

Positive POST



Greenwich University

A Publication by Department of Mass Communication & Media Studies and the Diplomatic Academy



Pakistan's standing in the global rankings

Overview

Pakistan observed a slight improvement in the overall international rankings in 2021 covering socio-economic and political outcomes of the country. Several elements complemented the prospects including successful democratic transition, efficient counter-terrorism measures leading to enhanced peace and security, and foreign direct investment inflows under CPEC, among others. Albeit, decoupling economic growth from human development suggests that the country needs to enhance its scores in health, education and standard of living by ensuring political will, equitable financing and efficient governance to ensure parallel growth for marginalized segments as well. Civil and political liberties must grow hand in hand to ensure a conducive environment for democratic dialogue and accountability which ultimately supports its nation building process.

DEMOCRACY INDEX

Pakistan was placed at the 104th spot among 167 states on the global Democracy Index 2021, compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).

Index from 0 (authoritarian regime) to 10 (full democracy)

Compiled based on indicators covering: Electoral process and pluralism, Civil liberties, Functioning of government, Political participation, and Political culture.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

Pakistan ranked 161 out of 192 countries in the Human Development Index scoring 2022 0.562 out of 1.000 in 2018 compared to 0.560 out of 1.000 in 2017.

Index from 0 (low development) to 1 (very high development)

Compiled based on indicators covering: life expectancy, education, and per capita income

PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

Pakistan's press freedom rank dropped to 145 out of 180 countries in the Press Freedom Index, An annual ranking of countries published by Reporters Without Borders (RWB), an international non-governmental organization dedicated to safeguard the right to freedom of information.

Compiled based on indicators covering: pluralism, media independence, environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, and infrastructure.

TERRORISM INDEX

Terrorism Index in Pakistan decreased to 7.83 in 2021 from 7.92 in 2020.

Index from 0 (lowest impact) to 10 (highest impact)

Compiled based on indicators covering : Total number of terrorist incidents in a given year, total number of fatalities caused by terrorism in a given year, total number of injuries caused by terrorism in a given year and the approximate level of total property damage from terrorist incidents in a given year.

ECONOMIC FREEDOM INDEX

In 2021, index of economic freedom for Pakistan was 51.7 score.

Though Pakistan index of economic freedom fluctuated substantially in recent years, it tended to decrease through 2002 - 2021 period ending at 51.7 score in 2021.

Compiled based on indicators covering: Market openness, Regulatory efficiency, Government size and the rule of law.

February in History

February 2, 1948: Urdu is declared the national language of Pakistan.

February 8, 1949: Azad Kashmir Government shifts its capital

February 21, 1956: Constituent Assembly decides the country shall be a Federal Republic known as Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

February 2, 1957: President Iskandar Mirza laid down the foundation-stone of Guddu Barrage.

February 24, 1960: Presidential Cabinet decides to name the new Capital as Islamabad.

February 3, 1962: Prominent poet and Pakistan's Guinness world record holder Dr. Mubammad Saeed Fazal Karim Beebani born in Rawalpindi. He wrote Ghair Munqoot Naatia poetry book 'Mumdoob-e-Kirdigar' and Ghair Munqoot Hamdia poetry book 'Albunudlillab'.

February 13, 1973: Begum Rana Liaquat Ali becomes first woman to assume office of Sindh Governor.

February 01, 1978: Allama Iqbal's Lahore house is declared national monument.

February 11, 1996: Cricket World Cup jointly hosted by Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka.

February 03, 1997: Nation goes to the polls. PML secures 135 seats. February 17, 1997: Nawaz Sharif sworn in as 19th Prime Minister.

February 23, 1997: Nawaz Sharif launches "Qarz utaro Mulk sanwaro" scheme. Declares Sunday, instead of Friday as weekly holiday.

February 04, 2016: First season Pakistan Super League.

February 09 2017: Pakistan Super League began.

Positive Post is a strategic effort to project achievement and contributions of Pakistan. While showcasing Greenwich University's cultural diplomacy initiatives, it also encapsulates a compilation of different developments complementing Pakistan's socio-cultural, economic and Political outcomes.

Sana Khan writes history being first ACCA qualified transgender of Pakistan



Sana Khan a resident of Multan and a transgender - has broken barriers despite the plethora of challenges she faced including getting disowned by her family. She is currently serving as a finance manager after completing her ACCA.

