



Bilawal backs PTI's demand for inquiry into May 9
 Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari endorsed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's demand for an inquiry into the protests of May 9, adding that the results should be accepted by all parties. Speaking in the National Assembly on Monday, Bilawal said it was not possible to forget attacks on institutions and martyrs' monuments. (Report on Page 8)



Former AJK PM blasts Indian ban on Muslim Conference in Jammu & Kashmir
 President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former PM Sardar Atique visited Muzaffarabad. Talking to various delegations and journalists former Prime Minister and President Muslim Conference Sardar Atique Ahmad Khan said that the Indian government The ban imposed by the Muslim Conference on Occupied Jammu and Kashmir is unconstitutional and illegal which cannot continue for long. (Report on Page 8)

Oath

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi administering the oath of office to Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif as the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Monday.



Photo: PID

Shehbaz Sharif takes oath as 24th PM of Pakistan

Naveed Ahmad Khan
 ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) president Shehbaz Sharif on Monday took oath as the 24th Prime Minister (PM) of Pakistan.
 President Arif Alvi administered the oath to newly elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in a ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr.
 The ceremony was attended by caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar, PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Chief Ministers, governors and other dignitaries.
 Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz President Shehbaz Sharif was elected as Pakistan's 24th Prime Minister (PM). He secured 201 votes against his Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) opponent Omar Ayub Khan who secured 92 votes.
 The session chaired by National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, began with the oath-taking of PML-N's Jam Kamal.
 As soon as the session began, SIC lawmakers chanted slogans to record their protest while holding PTI founder Imran Khan's pictures.
 He was jointly backed by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan, and Iste-hkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP).
 In his maiden speech, Pakistan's Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif invited the opposition for 'Charter of Reconciliation' to steer Pakistan out of crises.
 "Work ahead is difficult" but not impossible," surrounded by party lawmakers — said in his victory speech in NA.

ECP says it won't allocate reserved seats to Sunni Ittehad Council

Naveed Ahmad Khan
 ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Monday rejected the Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) petition, seeking the allocation of reserved seats following a 'merger' with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for this specific purpose.
 The ECP was requested to allot the seats based on the inclusion of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed candidates in their party.
 In this regard, a request drafted by SIC Chairman Sahibzada Hamid Raza was submitted with the electoral watchdog through a PTI representative.
 After hearing arguments from all sides, the commission had reserved its verdict on Wednesday, a day before the maiden session of the National Assembly.



The electoral watchdog, in its decision today, PTI-backed Sunni Ittehad Council was not eligible for the reserved seats allotted to women and minorities.
 The ECP announced the split decision with a 4-1 majority under Clause 6 of Article 53 of the Constitution and Section 104 of the Election Act. ECP Punjab member Hassan Bhawana dissented with the majority verdict.
 In the verdict, the ECP said the SIC is not entitled to claim quota

for reserved seats due to having "non curable legal defects and violation of a mandatory provision of submission of party list for reserved seats which is the requirement of law".
 "The seats in the National Assembly shall not remain vacant and will be allotted by proportional representation process of political parties on the basis of seats won by political parties," the order said.
 Citing Article 51(6) of the Constitution, the electoral watchdog said the reserved seats would be allocated to the political parties who contested elections and won general seats on the basis of "proportional representation system".
 It stated that per centum share of each political party shall be worked out with reference to

total number of general seats in the National Assembly and the provincial assembly. "The same formula is provided for the reserved seats for non-Muslims."
 PTI candidates contested the elections as independents after the Supreme Court upheld the election supervisor's decision, considering its intra-party polls "unconstitutional" and revoked its claim on the electoral symbol of 'bat'.
 As per the Constitution, the reserved seats are allocated to the political parties on the basis of the number of their lawmakers elected on the general seats. For their allocation, the ECP had already received the priority list of candidates from the parties before the Feb 8 polls.
 The situation this year is different from the previous elections as

the largest group of lawmakers are independents, who cannot have the reserved seats.
 There are a total of 346 reserved seats for women — 60 in the NA and 66, 29, 26, and 11 in the provincial legislatures of Punjab, Sindh, K-P, and Balochistan.
 Similarly, there are 10 reserved seats for minorities in the lower house. Besides, there are eight, nine and three reserved seats for minorities in the Punjab Sindh, and Balochistan assemblies.
 Sunni Ittehad Council, in its letter, stated that 86 independent candidates of the National Assembly had joined his party, adding that 107 independents of Punjab Assembly, 90 of K-P Assembly and nine independent members of Sindh Assembly now garnered the support of the SIC.

IMF recommends Pakistan to jack up GST on medicines, petroleum to 18pc

Commerce Desk
 ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has recommended the government of Pakistan to implement 18 per cent General Sales Tax (GST) on food, medicine, petroleum products, and stationery.
 According to details, the IMF experts have recommended the newly-elected government of Pakistan to end sales tax relaxation in its report dispatched to Islamabad.
 The IMF team visited Pakistan in December 2023, and dispatched its report in February 2024 with a set of recommendations ahead of the FY2024-25 budget.
 The IMF has recommended bringing several dozen items under the standard rate of 18% GST, including unprocessed food, stationery, medicine, POL products and others.
 The IMF estimated that rationalizing GST rates could



generate 1.3 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) revenue, which equates to Rs1,300 billion in national exchequer.
 Overall, the IMF has called for the removal of all distortionary tax policy changes related to compliance, including the abolition of minimum taxes and additional taxes, as well as the abolition of the Ninth and Tenth Schedules.
 Last month it emerged that Pakistan would seek a loan package from the International Monetary Fund plus 1.5 billion dollars in climate finance.
 The country is exploring the possibility of increasing the program to \$7.5-8 billion, reportedly seeking the addition of climate finance in the next bailout package, sources said.

Pakistan, under PM Shehbaz, set to achieve greater accomplishment in nation-building: Mao Ning



Spokesman Report
 BEIJING: Pakistan, under the leadership of newly-elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the new government, could achieve a greater accomplishment in the cause of national development, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said on Monday. "We believe that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz and the new administration, Pakistan can achieve a greater accomplishment in nation building," Mao Ning said during her regular briefing in response to a question.
 Felicitating Shehbaz Sharif on assumption of office of the prime minister of Pakistan,

she said, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang had sent congratulatory messages to him. The spokesman said that China commended positive remarks made by the prime minister of Pakistan on bilateral relations and the construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). "We commend his positive statement regarding China-Pakistan relations and CPEC," she said. Mao Ning expressed the optimism that Pakistan could continue to work with China for high-quality construction of CPEC and advance China-Pakistan all-weather cooperative partnership to foster an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future and deliver more benefits for the two peoples. It may be mentioned here that President, Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) was elected prime minister for second time on Sunday by securing 201 votes in the National Assembly of Pakistan. In his speech, the prime minister had vowed to bolster ties with China and accelerate the building of CPEC projects.

Iranian president phones PM Shehbaz to congratulate on his election



Spokesman Report
 ISLAMABAD: President of Iran Ebrahim Raisi on Monday telephoned Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and congratulated him on his election. The Iranian president felicitated the prime minister and conveyed his good wishes, a PM Office press release said.
 During the conversation, the prime minister said that both countries enjoyed deep-rooted historical and cultural linkages. He said that Pakistan desired to strengthen and expand bilateral cooperation in multiple fields. President Raisi expressed the hope that PM Shehbaz would utilise his all-out capabilities to put the country on the track to progress and prosperity. The prime minister also invited the Iranian president to visit Pakistan at the earliest.

ECP accepts Zardari, Achakzai's nomination papers for presidential elections

City Desk
 ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Monday approved the nomination papers of Asif Ali Zardari and Mahmood Khan Achakzai, for the upcoming presidential elections set to take place on March 9.
 Former president Asif Ali Zardari, nominated by allied parties, is running for the presidency slot for the second time.
 He will compete against Pash-tunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PMAP) chief Mehmood Khan Achakzai, supported by lawmakers from the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC). Both the leaders filed their papers over the weekend.
 The scrutiny of the nomination papers has taken place today, March 4. The final list of eligible candidates will be released on March 5. The candidates will have the rights to withdraw from the contest until March 6.
 The voting is set to launch from

10:00 am to 4:00 pm on March 9 at Parliament House in Islamabad, as well as the provincial assembly buildings in Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, and Quetta.
 On Sunday, the newly-elected National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq has called for a joint session of the Parliament on March 9, to elect Pakistan's next president.



The speaker summoned the joint session in accordance with the authority granted by clause (b) of Rule 9 of the Presidential Election Rules, 1988, as stated in a notification issued by the national assembly secretariat.
 The ECP recently designated five presiding officers to oversee the presidential elections in Islamabad and the four provincial capitals.

