong industrial policy this government is not your go-to – for two more reasons: One, because too much of its economic actions and discourse is shaped by the misplaced sense that the only matter of concern is the current account deficit. Even though, the real reasons for our economic decline are diminishing public investment and spending public money as if we are far richer and less secure militarily than we are, which haemorrhages our resources, big time.

The second reason this government is not your go-to is that asset-stripping the state –selling SOEs – now suffuses everything. The finance minister says that not doing so will not grow the economy. But this recipe is self-defeating. I have been arguing for months on these pages against selling profitable SOEs such as OGDCL and PPL. My beef is simple: OGDCL and PPL do not fit the government's narrative that SOEs are an apocalyptic threat to the economy's health. Rather, they give immense profits: Rs321 billion in 2022-23 and Rs1.7 trillion in the previous seven years. They are the federal budget's cash cows; they create fiscal space for sorely needed public investment. We cannot ignore these plain facts. Yet the government does not feel obliged to accept them. It pursues SOEs with its privatization wrecking ball – at warp speed. As Talleyrand (Napoleon's crafty diplomat) reputedly said of the Bourbons (the guys on the wrong side of French history), they have 'learned nothing and forgotten nothing' from failed privatizations such as PTCL and KESC. The economic obtuseness here is striking. So then, if facts don't matter, how do you approach this towering mountain of evidence against selling profitable SOEs? Or, broadly speaking, how do you answer the question: with absent industrial policy, what economic weapon will cannonball Pakistan into the ranks of 'tiger' economies? The government's answer to both questions is hope. However, the ideas and nostrums of free markets that underpin this hope encapsulated in the finance minister's oft-repeated mantra – business is not the business of the state – do not work because they are rooted more in ideological dreams than reality. They subtly imply a dislike of anything left in Mr ZA Bhutto's legacy.

Also, these ideas and nostrums go against the very grain of our constitution: whose principles of policy compel state actors to give people free and compulsory education (Article 37B), food, housing, and medical relief (Article 38D), prevent wealth concentration (Article 38A), and remove inequalities (Article 38E).

But our present economic effort is far from a struggle to live up to these ideals. Neither do you see them anywhere in the current political and judicial discourse and actions.

More and more, it appears the government does not have a strategy to grow the country beyond wishful thinking. Neither is it a good sign that our future means hoping that the government's most barmy economic ideas will come to pass. They did not in the past seven years and won't in the future. It is bad that the PML-N is not engaged in deeper soul-searching about being hooked on hopium even as its economic policies financially tar and feather the people. And persisting with hidebound extreme right-wing ideas adds to the sense that it is stunningly disdainful of their plight. If you continue with this stubborn condition, you write your political epitaph.

The clearest path ahead for the PML-N is to ditch its barmy economic ideas and move forward with a strong industrial policy. But it shouldn't be by anointing another technocrat/banker; political leaders must be firmly in charge of the economy – people who answer directly to the people; who have learned crucial lessons in leadership and accountability; and who, as per Kamala Harris' famous riff, do not 'just fall off a coconut tree,' as the former do.

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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

History of Pakistan



With a more liberal bent and a wider base of support—espoused the economic and social interests of urban groups and non-propertied classes. The two governments often clashed in the late 1980s, creating serious economic management problems. Issues regarding power sharing between the federal and provincial governments were largely ignored during the period of military rule in 1999–2008. However, in the 21st century the suc-

cess of any government in Pakistan—civilian or military—appeared to rest on the handling of what might be considered a fifth area of major conflict. Since 2001 the country has been confronted by a campaign of ceaseless terror, generally but not exclusively cast in religious terms, that has been mounted by religious forces opposed to secular modernism in all its forms.

To be continued....

Showbiz

Jeremy Renner 'had no idea' about Robert Downey Jr.'s Doctor Doom casting

Robert Downey Jr. 'didn't say anything to' Jeremy Renner about his return to Marvel

Jeremy Renner, although "excited" about Robert Downey Jr.'s return to Marvel as Doctor Doom, doesn't seem happy with the fact that the Ironman star hid the news from him. Renner, who played Hawkeye in the Marvel Cinematic Universe in several movies, got to know about Downey's return to the franchise just like everybody else, when the latter made a surprise appearance at San Diego's Comic-Con and was revealed to play Doctor Doom in upcoming Avengers films like Avengers: Secret Wars and Avengers: Doomsday.