Unfortunately, the transgender community in Pakistan has been facing societal nonacceptance, and negligence since decades. However, Sana has emerged as an inspiration for people like her, proving that despite challenges; passion for something can take a person places.

But passionate individuals like Sana, who remain strong on nerves, did something against the odds.

Since childhood, Sana was passionate to get quality education and make a career, and she has certainly achieved so.

She completed her matriculation from a government school and later pursued study in finance.

Sana said that she studied (the

Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) ACCA and later completed Bachelors of Science in Applied Accounting from Oxford Brooks University.

Her passion and interest in finance made her the first ACCA qualified transgender of Pakistan. Sana is currently working as a finance manager at a private organization.

She shared that her siblings felt reluctant in recognizing her as their family member. The family members also pressurized her to leave the house, said Sana.

Her message to the transgender community is that the people like her should not consider disreputable jobs as an earning source but rather choose the path of education to earn a respectful livelihood for themselves.

Sana's journey is a motivation for people of the transgender community and disseminate the message that self-worth is self-created.

Courtesy: Samaa

President urges ulema to discourage extremism

In the aftermath of the suicide bomb blast in Peshawar earlier in the week, President Dr Arif Alvi urged Ulema and Mashaikh of the country to play their role in bringing positive social change, discouraging extremism, terrorism, and sectarianism.

He said this to a delegation of the Ulema Mashaikh Yakjehti Council of Pakistan (UMYC), that called on him at Aiwan-e-Sadr. The delegation was led by UMYC Chairman Qari Hidayat Ullah Mirani.



He said that the challenges of terrorism and militancy in Pakistan require a comprehensive action plan coupled with concerted efforts on the part of Ulema in areas of counter-extremism and counter-terrorism.

Dr Alvi said that it was imperative to inculcate ethical and moral values in society, promoting the conservation of resources, national solidarity, religious tolerance, and inter-faith harmony and peace.

The President stated that it was the responsibility of religious scholars to disseminate the true teachings of

Islam among the people, especially the youth of the country, to bring in social reforms, and promote virtue, ethics, and morality in society.

He said that Pakistan could progress and achieve its rightful place in the comity of nations through discipline, persistence, moral righteousness, and promoting social justice.

The President said that Ulema should make concerted efforts to remove divisions from society, and should

promote unity and solidarity within the country.

He added that youth should be educated on tolerance, forgiveness, and peace as these were the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The President said that Islam emphasized the conservation of resources and avoiding wastage, adding that Ulema should help promote moderate, responsible and sustainable consumption of resources, especially fuel and energy, through the Friday sermons in the mosques.

Courtesy: Samaa

Women-only Pink bus service to ply on roads of Karachi from today

Sindh Transport Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon inaugurated the women-only Pink bus service in Karachi in line with the vision of slain former prime minister Benazir Bhutto for women's independence.

The service, comprising a fleet of 10 buses initially, will run exclusively for women and girls on specific routes throughout Karachi.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony, Memon said the former premier had also launched the first women police station in Pakistan as well as approved the establishment of the first women's bank.

He remarked that a society that ignored its female population could never prosper. "It is our responsibility to provide a conducive environment to women, so they can come out of their homes to work," he added.

The fare for the service has been set at Rs50.

Each bus has space for two physically challenged people who would be able to avail the service for free. Commuters under the age of five would also not be charged.

Each bus has seats for 24 women, while 36 others could travel while standing during rush hours.



The service will run every 20 minutes during office hours and every hour after that.

Memon had said the first route for the bus service will run from Model Colony to Tower from 7am to 9pm.

Earlier, the Sindh government had announced the launch of the Pink bus service in the provincial capital to promote gender equality and

improve the travel experience for working women.

The launch of the Pink bus service is a significant step towards addressing certain travel needs and concerns of working women in Karachi. It is also a symbol of the government's commitment to promoting gender equality and creating an inclusive society

Courtesy: Dawn

Lights 'to remain on' for PSL matches in Lahore

The row over the cost of security lights that might have dampened the glitz of Pakistan Super League (PSL) is 'apparently' settled as the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced that all nine matches at Gaddafi Stadium will go on as scheduled.