UN Chief congratulates Shehbaz Sharif on becoming PM of Pakistan

Spokesman Report
 UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres Monday congratulated Shehbaz Sharif after he was sworn-in as Prime Minister of Pakistan, saying he was looking forward to working with him on a number of issues. On Sunday, the National Assembly elected Shehbaz Sharif as the Leader of the House by 201 votes, defeating Omar Ayub of the Sunni Ittehad Council.
 PM Shehbaz took the oath of his office for a second term at a ceremony held at the President House in Islamabad on Monday. "We congratulate Shehbaz Sharif on assuming the post of Prime Minister of Pakistan and we look forward to continuing cooperation with the country on a wide array of issues," Stephane Dujarric, the UN Chief's spokesperson, said in an email.

Shehbaz Sharif presented guard of honour at PM House

City Desk
 ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was presented a guard of honour on Monday as he arrived at the PM House soon after taking oath of his office here at the President House.
 The national anthem was played and a smartly turned-out contingent of the three services presented him salute.
 He inspected the guard of honour.
 The prime minister was later introduced to the staff of the Prime Minister House.
Shehbaz sees off outgoing PM after farewell guard of honour
 A smartly turned out contingent of the three services on Monday presented a farewell guard of honour to outgoing Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif saw him off after the guard of honour and farewell meeting with the staff of Prime Minister Office.

PM announces steps to end poverty, joblessness in South Punjab: Sultana Shaheen

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: The Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Shahbaz Sharif has said that stability of the country's economy and elimination of inflation is the first priority for which revolutionary measures will be ensured and jobless youth will be provided and interest-free loans will be given as an asset of the Workers' Party.

There are ideas that will be given a legitimate place after being elected as the Prime Minister, he expressed this in a meeting held with the former member of the Provincial Assembly Sultana



Shaheen from Multan and the former member of the National Assembly Shaheen Shafiq.

Congratulations on being elected Prime Minister and best wishes Mian Shahbaz Sharif said that Sultana Shaheen and Shaheen Shafiq are our companions in difficult times, we cannot forget them and we will not allow them to be abused.

Will be completed and South Punjab We will take steps to eliminate deprivation and backwardness, we will pay attention to the improvement of education, health, roads, streets, sewerage system.

FBR raids factory making fake cigarettes in Jalalpur Multan

Arshad Raza Zaidi/ Mustansar Shanawaz

MULTAN: Directorate of Intelligence and Investigation of Inland Revenue Multan conducted a major operation under the leadership of Additional Director Zulfikar Ali along with Dr. Sharaft Abbas Deputy Director and other officers raided a factory manufacturing fake international Brand cigarettes, this factory in Jalalpur. Established in Parwala area was made and it was manufacturing lakhs of fake cigarettes of various international brands on a daily basis. Furthermore, the factory was operating without any legal registration and approval from FBR, which was subject to federal excise duty, sales tax. Loss of crores of rupees to the national exchequer due to income tax. Reaching here FBR's Intelligence and Investigation Multan Directorate had been monitoring this factory for some time through its intelligence network and after complete satisfaction, it raided the factory on March 2 along with its team with the help of the police. Illegal cigarettes are being manufactured under different names. During the search, apart from a large quantity of cigarettes, tobacco and other goods used in the manufacture of cigarettes, including fake packaging, were recovered, which was seized and the factory was sealed and legal action was initiated against those involved in illegal cigarette manufacturing.



Begum Tahsin Fawad congratulates PM on election of Shahbaz Sharif

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-N Rawalpindi City Senior Vice President Begum Tahsin Fawad congratulated Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif on being elected as the 24th Prime Minister of Pakistan and said that now is the time to solve the problems of the people. Now prosperity will come to Pakistan. Law and order will reign.

Pakistan Muslim League-N Rawalpindi City Senior Vice President Begum Tahsin Fawad expressed great joy in her important statement and said that I congratulate to our leader Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif, Ms. Maryam Nawaz Sharif and all leadership of PMLN on the outstanding achievement. I am grateful to the people of my country who made the right decision and elected an excellent political leader Mian Shahbaz Sharif as their Prime Minister. Pakistan will be stable and the people will be prosperous under the leadership of Pakistan Muslim League-N. Shahbaz Sharif has full potential to lead Pakistan on the path of development by getting rid of its problems. Our people are conscious and have complete trust in their Prime Minister. We all have to play a significant role in the construction and development of Pakistan.



Pick up an accident in Wana Shakai area, woman died, 13 injured

Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: On Monday in Lower South Waziristan, a pick-up vehicle going to Wana from Sanga area of Shakai Valley suffered a dangerous accident after it slipped in the snow. In which one woman died while 13 people were injured. Driver Gul Noor is also among the injured. On this occasion rescue team 1122 the injured men were shifted to DHQ Hospital.

On the other hand, MS Dr. Hamad of the District Headquarter Hospital, Wana, says that after the condition of the two injured became serious, they were referred to Dera Ismail Khan for further treatment.

Two injured are admitted in the surgical ward of DHQ Wana while 9 injured were discharged after giving first aid.

Hamza Wazir, a local resident of valley Shakai, said that the vehicle was going to Wana from Shakai side, where the vehicle overturned due to slipping in the snow in the hilly area at Sara Pal.

He said, all the individuals are said to belong to the Wazir Khojhal Khel tribe.



Inconvenience

ISLAMABAD: People standing outside closed Metro Bus Station of Secretariat in the Federal Capital due to Metro Bus Service closed during PSL matches in Rawalpindi.



Photo: Online

Women's University in Multan holds two days Int'l Conference on Sustainable Development Goals

Kiran Asim/ Quratul Ain Asim

MULTAN: According to the Spokeswoman Dr Anum Zahra Two days International Conference on 'Collaborative Strategies of Higher Education Institution and Industry to promote Sustainable Development Goals' held at Women University Multan. Vice Chancellor Of Women's University Multan Said

The two days international conference is hosted by the various departments of The Women University Multan. Over two days, the conference provided a platform for fruitful discussions on sustainable development goals and cutting-edge research of academia and industry. Keynote speakers this conference were Prof. Dr. Atta Ur Rehman (Ex HEC Chairman /Chief Guest), Prof. Dr. Shazia Anjum (Dean Faculty of Sciences, IUB), Prof. Dr. Mazhar Ayaz (Vice Chancellor/ CUVAS Univ, Prof. Dr. Ishtiaq A Rajwana (Vice Chancellor/MANSUA) and Mr. Naeem Asim (Deputy Director, DGPR, Multan). Various sponsoring organiza-



tion including Pepsi, Eyoil group, NBP, Servo oil, Fatima group of industries, and ECS and their members include Mr. Rashid Ali, Syed Zamin Raza, Mr. Salman Mr. Inamullah Naveed Khan, Mr. Asim Majed attended the inauguration session. Speakers from various International organizations including Spain, London, Saudi Arabia, Korea, China, Iran, UK and Australia attended the meeting. The local Universities include NUST, IUB, KFUE-IT, GSCWUB, BZU, LCWU, GCUF, and Fatima Fertilizers. The conference provided an excellent opportunity

for all the participants to engage in cross-sectoral dialogues with government officials, NGOs, local & International organizations, Industries and faculty and staff of various universities. The conference also provided opportunities for international collaboration and SDG related research among WUM and international universities. The panels and participants reviewed comparative approaches and developed international best practice on tackling the SDGs.

On this occasion Vice Chancellor Dr Kalsoom Pracha said that the

conference provided the best practice for sustainable development goals. The core objective of this conference is to foster a platform for meaningful discussions and knowledge exchange.

At the conclusion of the day, meaningful souvenir and certificates distribution ceremony was held. Vice Chancellor Dr. Kalsoom Pracha, Registrar Dr. Mamoon Khan along with Chief organizers Dr Misbah Mirza, Dr Sidra Mobeen, Dr. Warda Hassan presented these as a moment to acknowledge and honor the outstanding contributions of our speakers, presenters, and participants. The organizers were Dr Maryam Zain (Director Academics) along with Dr Asia bibi, Dr Schrish Mehdi, Dr Sumara Ashraf, Dr Shazia Perveen, Dr Memona Noreen, Dr Quratulain, Dr Raheela Jabeen and Dr Ayesha Ashraf. The focal person Dr. Misba Mirza express gratitude to all the keynote speakers, presenters, participants, and organizers for their invaluable contributions. The closing ceremony of conference will held today at Katchery campus.