"I had no idea," Renner told Us Weekly. "This son of a bitch didn't

say anything to me, and we're good friends." The Hawkeye actor took to

the Avengers group chat after Downey's return to the MCU was

announced, and "started blowing up [Downey's] phone." The group includes Chris Evans, Scarlett Johansson, Chris Hemsworth, and Mark Ruffalo. "I'm like, 'What's going on? Are you hiding this from us?' I don't know," Renner said. "That's exciting news, man. I'm really, really excited about it." Renner also opened up about how he is ready to reprise his superhero role, if Hawkeye returns. "I'm excited about it. We'll see. I think we'll probably be doing it," he said. "We'll have to figure it out. It's all brand new. It all just happened. They just made the announcement, so I guess we got to start figuring it all out."

Tech

Turkey shuts down Instagram access without explanation



Many Instagram users living in Turkey complained on the popular social media platform, X, that they could not refresh their feed after the country blocked access to the social media network on Friday. The national communications authority did not give any explanation but a high-ranking Turkish official accused the United States company of censorship. The BTK communications authority said in a post on its website that "instagram.com has been blocked by a decision on the date of 02/08/2024", without adding further details.

The Turkish presidency's communications director Fahrettin Altun on Wednesday hit out at Meta-owned Instagram, accusing the platform of "impeding people from publishing messages of condolence for the martyr Haniyeh". Ismail Haniyeh, the political chief of the Palestinian resistance group Hamas and a close ally of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was killed in Tehran on Wednesday in an attack blamed on Israel. "This is a very clear and obvious attempt at censure," Altun said on X. According to Turkish media, there are more than 50 million users signed up to Instagram in Turkey, out of a population of 85 million. The decision sparked mockery on other social media networks such as X. A meme showing a congested metro station with the tagline: "X when Turks wake up to find that Instagram is blocked", began trending on the platform. "Instagram is blocked in Turkey, life is over", wrote a user alongside a picture of a grieving man.

Health

Study links e-cigarette use to increased respiratory symptoms

The widespread use of mobile technology for healthcare and public health, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, has enabled efficient participant recruitment and real-time data collection for epidemiological studies. EC use, linked to severe lung illnesses and deaths in 2019, has raised concerns about toxic inhalation from toxic chemicals and microbial toxins in EC products. Despite these concerns, there are limited epidemiological studies assessing the short- and long-term effects of vaping habits (using electronic devices to breathe "vapor") on respiratory health. The integration of smartphone application (app)-based approaches in epidemiological research presents an opportunity to address this gap. Therefore, researchers conducted a longitudinal,

repeated measures study using a custom smartphone app to evaluate the potential impact of short- and long-term EC use on respiratory health in US adults. In the present study, researchers developed a customized, downloadable smartphone app named "Vaping and Health Study (VHS)" to collect data on EC use and respiratory health. Participants above 21 years of age (legal age for tobacco purchase) who used a smartphone were recruited via social media and were required to complete a screening survey. Further, a longitudinal app-based survey was conducted over 60 days, involving 306 participants. Notifications were sent via the app to remind participants. Pitcon Keynote Speaker Highlights eBook Check out the top interviews from Pitcon's Keynote Speakers over the years.

About 73% of the participants completed the baseline survey, with 220 participants included in the final analysis after excluding those with missing data. The average age of the participants was 33.8 years. About 60.5% were non-Hispanic White, and 60% were female. Respiratory symptoms were collected using a modified American Thoracic Society (ATS) questionnaire, covering symptoms like cough, wheeze, phlegm, shortness of breath, and eye and nose irritation. Chronic cough and phlegm were defined as lasting more than three months, while shortness of breath was evaluated using the modified Medical Research Council (mMRC) dyspnea scale. EC habits were assessed by asking about ever use, as well as short-term (past day, week, month) and long-term (past 90 days) use.