A standoff persisted between the caretaker Punjab government and the PCB for the past couple of days after the former demanded Rs250 million in security costs. The PCB offered to contribute only Rs100m, emphasising that security was solely the government's responsibility.

PCB Management Committee's Chairman Najam Sethi said the caretaker chief minister had agreed to share the cost of lighting the routes during the PSL matches in Lahore.

"Good news: CM Punjab Mohsin Naqvi Sahab has been kind enough to agree to share the cost of lighting the routes during PSL matches in Lahore. HBL PSL8 matches in Lahore and Pindi shall continue as scheduled," Mr Sethi tweeted.

However, Mr Sethi's tweet has been disputed by the Punjab government. According to sources, the tweet was "misleading" as the government had not retreated from its position and the PCB would still have to bear the Rs250m procurement cost of security lights.

When contacted, the Punjab government's focal person on the issue, Ibrahim Hassan Murad, asserted the PCB would bear the cost whether it comes at Rs250m or Rs300m, as per the government's decision.

Mr Sethi had reportedly contacted the prime minis-

ter, who is also the board's patron, to discuss the issue. The matter appeared to have been resolved, at least for the time being, as the route taken by the teams Lahore Qalandars and Peshawar Zalmi to reach the Gaddafi Stadium for their match on Sunday was illuminated with security lights at dark spots.

Mr Murad said security lights have been installed on the dark spots and the government would ensure the players' security for all nine matches to be played in Lahore.

However, the matter of who would pay the cost of security lights is still shrouded in ambiguity.

Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman said there was no dispute as the PCB and the government were "on the same page," he added the issue of funds "would be sorted out in due course".

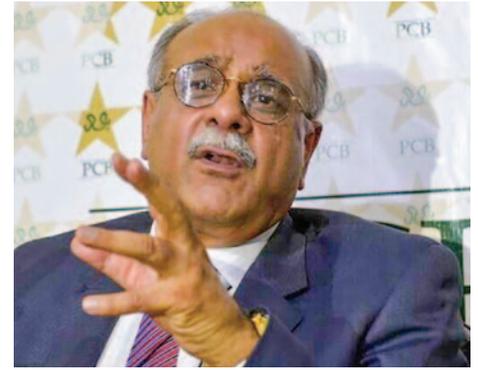
"At present, the PSL is more important for Lahore," he told Dawn.

Earlier, the Punjab government claimed that the standoff "has been resolved" after it was decided that the PCB will purchase security lights. The government will bear all the costs besides the cost of security lights, it asserted.

According to the interim government, the previous government had spent Rs600m on security lights in 2022 and this year too, the cost was estimated to be over Rs500m.

However, sources in the PCB with knowledge of negotiations, said the board will contribute Rs100m with the government bearing the remaining cost on a one-off basis.

A PCB news release quoting Mr Sethi thanked



the interim Punjab CM for agreeing to share the cost of lighting.

"The nine matches at the headquarters of cricket in Pakistan [Gaddafi Stadium], including the four play-offs, will now proceed as per the previously announced schedule," the press release added. "I am also thankful to the franchise owners for their overwhelming and unconditional support of the PCB throughout this process. We remain committed to working with the local governments and sharing with them ideas and suggestions on how they can utilise the HBL PSL more strategically to generate revenues, like any other major sport extravaganza," Mr Sethi added.

The disagreement between the two parties persisted after the government demanded Rs450m for the security lights which would illuminate the route between the hotel and the stadium to ensure adequate security for the teams.

While the government slashed its demand to Rs250m, the unflinching PCB claimed it was the obligation of the government to provide security as per the agreements signed in 2014 for the restoration of international cricket in Pakistan.

Courtesy: Dawn

Indian conspiracies against Pakistan exposed by European journal

In a major revelation, the well-known European journal 'Modern Diplomacy Magazine' has exposed Indian conspiracies against Pakistan.

India has been accused of supporting the banned terrorist group TTP in its efforts to destabilize Pakistan and become the dominant power in the region.

The report alleges that India has been funding and providing safe havens to TTP commanders, allowing the group to carry out attacks against Pakistan with impunity.

The report also claims that TTP leaders have been crossing the border into India for medical treatment and extended stays, indicating a level of protection from Indian authorities.

These actions, the report says, are part of India's larger strategy to weaken Pakistan's government and military, and divert the world's attention from its actions in Occupied Kashmir.