Former AJK PM blasts Indian ban on Muslim Conference in Jammu and Kashmir

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD/GHAZIABAD: President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister Sardar Atique visited Muzaaffarabad. Talking to various delegations and journalists former Prime Minister and President Muslim Conference Sardar Atique Ahmad Khan said that the Indian government The ban imposed by the Muslim Conference on Occupied Jammu and Kashmir is unconstitutional and illegal which cannot continue for long. The ban on the Muslim Conference on Occupied Kashmir is very sad and condemnable. The Muslim Conference is not just the name of an organization but a movement that lives in the hearts for centuries and its history is centuries old. The freedom movement cannot be suppressed by banning the Muslim

Conference. Pakistan is an iron pick around India's neck. He said that ban was imposed once in the past but finally this ban withdrawn in the decades of 1980. Occupying the state of Kashmir since 1947, the people there are being usurped. Not giving the right to speak for one's rights reflects the ugly face of India. On November 21, 2018, the Occupied Kashmir Assembly was abolished and till today there is no representative of the Occupied Jammu and Kashmir Assembly. After that on August 5, 2019, Article 370 was abrogated by the entire plan which was India's goal. In the next step, the decision was taken to the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister Sardar Atiq Ahmad Khan visited Ghaziabad. And expressed his condolences to the family. Later, he was met by senior workers



and officials of the Muslim Conference at Mujahid First House Ghaziabad. In the meeting, President Muslim Conference Sardar Atiq Ahmad Khan discussed in detail the latest situation of Azad Kashmir and Occupied Kashmir, including the recent elections in Pakistan. Speaking to the workers, President Muslim Conference Sardar Atiq Ahmad Khan said that the sacrifices of the people of Occupied

Kashmir will not go in vain and India will have to account for its atrocities. Narendra Modi's brutal policies have put South Asia on the brink of destruction. India has made life difficult for the people of Occupied Kashmir. Occupied Kashmir has become a prison. Stand up in support of human rights and play your part to implement the UN resolutions. The UN resolutions are a proof that the Kashmir issue is controversial. India is playing the role of anti-peace by deviating from these resolutions. He said that the people of Azad Kashmir are with the people of Occupied Kashmir and they will play their full role against any aggression by India. A concrete policy should be prepared for implementation. Kashmir will be free soon and India will have to leave Kashmir in humiliation and recognize the right of Kashmiris.

MC condemns Indian ban on Kashmiri Muslim Conference as flagrant violation of human rights

Bureau Report

RAWALPINDI: Leaders of Muslim Conference Sardar Asim Abbasi, Raja Latif Hasrat, Raja Mohammad Zareen, Dr. Abid Abbasi Zulfikar Ahmed Siddiqui Advocate, Syed Azhar Ali Shah and Sardar Yasir Abbasi in a joint statement on the Indian government's ban on Muslim Conference in Occupied Kashmir. Condemned in strong terms and said that this move by Modi government is a flagrant violation of freedom of opinion, fundamental rights and UN Charter. These leaders said that the voice of Kashmir's freedom movement cannot be suppressed by this move of Modi-fascist. It should be clear that earlier the Modi government has banned the political parties of Occupied Kashmir.

Meanwhile Muslim Conference workers are continuously protesting across the state against the ban on Muslim Conference, Srinagar. Protesting demonstrations were held at various places. Chanting slogans raised against Indian premier Modi. The workers of Muslim Conference, former president Mirza Muhammad Shafiq Jaral, addressed the protests at various places. Jaral Advocate, Secretary General Mohtarama Meher Nisa, Sardar Altaf Khan, Central Chief Organizer Raja Saqib Majeed, Former Government Minister Shamim Ali Malik, Youth Wing Chairman Sardar Usman Ali Khan,

Leader of Muslim Conference Sardar Tariq Sikandar, Haji Muhammad Ashraf Advocate, Women Wing Chairperson Ms. Samia Sajid Raja, Major Retd Nasrullah Khan, Muslim Conference Finance Board Chairman Syed Nazir Abbas Shah, Muslim Conference Central Leader Sardar Abid Razak, Muslim Conference Muzaaffarabad District President Syed Yasir Naqvi Advocate, Mirpur Division Women Wing President Ameera Khanum, senior political leader Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah Naqvi, Jandad Abbasi, Mushtaq Nair, Salar Muslim Conference Kotli Liaqat Ali Khan, Student Wing Chairperson Maimoona Kayani Advocate, Women Division General Secretary Kausar Parveen Advocate, Retd. DG Local Government Arshad Abbasi, Retired DG Awqaf Maqsood Abbasi, Retired ADSP Maqsood Abbasi Nasreen Akhtar Raja, Chairperson of Muslim Conference Mirpur Division Naheed Raja, Iqbal Inqilabi, and others said that the Indian government of Modi has banned the Muslim Conference in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir to advance its Hindutva agenda. The Muslim Conference is purely a political party that talks about a peaceful solution to the Kashmir dispute, so banning it is unjustified and against democracy. It cannot be suppressed at all. The Modi government is following the same policy in the occupied territory that Israel has adopted in the occupied Palestine.

PANAHA symposium on world obesity day highlights alarming rise of NCDs in Pakistan

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The overweight, obesity and diet-related NCDs are on the alarming rise in Pakistan. More than 40% of people in Pakistan are obese or overweight. The prevalence of overweight among the children under 5 has almost doubled from 2011 to 2018. The obesity and overweight increased in women of reproductive age from 28% to 38% in five years. Sugary drinks / ultra-processed products often high in sugar, salt or trans-fats are among the major contributors to obesity and many other non-communicable diseases. Government must take immediate policy actions to reduce the obesity and NCDs in Pakistan. This was said in a symposium on world obesity

day titled "Healthy diet policies to prevent obesity", organized by Pakistan National Heart Association (PANAHA) at a local hotel in Islamabad brought together the distinguished experts, health professionals, policy makers and media. Dr. Nadeem Jan, Federal Minister of Health was the chief guest of the occasion. Among the guests include Ex-President PANAHA, Gen. (R) General Ashraf Khan, Country representative of Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAI) Mr. Munawar Hussain, Vice President PANAHA Col. Dr. Shakeel Ahmed Mirza, President National Press Club Islamabad Mr. Anwar Raza, CEO Heartfile Dr. Saba Amjad, health professionals, civil society representatives and media.

Dr. Nadeem Jan reiterated the

government's dedication to tackling the obesity epidemic and NCDs. He said that Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination is committed to take all possible measures to improve public health in Pakistan. Ministry of health has recently banned the use of Sugary drinks in health ministry and issued an advisory to other ministries to ban these unhealthy drinks in their respective domains. He added that though I have retired, my support will always be with the PANAHA.

Gen Ashraf Khan delivered a keynote address shedding light on modifiable risk factors associated with non-communicable diseases and obesity. He said that overweight and obesity are the key modifiable risk factors for cardiovas-

cular and many other fatal non-communicable diseases. High body mass index (BMI) contributes considerably to NCDs. Unhealthy diets are among the major contributors to obesity. Government shall take immediate policy measures to reduce the risk of obesity in Pakistan. He stressed the need for higher taxes on ultra-processed foodstuffs to reduce their consumption.

Mr. Munawar Hussain in his presentation, delved into policies aimed at reducing the consumption of ultra-processed products with a special focus on higher taxes on sugary drinks, chocolates, ice creams, salty and sweet snacks, fast foods, baked items, ready to eat meals and processed meat. Taxing ultra-processed foods is a triple win for government as it reduces the obesity

and other non-communicable diseases, generate additional revenue for the government and government does not bear any cost. The revenue collected from taxes must be earmarked fully or partially for public health programs. He also stressed on adopting the holistic approach including regulating trans-fats in all foods, marketing restrictions and imposing Front of Pack Warning Labels and on ultra-processed products.

"Sugary drinks are the largest source of the intake of the sugar in the diet. The liquid sugar alters the metabolism of the body, promotes excess calorie intake which can lead to obesity and type 2 diabetes" said by Dr. Shakeel Ahmed Mirza. Ultra-processed foods are often high in sugar, salt or trans-fats.

World Health Organization recommends the limits of sugar, salt and trans-fats in our daily diet. If we want to reduce the disease burden, we must take serious policy actions to reduce the alarming increase in obesity and other non-communicable diseases.

Sanaullah Ghuman briefed the participants about PANAHA's campaign on the reduction of the consumption of ultra-processed foods. He said that PANAHA is not only working to raise awareness of general public on the health harms of ultra-processed foods but also working with policy makers for formulation of effective policies to reduce their consumption. He thanked the health minister for banning the sugary drinks in ministries and departments of federal government.

PPAF and NCSW celebrate International Women's Day to Honor Women from Across Pakistan

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), in collaboration with the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division, the Ministry of Human Rights, and the Punjab Government, hosted a National Women's Conference on Economic Empowerment in Islamabad to commemorate International Women's Day. The conference emphasized the vital importance of investing in women's potential and acknowledging their invaluable contributions to society and sustainable economic growth. A prominent highlight of the event was the awarding of the annual PPAF Amtul Raqeeb Awards to female community leaders from marginalized areas across Pakistan, celebrating their resilience and inspirational leadership within their communities. Additionally, four special accolades were given to outstanding individuals for their exceptional commitment



and innovation, setting the stage for further progress and excellence in their respective fields. The event was attended by representatives from government institutions, the donor and diplomatic community, academia, civil society, and students from educational institutions.