Funeral prayer for martyred Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh offered at Imam Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab Mosque in Qatar

Emir of the State of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Turkish FM Hakan Fidan, Emir Ji Pakistan Hafiz Naeemur Rehman attend the funeral prayer

DOHA: Funeral prayer for martyred Chairman of the Palestinian Resistance Movement Hamas's Political Bureau Dr. Ismail Haniyeh was offered in Qatar on Friday at Imam Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab Mosque. Emir of the State of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Emir Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Engineer Hafiz Naeemur Rehman, Al-Fatah delegation and a large number of people from different countries attended the funeral prayer.

Ismail Haniyeh had resided in Doha along with other members of the Hamas political office. Ismail Haniyeh will be buried at a cemetery in Lusail, north of the Qatari capital.

Ismail Haniyeh and his bodyguard Wasim Abu Usman were martyred in the pre-dawn attack on their accommodation in Tehran early Wednesday, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said.

He had traveled to Iran to attend Tuesday's swearing-in of President Masoud Pezeshkian. Israel, accused by Hamas, Iran and others of the attack, has not directly commented on it.

The Hamas leader's martyrdom came just hours after Israel struck a southern suburb of Beirut, killing Fuad Shukur, the military commander of Hamas-allied Lebanese group Hezbollah.

The killings are the latest of several incidents that have inflamed regional tensions during the Gaza war which has drawn in Iran-backed militant groups in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen. SABAH

National Youth Festival to be held soon; Mashhood

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister Youth Programme (PMYP) Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan on Friday said that the National Youth Festival would be held soon to showcase the talent of future generation. Talking to the Speaker of the Punjab Assembly Malik Ahmed Khan, he said all possible steps were taken to empower the youth as the future of Pakistan is in the hands of the talented and intelligent youth. Rana Mashhood also apprised the speaker about the initiatives and programmes of PMYP.

Malik Ahmed on the occasion appreciated the efforts of Chairman PMYP for providing opportunities to the youth for a prosperous future. INP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Parliamentarians offering funeral prayer of Shaheed Ismail Haniyeh.

Senate deputy chairman calls on President Zardari

President Zardari expresses deep sorrow over the loss of lives & damage to properties caused by rain-related incidents in country

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman of Senate Syedaal Khan on Friday called on President Asif Ali Zardari here.

In the meeting, they discussed the overall situation in the country and the legislative matters of the Senate, according to a President House press release.

Meanwhile, President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday expressed deep sorrow over the loss of lives and damage to properties caused by rain-related incidents across various regions of the country.

In a statement issued by the President House, President Asif Ali Zardari conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the families of those who lost their lives. The president underscored the urgency of accelerating relief efforts to aid those affected.

President Asif Ali Zardari also called for the implementation of precautionary measures to safeguard lives and prevent further rain-related tragedies. He emphasized the importance of timely actions by the administration



to ensure the effective drainage of rainwater and mitigate the risks of future incidents. In his prayers, President Asif Ali Zardari

sought divine peace for the departed souls and strength for the bereaved families to endure their loss.

Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat reviews regulatory performance, emphasizes accountability & legislative reforms

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat, presided over by Senator Rana Mehmood-ul Hassan, held a meeting on Friday at the Parliament House.

In attendance were Senator Saifullah Sarwar Khan Nyazee, Senator Mohammad Abdul Qadir, Senator Jam Saifullah Khan, the Secretary of the Cabinet Division, the Chairman of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), senior officials from the Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA), Ministry of Interior and other affiliated departments.

The meeting commenced with a briefing on the functional structure of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), its mandate, the formation of its authority, and its regulatory values. The officials, while reporting on the principles of regulation, emphasized that their focus is to ensure regulation is consistent, transparent, and open to the general public. Data on NEPRA's performance over the last three years was also presented to the committee members.

The officials presented information on tariff determinations, adjustments, and transmission service charge components. Senator Mohammad Abdul Qadir recommended that NEPRA provide a special briefing on the power sector, as the lack of accountability could lead to unrest in the country. Senator Saifullah Khan Nyazee suggested that an audit report be provided to the committee members, and a forensic audit of the IPPs was unanimously recommended. The Chairman of the Committee, Senator Rana Mehmood ul Hassan, advised the officials to come up with solutions, as the entire nation bears the brunt of inefficiency in tariff monitoring. He also suggested that the officials ensure accountability in the determination of tariffs and report on the authority responsible for overseeing this matter.