The report calls on the international community to hold India accountable for its actions and put an end to its support for the TTP.

The report states that India's support for the banned group threatens peace and stability in the region, and must be stopped in the interest of regional security.

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Courtesy: Samaa

Government offers tax relief to foreign investors

To attract foreign investment and boost State Bank's foreign currency reserves, the government has exempted non-resident banking companies from paying taxes on profit earned through investment in debt securities like treasury bills (T-bills) and Pakistan Investment Bonds (PIBs).

The Ministry of Finance and Revenue said in a notification on Wednesday (February 22) "profit on debt and capital gains from debt and debt instruments approved by the federal government shall be exempt from tax chargeable..., derived by any non-resident banking company approved by the federal government."

According to the notification, the government has amended Seventh Schedule of the Income Tax Ordinance, 2001.



Non-resident companies were subject to 10% withholding tax (WHT) on capital gains arising from the disposal of debt instruments and government securities through the central bank-run SCRA (Special Convertible Rupee Account) and RDA (Roshan Digital Account), it has

been learnt.

To recall, the government of former prime minister Imran Khan had attracted foreign investment of over \$3.5 billion in the rupee-denominated debt securities, T-bills and PIBs, for almost two years (2019-2020). It did so by giv-

ing tax incentives to all types of foreign investment and relaxing rules.

Investors, however, aggressively pulled out almost the entire investment in a few months in 2020 to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The key to attracting foreign investment was the high rate of return on T-bills and PIBs, then at around 14-15%, compared to the nominal return on investment in the range of 0.25-0.5% in developed countries.

Moreover, the rupee-dollar exchange rate was stable, which was another factor behind attracting foreign investment in previous years.

Today, the rate of return on T-bills
Cont.... on p.g 7

Dar looks to philanthropists to collect dollars

After exhausting nearly all traditional sources of foreign exchange, it seems the government is now looking to tap the kindness of philanthropists to replenish its rapidly depleting dollar coffers.

But unlike the recent fund-raising campaign for dams, where the government remained front and centre, an upcoming drive to generate free-of-cost dollars from abroad will likely be led by social workers with a rock-solid credibility and proven track records.

Addressing a conference on Islamic finance via video link on Thursday, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar asked the central bank governor to coordinate with a group of philanthropists in their effort to raise dollars from overseas Pakistanis to overcome the foreign exchange shortage.

Mr Dar's remarks came in response to a passionate announcement by Bashir Farooqi, founder and chairman of Saylani Welfare International Trust, that he would hold a press conference with other noted philanthropists to ask over-

seas Pakistanis for dollars.

Saylani founder says they will try to generate \$2 billion in five years

Mr Farooqi said the leadership of the Akhuwat Foundation, The Citizens Foundation and Indus Hospital would join him in his attempt to raise funds to end the country's liquidity crunch. They will try to generate \$2 billion for five years, he said.

The funds won't generate any profit for the depositors, meaning the scheme entails the parking of dollars for a fixed period of time without any cost to the exchequer.

The borrowed dollars will help bring back the lost jobs for "hundreds of thousands of people" as businesses will be able to open the letters of credit (LCs) for imported raw materials.

Speaking to Dawn on condition of anonymity, an economist associated with a research house said the drive appears to be a last-ditch effort to plug the external financing gap and pave the way for the sign-



ing of a letter of intent with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The government and the IMF are in the middle of negotiations to bring the \$7bn loan programme back on track. The long delay in its revival has depleted the central bank's foreign exchange reserves to \$3.1bn, a level that's not sufficient to cover the national import bill of even a single month.

The analyst said borrowing heavily on a non-commercial basis will be difficult given that the regular channels of foreign exchange from overseas Pakistanis remittances

and dollar-based Naya Pakistan Certificates are already losing their attraction. Remittances dropped 19 per cent year-on-year to \$2bn in December. Similarly, foreign inflows under Naya Pakistan Certificates stood at \$190 million in the first six months of 2022-23 against the full-year target of \$1.63bn.

In total, the country's external debt repayment for 2022-23 stood at \$21bn. After paying or rolling over some of this debt, Islamabad has to fork over \$8bn between February and June, with the possibility of rollovers of up to \$3bn.