During a welcoming address, Nadir Gul Barech, CEO of the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), underscored the essential link between gender equality

and sustainable development goals, including good governance, human rights, and environmental sustainability. He highlighted the central role of women and girls in PPAF's initiatives, noting the significant impact that empowering women has on their lives and communities. Barech detailed PPAF's efforts in enhancing women's access to financial resources, providing assets, interest-free loans, and technical and financial training to reduce

poverty and promote inclusion. He emphasized the importance of giving women a voice, including them in decision-making processes, and removing barriers to their participation in development, reinforcing the organization's commitment to women's empowerment.

Nilofar Bakhtiar, Chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) and the chief guest of the conference, stressed the importance of inspiring a new generation of women to break free from fear and pursue their dreams by equipping them with the skills necessary to become leaders who can significantly contribute to Pakistan's social and economic well-being. Bakhtiar stated, "We cannot achieve true development without equal opportunities for women in education, health, and employment." She underscored the need for equal opportunities and skill development for women, citing them as both a moral and practical imperative. She envisioned the event



as a beacon of optimism, signaling a shift towards a future where women lead the narrative of Pakistan's development and prosperity. Bakhtiar also shed light on the significance of national narratives 'Paigham e Pakistan' and 'Dukhtar e Pakistan', initiatives that promote unity, peace, social cohesion, and the empowerment

of women. The audience also heard from former Inspector General of Police, Helena Iqbal Saeed, Dr. Amena Hasan, Dr. Saima Afzal, and Dr. Bakhtawar Khalid, who shared their journeys to success despite facing adversities. They emphasized that success is a journey requiring continuous effort,

perseverance, and dedication. Girl students from various colleges in Islamabad and Rawalpindi impressed the audience with their performances themed around the Economic Empowerment of Women, earning accolades from a panel of judges for their creativity and insight.

Photo: Raja Farid

We act as a system integrator, providing comprehensive Industrial Power and Solar Solutions: Aamir Saeed, Director (FET)

The Interview of Aamir Saeed, Director, Fusion Engineering & Technology (FET)



Tahir Amin Malik

The Director Fusion Engineering & Technology (FET) Aamir Saeed said in an interview that FET Company started as a small engineering venture in Lahore city of Pakistan, and he said that, We saw a growing demand for Solar Hybrid Control System, solar structures, cable trays and reliable switchgears, cable trays and reliable switchgears, and we focused on precision manufacturing and building a reputation for quality products and solutions. "This commitment to excellence proved to be the corner stone of FET's success. The dedication to quality and innovation has been paramount from the very beginning. This focus on excellence allowed us to build a strong reputation and expand our product line to include Switchgears, solar structures and cable trays. From Manufacturing to Systems Integration: A Multifaceted approach and Aamir further said that our focus began by outlining the company's and FET operates in two distinct divisions. The first division handles the manufacturing of essential electrical components like switchgear, solar structures, and cable trays and these products form the backbone of any power infrastructure." He said the second division takes a more integrated approach, and we act as system integrators, providing comprehensive industrial power solar solutions as well. He said expanding into System Integration FET, however, didn't rest on its laurels. Aamir recognized the need for a more holistic



approach to power situations "We saw a gap in the market," he said. "Clients needed more than just individual components and needed a system integrator who could understand their specific requirements and design a complete solution." This realization led to the creation of FET's, second division, specializing in system integration and this division caters to diverse clientele, providing advanced solutions like PV-DG Hybrid Control Systems and these systems integrate Photovoltaic (PV) and Diesel Generator (DG) power sources, ensuring a reliable and efficient energy supply. Aamir said Generator Synchronization FET helps clients synchronize multiple generators for optimal power output and grid stability. He further said SCADA and EMS, the company offers supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) and Energy Management Systems

(EMS) for real-time monitoring and control of power infrastructure. Talking about Power Quality Solutions, Aamir Saeed said that FET tackles issues like Harmonics Distortions and Flickering, ensuring clean and reliable power for sensitive equipment. He said that building the gap between products and systems is necessary. Aamir emphasized the unique advantages of FET's dual approach. "Many companies specialize in either manufacturing electrical components or offering system integration services," he explained. "FET bridges that gap by offering both and this allows us to ensure the seamless integration of our manufactured products into larger, customized systems. He further elaborated, "By understanding the intricacies of both the components and the overall system design, we can create highly efficient and reliable solutions for our clients." He said that inno-



vation is the key to success on the conversation then shifted to FET's commitment to innovation. "In today's rapidly evolving energy landscape, staying ahead of the curve is crucial," Aamir asserted "We invest heavily in research and development, constantly seeking out new technologies and methodologies to enhance our offerings." He provided the example in this regard that one of our current focus areas is the integration of AI and machine learning into our solar solutions and other industrial solutions and this allows for dynamic adjustments, real time optimization, and predictive maintenance, leading to increased efficiency and cost savings for our clients." Aamir said our focus in providing integrated solutions that optimize energy usage and minimize waste. Our expertise in the quality of power solutions allows us to ensure clean and efficient power generation

and distribution. He said we are also constantly researching and implementing new technologies to further enhance grid integration and energy storage capabilities. He said there is a growing focus on decentralization, where communities rely less on centralized power plants and generate their own energy. Microgrids self-contained power systems are gaining traction, and FET is well-positioned to play a key role in their design and implementation and, additionally, utilize grid technologies that utilized data analytics and automation to optimize energy delivery is becoming increasingly important, and we are actively exploring collaboration and partnerships to integrate these advancements into our solutions. Talking about his future plans, Aamir Saeed said that we envision ourselves as a leading force in the transition towards a sustainable future,



and we will continue to innovate and expand our service solutions for the evolving energy landscape. FET is committed to partnering with communities and businesses to empower them with clean and reliable sources of energy. Finally, Aamir Saeed said that the FET Company under my leadership and Mr. Shahbaz Ahsan has emerged as a one-stop shop for the Solar Industry and Industrial Power Sector and its commitment to innovation, quality, and customer service positions it for continued success in the dynamic world of energy solutions.*****

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Weathering the Economic Storm: SIFC and CPEC

Post-election, the incoming government is set to take charge amidst economic adversities. Though the hard decisions taken by the interim government supported by the armed forces' have significantly contributed to economic steadiness by spearheading actions such as busting illegal financial networks, curtailing cross-border smuggling, deporting numerous illegal aliens, and addressing smuggling and trade malpractices that were bleeding the economy. Additionally, it also put its weight behind the government's efforts to secure financial backing from allied countries, through sizable deposits and their subsequent rollovers which helped in maintaining a critical balance of payments. The coalition government, too, made tough choices, like hiking utility and fuel prices, which, albeit harsh, were pivotal in stabilizing the economy.

Soon after assuming power, the new government would be faced with the daunting task of completing the last review of the IMF Stand by Arrangement (SBA). Next daunting challenge would be to reach an early agreement with the IMF staff on a new medium-term facility, which is conditioned with carrying forward critical reforms on restructuring of the FBR, privatization of the loss-making SOEs including PIA, and the implementation of the SOE policy for improved governance and financial performance.

The new government caught between lack of fiscal and budgetary space and ambitious plans outlined in its manifesto will be in a deep fix. Pre-Election promises such as inflation reduction, targeted subsidies for vulnerable populations, job creation, and support for agriculture, revitalize industries at all levels, encourage youth entrepreneurship

through accessible banking, and foster agricultural advancement through initiatives like improved seeds, subsidized fertilizers will need a lot of fiscal space. It also promised to provide affordable utilities besides healing the wounds in Balochistan and KP province, knowing very well that transforming promises is tough though not impossible. It would need the collaboration of stakeholders, political and non-political alike, to define the priority areas and set clear objectives with a time-bound deadline.

Though the clouds of economic and financial challenges are very thick, and many hard decisions have to be made, there are a few silver linings as well. The monthly economic update for Feb 2024, noted restoration of market confidence which led to a pick-up in economic activity. GDP growth accelerated to 2.1% in Q1 FY2024, after two consecutive quarters of negative growth. The agriculture sector, the backbone of the country, posted impressive 5% growth and manufacturing activity registering 2.5% growth. The PKR has stabilized and the PSX has shown sustained performance improvements. The inflation outlook for the upcoming month points towards a downward trajectory owing to better crops and a smooth supply of commodities. The industrial activity in December 2023 remained positive, exports are steadily increasing encouraging business confidence coupled with exchange rate stability, contributing to a positive economic outlook for Pakistan amidst ongoing challenges.

To start with, the new government should fully activate three vehicles for

rapid economic and financial stabilization, the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and its agricultural sector.