Additionally, senior officials from the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) briefed the committee members on its operations and performance. The meeting also covered the outlook for oil and gas licensees and complaint resolution. Senator Mohammad Abdul Qadir suggested that OGRA should enhance legislation by implementing area responsibility.

The committee members expressed serious concern over the loss of precious life caused by the cylinder blast.

They recommended increasing the penalties and fines for unauthorized cylinder manufacturing. Furthermore, the committee members advised the Interior Ministry to produce a report within one week on the legislative aspects related to the incident. SABAH

Senator Siddiqui welcomes PBC resolution endorsing Parliament's authority to legislate

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz senior leader Senator Irfan Siddiqui Friday said that the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) has put its weight behind the Parliament through a unanimous resolution endorsing its authority to legislate.

"The PBC has given a clear message to the judiciary through a unanimous resolution announcing support for the Parliament," Siddiqui said. He said that the PBC has played historic role at this critical juncture. It is now up to the Parliament to choose its role, he added.

In a statement on social media on Friday, the PMLN parliamentary leader in senate said that the largest representative body of lawyers has declared through its resolution that "the complete authority to draft and legislate the constitution solely lies with the Parliament, which is comprised of representatives of the people."

He said that every institution must remain within its constitutional limits.

Senator Siddiqui stated that this is a very clear message for the judiciary, which, in May 2022, wrote the constitution according to its own political objectives by interpreting Article 63-A. "The decision of July 12, 2024, not only rendered the Election Act 2017 ineffective but also openly violated the clear and unambiguous articles of the constitution," he said.

Senator Siddiqui noted that, in this situation, lawyers have played a historic role by announcing support for Parliament.

He stated that Parliament now has two options: either protect the constitution and prevent its suspension and ineffectiveness as the supreme state institution with the authority to legislate, or silently watch the disgrace of the constitution and law.

Amir Muqam appeals parliamentary parties to participate in protest walk on Youm-e-Istehsal

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam has appealed to all the parliamentary parties to participate in the walk from Radio Pakistan to D Chowk in Islamabad on the occasion of Youm-e-Istehsal-e-Kashmir on August 5. Engineer Amir Muqam, speaking in the National Assembly, said on August 5, 2019, the special status of Jammu and Kashmir was repealed by the Modi regime which will complete five years on August 5.

He said like every year, Youm-e-Istehsal-e-Kashmir is also being observed this year. Protest walks and demonstrations have been announced against this illegal move of the Modi government in Pakistan as well as around the world, he added.

Amir Muqam appealed to all the parliamentary parties to participate in the walk from Radio Pakistan to D Chowk so that a clear message could be sent to India that the government and people of Pakistan are all united on the Kashmir dispute. INP

Minister briefs French envoy about reforms process

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of France to Pakistan Mr. Nicolas Galey called on Minister of State for Finance & Revenue Mr. Ali Pervaiz Malik at Finance Division today. Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik provided an overview of Pakistan's economic progress, highlighting positive trends such as increased foreign exchange reserves, decreased inflation, and a robust stock market, all corroborated by recent ratings from international agencies.

He outlined key reforms underway, including privatization initiatives, energy sector advancements, and restructuring of state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The discussion also covered the Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) digitization initiative, which is being implemented with support from McKinsey to enhance tax administration and compliance.

The Minister of State highlighted the budget for 2024-25, focusing on strategies to expand the tax base by integrating untaxed segments and encouraging non-filers to comply. Significant projects in customs and inland revenue aimed at improving digitization and operational



efficiency were also discussed.

Ambassador Mr. Nicolas Galey expressed appreciation for the excellent reforms undertaken by Pakistan and offered technical support from France in areas of mutual interest. He recognized the progress made by the Government of Pakistan in stabilizing the economy and expressed confidence in the potential for further collaboration.

Looking ahead, both parties affirmed their commitment to deepen economic relations, exploring investment opportunities, and expanding bilateral trade. DNA

Hope new generations to further strengthen Pak-Turkiye ties: Turkish Envoy

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Turkiye to Pakistan, Prof. Dr. Mehmet Pacaci has there exist a long historical, friendly and fraternal relationship between Pakistan and Turkiye and we hope that the new generations of both countries will further strengthen these ties.