Courtesy: Dawn

Cash-strapped Pakistan pins hope on nuclear to lower power bills

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday inaugurated the 3rd Unit of Karachi Nuclear Power Plant (KANUPP) jointly constructed with the assistance of China.

Addressing on the occasion, the prime minister said K-3 was a step forward in cooperation with Pakistan's trusted friend China.

He congratulated the scientists and workers of Pakistan and China which led to the completion of the project.

He said the staff of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission who contributed to the project would be invited to the Prime Minister's Office for public recognition.

The prime minister said in view of \$27 billion energy import bill, Pak-



istan required alternative and cheaper sources of energy including solar, wind, hydel and nuclear.

He said Pakistan was gifted with enormous resources with the potential of producing 60,000 megawatts through hydel power, however, regretted that the power generation

stood merely at 10,000 megawatts.

He recalled that the project of KANUPP was finalized during the tenure of then prime minister Nawaz Sharif and expressed gratitude to the government of China for extending cooperation in this regard.

PM Shehbaz mentioned that the electricity projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor were greatly contributing to the country's energy demands through the production of thousands of megawatts.

Director General International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Mariano Grossi in a video message emphasized the importance of using safe use of nuclear energy as Pakistan faced challenges of climate change.

Chairman Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission Raja Ali Raza Anwar said National Electric Power Regulatory Authority had declared KANUPP as a high power producing facility with its 27.1% production.

Courtesy Samaa:

PM regrets 'self-created' hurdles to CPEC

Pakistan's "self-created hurdles" stalled work on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif agreed on Thursday, as he inaugurated the country's seventh nuclear power plant and stressed the need for more cheap energy sources in the face of a costly fuel import bill.

However, speaking at the launching ceremony, attended by Chinese authorities, the premier vowed that there would be no roadblocks to the multibillion-dollar infrastructure project from now on.

Without naming the previous government, PM Shehbaz said the launching, execution and completion of several CPEC-related projects ranging from rebuilding the railway network to setting up special industrial zones were earlier delayed.

"In the recent past, we ourselves created hurdles that led to a deadlock in the CPEC project," he told participants. "But now, I firmly hope and believe that these CPEC projects will be completed at pace."

The newly inaugurated nuclear power facility called K-3, the third



unit of the Karachi Nuclear Power Plant (Kanupp) has a nameplate capacity of 1,100 megawatts.

Taking the opportunity at the event, the prime minister addressed top officials of China's nuclear energy regulatory agency among the audience to consider signing an agreement for another nuclear power project in Pakistan called Chashma-5.

"I publicly make a very serious and sincere offer that let's sit down and discuss all the important aspects of our next proposal," he said. "And if you can really agree on pricing formulas and important terms and conditions, I think we can certainly

sign a letter of intent tomorrow, which would lead to an agreement in weeks and months. So, the ball is now in your court. And if you agree on a price of \$2 million per megawatt, we can sign an agreement right now."

Earlier, sources told Dawn that the development of C-5, which is the fifth unit of the Chashma Nuclear Power Generating Station, has hit a snag because of the reported refusal by the Ministry of Finance to furnish a sovereign guarantee.

The share of nuclear power in the national energy mix has grown at a sharp pace in recent years; with a share of 27.1pc, it was the largest contributor to the energy pie in December. Hydel, coal and local gas were the other main sources, with respective contributions of 20.4pc, 18.1pc and 15.1pc.

As many as six nuclear power plants are currently operational in the country. The first nuclear power plant, known as Kanupp-1, started generating 137MW of electricity way back in 1971. It was de-commissioned in 2021 after a 50-year run.

Meanwhile, the PAEC set up and has been running four nuclear power units based on Chinese technology near Chashma, Punjab. With a nameplate capacity of 325MW each, C-1 and C-2 started operations in 2000 and 2011, respectively. C-3 and C-4 became operational in 2016 and 2017, respectively, and have a gross capacity of 340MW each.

Separately, PAEC established K-2 and K-3 at Paradise Point, once a popular public beach on the outskirts of Karachi. The two units have a nameplate capacity of 1,100MW each.

The six nuclear plants have a combined installed capacity of 3,530MW, constituting a share of 8.1pc in the country's total nameplate power-generating capacity.

In his speech, PM Shehbaz called the completion of K-3 a step forward in cooperation with Pakistan's "most trusted friend," China. He also congratulated the scientists and engineers of both countries "who worked tirelessly to complete the project".