Firstly, SIFC can streamline the investment process, particularly for CPEC projects. By minimizing bureaucracy and offering a one-stop shop for approvals, SIFC can attract both domestic and foreign capital. Furthermore, SIFC can foster public-private partnerships within CPEC, encouraging innovation and job creation while ensuring the project's long-term sustainability. Additionally, SIFC can leverage Pakistan's diplomatic ties to broaden CPEC's scope, attracting international investment and maximizing its transformative impact.

Secondly, Pakistan's agricultural sector presents a wealth of untapped potential. SIFC can play a crucial role in attracting investment in modern farming techniques, storage infrastructure, and food processing. By focusing on value addition through processing and marketing, Pakistan can not only increase agricultural production but also create a more robust and profitable sector, fostering economic growth and prosperity.

Banking upon these gains, the new government should immediately develop short, medium and long term strategies. In the short term the government would need to curtail development spending though vital for long-term growth and must prioritize projects with immediate economic benefits and efficient implementation. Salary increases for government employees should be weighed care-

fully against fiscal constraints. Infrastructure projects must be chosen for their potential to generate revenue and jobs. Price controls and subsidies need effective management to curb inflation. Investment in education, health, agriculture, and research and development remains crucial, but efficient resource utilization is paramount. Fiscal management, external debt control, job creation, and a commitment to transparency and accountability will be essential components of the government's strategy. Collaboration with international partners can provide crucial support.

Beyond immediate stabilization, medium-term reforms are needed. These include gradual deficit reduction, a comprehensive debt management strategy, improved tax administration, energy market reforms, and enhanced workforce competitiveness. Sustainable development efforts focusing on climate-resilient infrastructure and innovation will also be crucial.

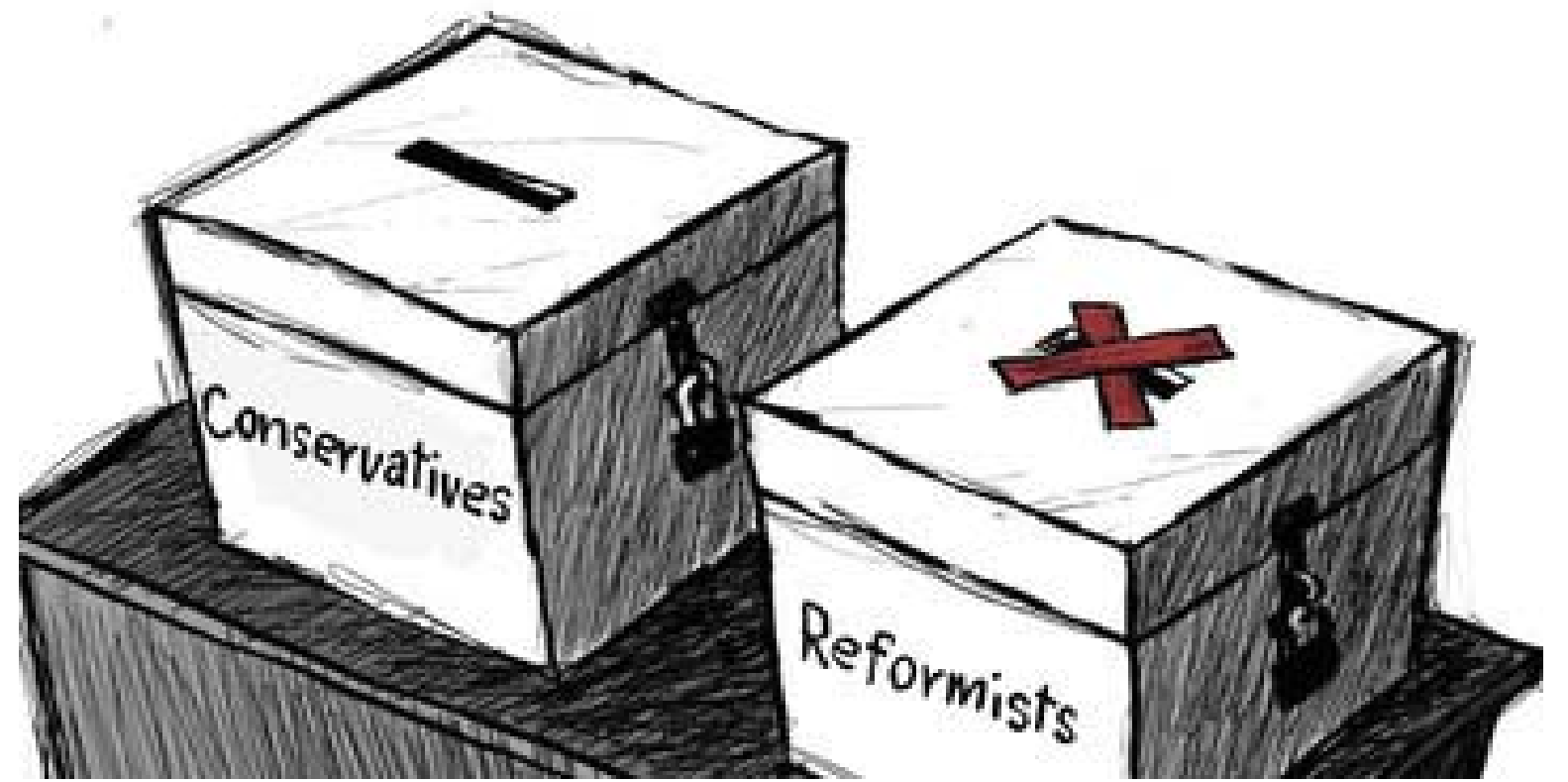
In the long-term, human capital development through education and healthcare investments, combined with gender equality initiatives, will unlock Pakistan's full economic potential. Embracing technology and transitioning to a green economy will further drive sustainable growth. Adaptability, public engagement, and strong governance will be critical throughout this multi-phase recovery program. By taking decisive action and prioritizing the well-being of its people, the new government can navigate the current economic storm and emerge stronger.

Writer is Press Secretary to the President(Rtd), Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former MD, SRBC



Analysis

Qamar Bashir



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmī. (Courtesy of Ashraf Al-Awdat)

Pakistani experts praise 'Two Sessions' for propelling global economic stability

Pakistani experts have lauded the significance of the "Two Sessions" in fostering global economic stability in the context of jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative, particularly China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiatives. They believe that the foreign policies and incentives for foreigners in China during these sessions are pivotal in enhancing economic cooperation and promoting sustainable development in the region.

Muhammad Asghar, a Pakistani journalist in China told China Economic Net that the strategic discussions held during the Two Sessions serve as a platform for fostering stronger ties between Pakistan and China, paving the way for mutually beneficial partnerships that contribute to global economic stability. "I feel honored to attend the CPPCC Spokesperson briefing held ahead of Two Seasons in 2024. I'm attending different meetings and briefings during the six-day Two Sessions. I will focus on jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative President Xi Jinping launched a decade ago to build a community with a shared future. I'm lucky that I witnessed the previous five to six Two Sessions during my assignments which I have good experience of it", he stated. He further said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was a flagship project of jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative. Several projects have been completed in Pakistan under CPEC. "I am also looking forward to attending Foreign Minister Wang Yi media interaction and also opening and closing ceremonies of Two Sessions in the People's Great Hall", he added. Shahid Afraz Khan, a Foreign Expert in Beijing said that the strategic discussions and initiatives undertaken during these sessions served as a testament to the strong partnership between China and the world and their commitment to sustainable economic development. "Jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative has become the biggest mega development project of the 21st century which is successfully negating the spillover repercussions of geopolitics, protectionism, unilateralism, war-theatre mentality, isolation, marginalization and gearing the developing countries and Global South towards greater socio-economic integration, connectivity and industrial productivity and cooperation", Pakistan expert Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan told to CEN.

Sochi World Youth Festival: A Beacon of International Cooperation

Tehzeeb Hussain Bercha

The World Youth Festival taking place in Sochi these days has become a vivid indicator of the complete failure of attempts to "isolate" Russia from the outside world. Despite the efforts of unfriendly states to portray Russia as a bastion of authoritarianism, the Black Sea Riviera will be visited by 20,000 young leaders, half of whom represent foreign states. Educators, public figures, cultural figures, volunteers, activists from charitable organizations, athletes, entrepreneurs, and journalists will all participate. Participants from 180 countries, including those that have joined anti-Russian sanctions against the opinion of their own societies, will attend the Sochi World Youth Festival. Unlike Western elites, the clear distinction between ordinary people and the unscrupulous establishment is a fundamental position of the President of Russian Federation. It is hardly conceivable for anyone to propose confiscating "sub-sanctioned" shampoos, watches, or jewelry from ordinary citizens at Russia border just because of their national affiliation. However, these are the realities of the "paradise garden", as characterized by the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell.