While addressing the certificate distribution ceremony of the two-week summer camp organized by Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) in collaboration with Yunus Emre Institute, Pakistan here Friday, the Turkish Ambassador mentioned that these activities will bring the younger generations of the two countries closer, ultimately strengthening the relationship.

Dr. Mehmet Pacaci also extended congratulations to the university and the Yunus Emre Institute for arranging the camp.

Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Prof. Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir said that Pakistanis and Turkish people considered each other as their second home. Turkish children are eager to learn Urdu, and Pakistani children are enthusiastic about learning Turkish, he said and added that there were similarities in the history and culture of the two countries, and the moon and star on the flags of both countries symbolized our unity. INP

ECP asks political parties to submit consolidated statements

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday reminded all the heads of Political Parties to submit their consolidated statements of accounts (Form-D) for financial year 2023-24 on or before August 29.

"In terms of section 210 of the Elections Act, 2017 read with section 204 of the Act ibid and rule 159 & 160 of the Election Rules, 2017, thereof, that the political parties are required to file with Election Commission their Consolidated Statement of Accounts on (Form-D) for financial year, 2023-24 ended on 30th June, 2024 or before 29th August, 2024," said a press release issued here.

It may be recalled that Section 210 of the Elections Act, 2017 provides that a Political Party shall, in such a manner as may be prescribed, submit to the Commission, within sixty days from the close of a financial year, a consolidated statement of its accounts audited by a Chartered Accountant on Form-D containing, annual income and

expenses, sources of its funds and assets and liabilities.

The Consolidated Statement of Accounts to be submitted to the Election Commission complete in all respect and shall accompany by report of a Chartered Accountant with regard to the audit of accounts of a political party and a certificate signed by an office-bearer authorized by the party Head stating that: -

i. No funds were received by the party from any source prohibited under the Elections Act, 2017.

ii. The statement of accounts contains an accurate picture of the financial position of the party.

iii. The information given above is correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

iv. The above statement is audited by the Chartered Accountant and detailed report thereof is annexed.

The statement of accounts is to be submitted on Form-D as provided in the Elections Act, 2017. Printed Forms are available, free of cost, in the Election Commission Secretariat, Islamabad and

in the offices of the Provincial Election Commissioners, Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Form-D / Proforma for source of funds are also available on ECP's Website. Overwriting should be avoided. The attested copy of Membership / Certificate issued by ICAP in respect of Auditor engaged shall be annexed to the Form-D along with last valid renewal certificate. The Form-D shall also accompany a legible copy of each of the bank statements for the period of 01.07.2023 to 30.06.2024 of the party, along with a bank reconciliation statement.

The subject statement shall be addressed to the Secretary, Election Commission of Pakistan, Constitution Avenue, G-5/2, and Islamabad and shall be delivered through an office bearer of the party, duly authorized by the party head in terms of rule 156 of the Election Rules, 2017. Statements received through post, fax, courier service or any other mode shall not be accepted. DNA

Senator Sherry Rehman termed Benazir Income Support Programme a success story for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Senator Sherry Rehman, Chairperson of the Standing Committee Senate on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, visited the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Headquarters on Friday.

During her visit, she was briefed on BISP's core initiatives, with a special emphasis on its role in addressing the crises caused by climate change and natural disasters. Senator Rubina Khalid, Chairperson of BISP, along with Additional Secretary Dr. Muhammad Tahir Noor, provided an overview of BISP's crucial interventions, particularly during the devastating floods of 2022. They highlighted that BISP was the first to reach flood-affected communities across the country through its dynamic database, disbursing Rs. 70 billion to 2.7 million families in need.

Senator Rubina Khalid also discussed BISP's proactive measures to handle emergencies caused by climate change. She introduced the Hybrid Social Protection Scheme, designed to promote savings culture among beneficiaries,



ensuring they are better prepared for unforeseen climatic events. Additionally, Senator Rubina Khalid shared BISP's ongoing efforts to implement a transparent payment mechanism in consultation with the State Bank, following the directives of President Asif Ali Zardari. This initiative aims to enhance transparency and uphold the dignity of women beneficiaries. Senator Sherry Rehman praised BISP's achievements, describing it as a success story for Pakistan. She underscored the importance of international partnerships and maintaining strong relationships with donor organizations for the continued support and well-being of BISP beneficiaries. SABAH