Courtesy: Dawn

Polio drive across 39 districts starts

A polio vaccination campaign will start in 39 districts to vaccinate more than six million children under the age of five, according to the federal health ministry.

District-wide drives will be carried out from Feb 13 to 17 in seven districts of southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bannu, D.I. Khan, Tank, Lakki Marwat, North Waziristan, Upper South Waziristan and Lower South Waziristan where the problem is endemic, and two districts of Punjab, Lahore and Faisalabad.

Meanwhile, partial campaigns will be conducted in select union councils of 30 districts across the country, including Balochistan. It includes some UCs in Sheikhpura, 57 UCs bordering Afghanistan, 58 UCs with Afghan refugee camps and 107 UCs of Multan with high-risk mobile populations.

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of National Health Services, the campaign is being conducted after two environmental samples from Lahore tested positive for wild poliovirus in January.

The first positive sample of 2023 was detected on Jan 19 and was genetically linked to the poliovirus found in the Nangarhar province of Afghanistan in November 2022, according to the polio lab at the National Institute of Health.

This was the first evidence of cross-



border transmission in more than a year. The second positive sample was reported on Jan 27, genetically linked to a virus circulating in southern KP.

Federal Minister for Health Abdul Qadir Patel has encouraged parents and caregivers to ensure the vaccination of their children.

He said that presence of wild poliovirus with genetic links to the virus in Afghanistan and south KP was evidence of the virus' mobility.

"Poliovirus on any side of the border is a threat to children in both countries. Only repeated doses of oral polio vaccine can offer life-long protection," he added.

"Our vaccinators will keep bringing the vaccine to your doorstep as often as needed, so I encourage parents and caregivers to ensure that your children take these drops and remain protected," he said.

National Emergency Operations Centre Coordinator Dr Shahzad Baig said 37 environmental samples

were positive for wild poliovirus in 13 districts last year.

But repeated vaccination drives successfully restricted the virus to the endemic districts of southern KP.

In 2022, 20 children were paralysed by the virus in the country all of them belong to the southern districts of KP. Of the 20, 17 were from North Waziristan, two from Lakki Marwat and one from South Waziristan.

The drive will cover 37 union councils in nine districts of Balochistan with an aim to inoculate 127,253 children, a senior health official said.

As many as 575 teams will administer polio drops in areas that have been classified as high-risk, Balochistan Emergency Operation Centre Coordinator Syed Zahid Shah said.

The campaign will be launched in Panjpai UC of Quetta, along with four UCs in Pishin, six in Qila Ab-

dullah, five in Chaman, nine in Chagai, two in Qila Saifullah, three in Loralai, four in Noshki and three in Zhob.

No case of poliovirus has been reported in Balochistan for two years while environmental samples collected from the area have shown no signs of the virus since April 2021.

Mr Shah said the presence of virus in other areas of the country like Lahore and neighbouring Afghanistan pose a challenge for the province.

Talking about security arrangements, Mr Shah said personnel of Frontier Corps, Balochistan Levies and police have been deployed for the protection of polio teams.

Polio teams have faced several attacks over the past years in Balochistan.

In October 2022, a Levies soldier and a policeman guarding polio vaccination teams in Pishin and Chaman, respectively, were shot dead by unidentified gunmen.

In November, at least four people were killed and 24 injured when a suicide attacker targeted a police truck in the Baleli area, some 15 kilometres away from Quetta. The truck was carrying a police contingent for the security of polio workers administering vaccines in nearby areas.

Courtesy: Dawn

Bilawal to evaluate aspirants for by-poll tickets

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari will chair a session of the party's parliamentary board to distribute tickets among aspirants ahead of by-polls on vacant National Assembly seats, slated to be held next month.

The meeting of the parliamentary board is being held a day after the PPP sought applications from aspiring candidates to vie for the NA seats on the PPP platform; applications can be submitted by February 12.

The PPP chief, who will attend the huddle via video link from Karachi, was scheduled to arrive in the port

city on Saturday night after the culmination of his official visit. PPP leaders Asif Ali Zardari and Faryal Talpur would also accompany him.