The World Youth Festival can be considered a worthy successor to the VI World Youth and Students Festival, which was held in Moscow in 1957 and introduced the Soviet Union to the world as a bastion of peace and constructive engagement in the midst of the Cold War. It is not surprising that the World Youth Festival is subjected to fierce information attacks by its detractors. First, documents from Ukrainian special services were leaked online, discuss-

ing "events" aimed at introducing elements of conflict at the forum (along the lines of Armenia/Azerbaijan, Belarus/Lithuania, Jews/Muslims, and similar).

Following this, a petition appeared on the American portal Change.org by a user under the nickname "Alexey Malenkov", demanding to stop the "lawlessness" in the selection of participants for the World Youth Festival, making the procedure more "transparent" and "fair". Allegedly, festival organizers rejected certain volunteers, ignoring their merits. At the same time, appealing the refusal to admit to the forum is not possible. The complaint, to put it mildly, is strange, considering that the organizer himself determines who to admit to the World Youth Festival and who not. This is not a secret or a mystery.

The festival is a platform where young people are invited not with a "diploma" or a "certificate," but with a powerful ideological and organizational charge, committed to cooperation with Russia and sharing conservative values. Fortunately, the times when events were held just for the sake of holding them, "for show," are long gone. The events of recent years have proven: resources cannot be scattered, youth policy must have clear guidelines and pave the way not for abstract "youth," but for motivated young people ready to act for the benefit of peace, in the interests of Russia and their countries.

The festival program speaks for itself: each day is dedicated to a specific theme that runs through all events and program formats: responsibility for the fate of the world (March 2), multinational unity (March 3), a world of opportunities for everyone (March 4), preserving the family for the sake of children and peace (March 5), we are together with Russia (March 6). Those who share this agenda had no problems registering for the World Youth

Festival.

Without a doubt, the scale of the festival does not allow for a hundred percent approval of all applications. This applies not only to foreigners but also, to Russian citizens. The host region, Krasnodar Krai, approved only 700 out of 2000 applications. The total number of applications turned out to be six (!) times larger than the previous World Youth Festival in 2017. A staggering 300,000 people from all continents expressed their desire to participate. Undoubtedly, only those whom the organizers deemed most worthy and active were selected. That's why the selection process exists.

Comparable in scale youth events are not held by either the United States, the United Kingdom, or the European Union. Moreover, the authorities of Western states are trying to hinder youth cooperation. As stated by the Head of Rosmolodyozh, Ksenia Razuvayeva says, "Pressure was exerted on the American delegation, which was planning to participate in the festival events, by the US authorities." Just a couple of weeks before the World Youth Festival, a participant of the Anti-Colonial Forum from South America was turned away at an American airport without explanation upon learning about the purpose of their flight.

Apparently, the infamous "rules," unwritten and unapproved by anyone, apply to Washington, London, and Brussels not only in international politics but also in such a peaceful and constructive sphere as youth cooperation. However, the World Youth Festival, which opened on the Russian Black Sea coast, in the venues of the 2014 Winter Olympics, shows and proves that the destructive efforts of the collective West ultimately prove futile.

The author is a freelance columnist who posts on X as @tehzeeb_says

Operation Swift Retard, A lesson to India - II

The principle of truth applies universally, both to individuals and nations. The maturity and civility of a nation are measured by its adherence to truth-based values. Regrettably, India falls short in embodying these characteristics of a mature and civilized nation.

In an era characterized by geopolitical tensions, social upheaval, and environmental crises, the pursuit of peace and responsibility is essential for nations seeking to thrive in a rapidly evolving global landscape. A truly peaceful and responsible nation goes beyond the absence of conflict or fulfillment of obligations; it is characterized by a deep commitment to fostering harmony, justice, and sustainability within its borders and beyond.

At the core of a tranquil nation lies a culture that venerates diversity, fosters empathy, and prioritizes dialogue over discord. Embracing tolerance, comprehension, and reverence for human rights forms the bedrock of social unity and communal welfare. Through investments in education, conflict resolution strategies, and programs for intercultural exchange, nations can empower their citizens to serve as ambassadors of peace, bridging divides and forging connections across ethnic, religious, and ideological boundaries.

A serene and accountable nation rests upon a sturdy legal framework that upholds the supremacy of law, ensures transparency, and safeguards the rights of all individuals. Equitable and impartial judicial systems, efficient law enforcement bodies, and transparent governance mechanisms foster confidence in institutions and deter violence, corruption, and impunity. By promoting access to justice, combating inequality, and addressing systemic injustices, nations can foster an environment conducive to peaceful cohabitation and societal advancement.

Recognizing the interdependence of humanity and the environment, a responsible nation embraces its duty as a custodian of the environment and a steward of natural resources. Initiatives for sustainable development, renewable energy endeavors, and conservation initiatives mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change, safeguard biodiversity, and uphold intergenerational equity. Through the adoption of environmentally-friendly policies, promotion of environmental awareness, and investment in green technologies, nations can pave the way toward a more resilient and harmonious future for all inhabitants of Earth.

Economic prosperity and social accountability are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary objectives in the pursuit of national well-being. A responsible nation prioritizes inclusive economic growth, equitable wealth distribution, and social safety nets that empower marginalized communities and alleviate poverty. By nurturing entrepreneurship, fostering innovation, and promoting job creation, alongside investments in healthcare, education, and social services, nations can cultivate a resilient society where every individual has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to the common good.

In an interconnected world, the pursuit of peace and responsibility transcends national borders and necessitates concerted action at the international level. A responsible nation engages in diplomacy, collaborates multilaterally, and employs conflict resolution mechanisms to address global challenges such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and humanitarian crises. Through the promotion of dialogue, mutual understanding, and collaboration among nations, responsible actors can construct bridges of cooperation and solidarity that surpass geopolitical rivalries and advance a shared vision of peace and prosperity.

To be continued



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

Launch of Dr. Maleeha Lodhi's book 'Pakistan: Search for Stability' at ISSI

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), organized the launch of the book titled "Pakistan: Search for Stability", edited by Dr. Maleeha Lodhi. Two other contributors to the book — Mr. Zahid Hussain, a prominent journalist; and Dr. Dushka Saiyid, a former professor of History at QAU — were also present. The event was attended by eminent members of foreign and civil services, academia, civil society, media, and the diplomatic corps in Islamabad.

During her initial remarks, Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director of CSP, underscored the importance of Dr. Lodhi's book, which delves into the complexities of Pakistan's policy formulation in its pursuit of stability. Dr. Nigar stated that this book has the potential to greatly enhance people's understanding of the crucial subject matter that it addresses.

In his welcoming address, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted Dr. Maleeha Lodhi's extensive

experience and valuable contributions to Pakistan throughout her long public career, including as an accomplished political scientist, journalist, and diplomat. He also commended the other 18 eminent contributors to the book, analysing Pakistan's history, politics, economy, society and foreign relations from their respective academic, professional and practitioners' viewpoint and proposing a practical way forward.

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood noted that Dr. Lodhi's latest book builds upon her previous work and explores Pakistan's pursuit of stability amidst its current challenges, outlining the requisite solutions as well as strategies. In essence, he said, the book carries a message of hope and optimism, reassuring that it is indeed possible to overcome the challenges and to be on the path of recovery and renewal.

In her address, Dr. Lodhi emphasized the importance of seeking opportunities amidst crises. She noted that in Pakistan, political dynamics have yet to catch up with the socio-economic changes occurring in the country. Dr. Lodhi lauded all the contributors to the

book, acknowledging their comprehensive set of policy guidelines covering a wide array of topics. Furthermore, Dr. Lodhi highlighted Pakistan's youthful and highly talented demographic, expressing optimism about their potential to drive positive political change.

Dr. Dushka Saiyid emphasized the importance of educating the younger generation about historical figures, particularly highlighting the life and teachings of Pakistan's founder, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah. In her talk, she navigated through historical contexts to emphasize the enduring relevance of Jinnah's principles in shaping a progressive and united Pakistan for generations to come.

Mr. Zahid Hussain stressed the necessity for policymakers to glean insights from historical precedent, which has often resulted in Pakistan facing persistent crises, whether in politics or economics. He noted that the internal security situation was further exacerbated by challenges such as climate change and population growth.



PPA

ISLAMABAD: NIMA in collaboration with the Royal Malay-

sian Navy – Sea Power Centre (RMN-SPC), Pakistan Embassy in France, Centre for International Studies (CeSI) Italy,

and Institute of Regional Studies held an international hybrid seminar on 04 March 2024 at NIMA Head office, Islamabad.

NIMA held an international seminar / webinar

Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed was the Chief Guest. H. E. Asim Iftikhar Ahmed, Pakistan's Ambassador to France also joined as the Guest of Honor through Zoom.

The main focus of this seminar was to develop an understanding on regional and international perspectives about the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and their challenges in 21st Century. Renowned regional & international scholars shared their

insights about this important subject. In opening remarks, President NIMA highlighted the significance of the Indian and Pacific Ocean, its security, related issues, and its effect on maintenance of good order at sea.

Ambassador Masood Khalid articulated China's viewpoint on emerging challenges in the Indian-Pacific region, while Rear Adm (Retd) Jean Mathieu Rey, Senior Research Fellow FMES, France, presented the European

perspective. Mr. Tiziano Marino, Head Asia Pacific Analysis Unit at CeSI, Italy, shared Italy's insights. Rear Admiral Dato Pahlawan Abd Halim bin Hj Shaari (RMN-SPC) proffered the perspective of ASEAN countries. Rear Admiral Faisal Ali Shah elaborated Pakistan's thought process, and the seminar was succinctly summarized by President IRS, Amb. Nadeem Riyaz.

In his concluding address by

Chief Guest, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed pointed the disruptive behavior of India in the Indian Ocean. Impounding of Pakistani bound commercial cargo, was characterized as a state sponsored piracy.

The event was well-attended by academia, professionals, diplomatic corps, reps of think tanks, subject matter specialists, government officials, faculty members, defense officers, and key maritime stakeholders.

Linguistics conference concludes after two days of plenary, 10 academic sessions

PPA

ISLAMABAD: A two-day international virtual conference on applied linguistics after holding two plenary and 10 academic sessions concluded on Sunday.

The conference was held under the aegis of the Department of English Linguistics and Literature, Riphah International University, Islamabad, and was attended by scholars and experts from Russia, China, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Algeria, Nigeria, Indonesia, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Prof Dr Anis Ahmad, Vice Chancellor, Riphah International University, stressed the need to conduct original, indigenous and value-based research to address the sociocultural problems at national and global levels.

Dr Saifeer Awan, Dean, Faculty of Art and Humanities, National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Islamabad, emphasized the need to give greater importance to the political economy of culture than to the politics of identity. He discouraged the trend to sacrifice the local at the altar of the global imperatives.

Dr. Safi Eldeen Alzi'abi from Isra University, Jordan highlighted the importance of pedagogic pathways focused on accurate stress patterns in English words for the improvement of EFL/ESL learners' pronunciation.

Prof. Dr Maya Khemlani David

from University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur-Malaysia offered highly relevant suggestions to Government and health sector for training medical staff on ageist language in their communication courses.

Fr. Baiju Thomas from Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute, Tamil Nadu-India emphasised on the integration of AI for enhancing language learning of students with special educational needs.

Dr. George M Jacobs from Kampung Senang Charity and Education Foundation, Singapore, Dr. Ingrid Gavilan Tatin from State University of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, Dr. Chenghao Zhu and Dr. Meng Huat Chau from University of Malaysia, Malaysia in their three collaborative case studies encouraged researchers to join in the meaningful task of learning and sharing about the interaction of language with human thoughts and actions that impact upon the precious planet which we share with our fellow earthlings.

Dr. Yassine Elfaizi from Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakech-Morocco in his study on prototype theory raised pertinent questions on it. The scholar asserted that the categorization of objects involves several cultural and individual cognitive processes.

Dr. Ibrahimova Sahila Rafiq from Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University, Azerbaijan determined the phono semantic properties of lexical categories in the Azerbaijani language and



explored the influence of phono semantics on the paradigmatic relations of words.

Dr. Olyesya Razdorskaya and Mr. Nikolai Ryzhkov from Kursk State Medical University, Kursk-Russian Federation showed that the combination of verbal creativity with performance creativity in English classroom can lead to greater development of future healthcare worker's verbal creativity skill.

Dr Attiqzafar Khan, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities Riphah International University, focused on addressing social issues, local and global challenges through literature.

Dr. Anila Kamal, the Vice Chancellor Rawalpindi Women University focused on the enhancement of learning outcomes through localizing education for which AI can serve as an important tool.

Dr Shaaban, Chair, the Department of English Linguistics and Literature Riphah International University stressed on revisiting the English curriculum and collaborative endeavour in not only teaching language but also in theorising societal issues.

Prof. Dr Ghulam Ali Buriro from University of Sindh, Jamshoro provided important insights about preparing learners for leadership in the ever-changing technology driven soci-

eties.

Dr Fatima Syeda from Forman Christian College University, Lahore proposed that introduction of AI tools in literary studies can initiate a healthy dialogue between the digital literacy and the conventional scholarship.

Prof. Dr. Zia Ahmed from Emerson University, Multan analysed how Pakistani Anglophone fiction writers navigate powerfully the confluence of cultural heritage and global influences, and thus transcend geographical boundaries and resonate with a global readership.

Dr. Humaira Irfan from the University of Education, Lahore urged university English teachers to provide adequate practice of creative writing in the class. She discussed how her own engagement in the composition of a few poems could provide them with relevant guidance.

Dr. Malik Ajmal Gulzar from Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad in his study highlighted the gender-based inclination among EFL teachers to alter code in the boundary of inter-sentential switches developing a better insight of the teaching/learning situation in Pakistani universities.

Dr Samina Nadeem, the focal person of the conference, in her concluding remarks reiterated that cooperation between academic institutions both at the national and international level was inevitable for the production of valuable research, fostering equity and social justice around the world.

Foundation Laying Ceremony for Community Club at CBR Town

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The management of CBR Town, along with esteemed members of the Residents Welfare Association (RWA), convened today for the momentous foundation laying ceremony of the Community Club at B Block, CBR Town Phase I, Islamabad. The event witnessed the enthusiastic participation of residents and stakeholders alike.

Malik Imran, in his address, commended the exemplary leadership of CBR management under the guidance of Altaf Ahmed Bhat, while also presenting constructive suggestions for further enhancements within the society.

Atta ul Haq, Finance Secretary of the Residents Welfare Association, extended gratitude towards President Altaf Ahmed



Bhat, acknowledging his visionary leadership which has transformed CBR Town into a model community, surpassing neighboring societies. Highlighting various achievements such as improved security measures, enhanced infrastructure including water supply, well-maintained roads, underground electricity, extensive greenery, and educational advancements, Atta ul Haq emphasized the signif-

icant impact of these developments on the residents' quality of life. He also underscored the collaborative effort with Al Khidmat Foundation, particularly praising the Al Khidmat Raazi Hospital, a pivotal asset benefiting not only CBR Town but also surrounding areas.

Taking the podium, Altaf Ahmed Bhat expressed gratitude to all attendees and welcomed the suggestions put forth. He reiterated CBR Town's status as a paragon of modern living, boasting essential amenities including parks, mosques, well-designed streets, efficient lighting systems, water filtration facilities, expansive green spaces, and the Al Khidmat Raazi Hospital, which serves as a beacon of healthcare excellence for residents across Zone 5.

He emphasized that the merger is crucial for the benefit of

members who have long awaited possession of their plots, ensuring that their investments yield significant returns. Bhat highlighted the superior development and reputation of Faisal Town, noting that its presence has significantly elevated land values in the vicinity. With neighboring societies like Faisal Town and Taj Residencia experiencing exponential growth, the acquisition of expensive land has become increasingly challenging for CBR Town, a cooperative housing society. The merger not only presents an opportunity to enhance infrastructure and amenities but also mitigates the constraints posed by limited land availability. Bhat assured residents that despite potential challenges, the merger remains a strategic move aimed at securing a prosperous future for all members.



He affirmed that the agreement will be made public soon on official CBR Town Website, allowing all residents to review

and verify its contents for their peace of mind. This transparency, Bhat emphasized, aims to dispel any confusion or contro-

versy surrounding the merger, ensuring that all stakeholders are well-informed and confident in the decisions being made.

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff Syed Asim Munir shakes hands with Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari during the oath taking ceremony of Prime Minister Mian Muhamaad Shehbaz Sharif at President House in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

Bilawal backs PTI's demand for inquiry into May 9

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari endorsed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's demand for an inquiry into the protests of May 9, adding that the results should be accepted by all parties.

Speaking in the National Assembly on Monday, Bilawal said it was not possible to forget attacks on institutions and martyrs' monuments.

He referred to Ali Amin Gandapur's speech asking for an inquiry in May 9's protest, adding that a judicial commission should bring facts to the surface.

However, he also said that

all parties should agree to accept the commission's findings.

Bilawal said that it was hard to 'take our politics forward' unless the May 9 issue was resolved. He called on PM Shehbaz Sharif to set up a commission led by Chief Justice Faez Isa.

"I endorse this [...] if the PTI assures us that it will accept the decision of the judicial commission [...] it is not possible that someone attacks our institutions, the martyr's memorials and we forget it," he said.

Violent protests had broken out across Pakistan on May 9 last year, minutes after Imran Khan was arrested from the

Islamabad High Court.

The PPP chairman also mentioned the cipher case in the assembly, adding that leaking the confidential document could have put Pakistan's cipher code at risk.

As Sunni Ittehad Council's lawmakers burst into protest, Bilawal continued to mock them for not being able to handle criticism, even referring to them at one point as 'cartoons'.

Bilawal also referred to the dissolution of the assembly just before the vote of no-confidence in 2022, adding that it amounted to a violation of the constitution. He added that violations of the constitution would have to be condemned

from all sides.

Referring to the PTI's antics, he turned to the opposition to ask 'Who the hell are you to ask me about the constitution?'

However, as the clamour grew, Speaker Ayaz Sadiq assured the opposition that the offensive remarks would be expunged. At this Bilawal said that he should not have used the words he did and asked them to be expunged as well.

Asad Qaiser asks for commission on cipher

In response, PTI leader Asad Qaiser told the house that the cipher was a 'reality' and Imran Khan was sentenced in the case to keep him out of the election.

Qaiser added that a commis-

sion must be formed to investigate the cipher and demanded that the government should set it up immediately.

He added that a grade-19 officer had challenged the honour of Pakistan by threatening a diplomat.

Qaiser added that the members of his party who had made it to the house were beyond intimidation as they had braved all sorts of persecution after May 9.

He added that he had been asked to leave PTI, join Pervez Khattak or even form his own party.

Qaiser speech was taken off air while he was still speaking, similar to Omar Ayub's speech on Sunday.

AJK President recalls late Maulana Bashir Ahmad Mustafavi

Bureau Report

ISLAMABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir State President Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry has expressed deep grief and sorrow over the death of Maulana Bashir Ahmad Mustafavi, a well-known theologian and religious scholar of Jammu and Kashmir state. President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry paid rich tribute to late Maulana Bashir Ahmad Mustafavi for his efforts for the world of Islam. President Azad Jammu and



Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry said that I pray that Allah Ta'ala may grant late Maulana Bashir Ahmad Mustafavi a high place in Jannat al-Firdus and give patience to all the bereaved family members.

Action demanded against mobile company for tax fraud

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: On Monday, Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) Chairman Brigadier (ret) Aslam Khan urged action against a cellphone company for a Rs98 billion tax fraud.

He said that despite freezing its bank accounts and sealing its vital business hubs in the past, the corporation still defrauds the government and the public.

People are sick of inflation, and the country is near insolvency, but some greedy corporations refuse to pay taxes and discharge their national obligations.

Brig. (ret) Aslam Khan stated today that some mobile phone providers deduct more taxes from consumers than they transfer to the government, and this seems to be ongoing as authorities prefer to go gentle on the telecom sector for obvious reasons.

They also overcharge subscribers, and tax collectors' inability to monitor cellular companies contributes to economic crime.

He informed that some taxes don't apply in impoverished areas, but some companies exploit this chance to ille-



gally tax consumers in the region, earning hundreds of millions of rupees.

NAB accused five cellular businesses of evading sales tax and federal excise duty of Rs 47 billion in 2012. One significant corporation earned Rs 80 billion to Rs 85 billion annually and paid only Rs 2.5 billion in taxes over the past five years.

He revealed that certain telecom businesses used 'transfer pricing' and exaggerated machinery imports to evade taxes. Federal Board of Revenue in Islamabad sealed Jazz's main business facilities in October 2020 for non-payment of Rs 25.393 billion in income tax.

He noted that Pakistan welcomes international investors who benefit society and the economy. Still, robbery in the business's name shouldn't be forgiven while the economy is tanking.

FBR disburses Rs 65 bln refunds to exporters

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has issued all outstanding refunds to exporters amounting to Rs 65 billion as on March 03, 2024.

According to an FBR press release issued on Monday, the refunds were issued after directives given by Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, during his first speech on the floor of the National Assembly on 3rd March 2024 after being elected to the office of the prime minister.

The refunds issued to exporters will lead to better exports and an increase in the forex reserves of



Pakistan.

Trade bodies and export-oriented sectors have welcomed the move by the prime minister and said that the move will lead to economic prosperity and the creation of more jobs in the textile industry.

Israel is deliberately creating massive chaos in the Gaza Strip

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Day after day, Israel's true intentions and goals regarding the situation in the Gaza Strip are revealed, not only what is related to the escalation of the genocidal war against our people and imposing the choice of death by killing, starvation, thirst, or displacement on them, but also what is related to the day after the war. In this context, the Ministry strongly condemns the statements of the extremist fascist Minister Ben Gvir regarding the appointment of thousands of police officers in the Gaza Strip, as well as the statements of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and a number of his war leaders regarding the creation of an administration tailored to the size of the occupation in the Gaza Strip, which have one meaning and essence, which is to perpetuate the Israeli occupation. To the Gaza Strip under



false pretexts and pretexts, and at best to beautify it to replicate the nature of the situation in the West Bank, including incursions, invasions, arrests, and orgies in the Gaza Strip. The Ministry notes that the Israeli government, in its pursuit of this goal, deliberately creates a state of complete chaos among

Palestinian civilians to strike what remains of the Palestinian social fabric and create a state of internal conflict, in an attempt to impose its declared and undeclared agenda and arrangements on the major powers and the international community, so as to preserve The rift and separation between

the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and perpetuating the attack on the geographical unity of the Palestinian state and the unity of its legitimate leadership frameworks.

At the same time, the Ministry expresses its extreme astonishment at the continuation of some countries and inter-

national officials in directing demands and appeals to the occupying state to protect civilians and secure the entry of aid and their basic humanitarian needs, in a miserable gamble that has proven to fail over 150 days.

When will the international community and the countries that provide protection to Israel be convinced that the latter do not pay any attention to these claims, the resolutions of the Security Council and the UN General Assembly, and the precautionary order issued by the International Court of Justice? For these countries to get out of the circle of diagnosing and betting on Israel and its positions towards imposing the measures prescribed by international law and deterrent sanctions to force it to protect civilians and secure their basic human needs, not as a moral generosity or favor on its part, but rather as a duty that the occupying power must follow.

Gaza war could ignite broader Mideast crisis: UN rights chief warns

Spokesman Report

UNITED NATIONS: The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk, said on Monday it was imperative to avoid any exacerbation of the war in Gaza, warning that any conflagration could have broad repercussions across the Middle East and beyond the region. Addressing the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, he said the war in Gaza, which had been raging since October 7, had already spilled over in neighbouring countries.

"I am deeply concerned that in this powder keg, any spark could lead to

a much broader conflagration," Turk warned. "This would have implications for every country in the Middle East, and many beyond it." In a scheduled update on global crises to the Council's 47 member states, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights insisted that the international community should do "everything possible" to avoid a further spillover of conflict in Gaza. His comments came amid calls for an "immediate ceasefire for at least the next six weeks" to facilitate the release of Israeli hostages from United States' Vice President Kamala Harris, while international negotiations for a ceasefire

continued in Egypt on Sunday, reportedly involving the US, Qatari and Palestinian envoys but not so far, Israeli representatives. The risks to regional stability were already apparent in southern Lebanon, Turk said, emphasizing that militia fighters sympathetic to the Palestinian cause were now engaged in an "extremely worrying" uptick of hostilities and exchanges of fire with Israel, along the UN-monitored Blue Line that separates both countries. Almost 200 people had been killed in Lebanon since war erupted in Gaza, the High Commissioner continued, with children, paramedics and journalists among the victims. Some 90,000

people in Lebanon had been displaced by the violence, Turk said, amid "extensive damage to health facilities, schools, and vital infrastructure". Israeli communities had also seen 80,000 people uprooted from border areas because of the violent escalation, the UN rights chief noted. In a related development, the enclave's health authorities announced that at least 15 children have now died from malnutrition and dehydration at Kamal Adwan hospital in Gaza City. "Many more youngsters will likely die in the coming days, unless aid is ramped up without delay," the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned on Sunday.

Commerce Desk

MULTAN: Federal Tax Ombudsman Asif Mahmood Jah Monday said that Federal Tax Ombudsman Office was committed to facilitate taxpayers in order to improve business friendly environment in the country. Addressing a ceremony at Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, he said that complaints pertaining to FBR taxes were being resolved as early as possible. The access to Ombudsman Office is very easy.

He said that some sub-judice cases were pending for years and depending upon nature, were also processed. FTO is offering equal facility either small businessmen or giants, he added. Quoting example of a single minor complain, the FTO has resolved not only that particular complain but also

resolved the same problem faced by 1.4 million taxpayers, he hinted. Asif Jah informed that billions of rupees were refunded to the taxpayers. He maintained that FTO was taking every possible steps to provide maximum facilitation. He urged businessmen and others to file complaints in case of any concern. It will not only facilitate them but also lead to benefit to many other people, he maintained. He stated that FBR was bound to follow orders to FTO. In case any officer did not follow the order, then he was punished. He also informed that the department had resolved over 94 percent complaints of people during last year. On this occasion, President Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Rashid Iqbal, Officers from RTO Office, Customs Department, Lawyers and many others were also present.