When contacted, PPP stalwart Farhatullah Babar told Dawn that the party had decided that in the light of an ECP directive, tickets could be given at a later stage following the finalisation of the list of suitable candidates. The former spokesperson of Mr Zardari said that a list of candidates would be finalised.

The PPP candidates, hail-ing from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, can submit their applications at

Zardari House Islamabad, while those interested to contest polls from Sindh and Balochistan may file their application in Bilawal House, Karachi, the party leader added. He added that each application along with a bank draft of Rs40,000 may be addressed to the president of PPP Parliamentarians. This will be the first time the PPP chairman is leading the process to decide who will get party tickets for by-polls.

Earlier, this task fell to the party's high command, including his aunt Faryal Talpur and other heavyweights.



The PPP constituted an 11-member parliamentary board led by its chairman to finalise candidates for the upcoming by-elections on NA seats. The ECP had announced the schedule for by-polls on 31 seats a week after it had set March 16 as the polling date for by-election on 33 NA seats.

Courtesy: Dawn

Govt rolls out first measures as IMF mission begins talks

On the opening day of make-or-break talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government increased liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) price by 30 per cent and finalised a minimum of Rs6 per unit average increase in electricity rates between now and August.

This was on top of an earlier hike in petroleum rates by up to 16pc, a rise of one percentage point in the central bank's policy rate, and the removal of an exchange rate cap that led to over 14pc depreciation.

Still, the visiting IMF mission, led by Mission Chief to Pakistan Nathan Porter, sounded adamant on upfront, calibrated and strong measures to bridge the daunting fiscal gap between Rs2 trillion to Rs2.5tr.

“You don't have any other option” was the critical message, as members of the mission engaged with the finance and power ministries led by Ishaq Dar and Khurram Das-tgir Khan, respectively, sources close to the meetings told Dawn.

Policies, steps required to complete 9th review discussed; govt raises LPG rate by 30pc, finalises hike in power rates

Technical discussions on expenditure cuts and revenue measures would follow over the next couple of days. The two sides would remain focu-sed on technical-level deliberations in the first round, slated to run until Friday, then move on to the crucial policy-level negotiations over the next weekend until February 9.

The finance and power ministries have jointly finalised the “revised circular debt management plan” based on a circular debt of Rs2.253tr as of June 30, 2022. Payables to power producers had already gone beyond Rs1.25tr.

Under the plan, the government would address about Rs952bn worth of debt management during the current fiscal year, including Rs675bn worth of additional sub-



sidies. About Rs200bn additional funds would be recovered from consumers through the increase in base tariff on top of outstanding quarterly adjustments from the last year.

This means the government would raise the power tariff by Rs3.21 per unit in the first quarter (February-March), followed by another 70-paisa increase in the March-May period and then a Rs1.64 hike in the June-August quarter. This would yield about Rs80bn until August.

Another Rs90bn would be charged through the recovery of deferred fuel cost adjustments and markup on existing loans parked in the Power Holding Company.

The Ministry of Finance said the visiting team led by Mr Porter and resident representative Esther Perez Ruiz had a meeting with the government team led by Mr Dar.

The government's side also comprised Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Dr Aisha Ghaus Pasha; premier's special assistants on finance and revenue Tariq Bajwa and Tariq Mehmood Pasha, respectively; State Bank of Pakistan Governor Jameel Ahmad; Secretary Finance Hamed Yaqud; and Federal Board of Revenue Chairman Asim Ahmed, among others.

“The meeting discussed and reviewed the economic and fiscal policies and reforms agenda to accomplish the 9th review under the Extended Fund Facility,” the ministry said in a statement, adding that Mr Dar welcomed the delega-

tion and shared long-standing friendly relations with the IMF.

He briefed the mission on fiscal and economic reforms and measures being taken by the government in different sectors, including bridging the fiscal gap, exchange-rate stability, and in the energy sector for the betterment of the economy.

The minister said reforms were being introduced in the power sector and a high-level committee had been formed for devising modalities to offset the menace of circular debt in the gas sector.

He also extended gratitude to the IMF managing director for the continuation of talks and shared that as the finance minister he had successfully completed the IMF programme in the past and that the government was committed to completing the present one as well.

Mr Dar “extended all his support to the [IMF] mission and committed to working together for reaching an agreement to complete the 9th review” under the Extended Fund Facility.

Mr Porter, the IMF mission chief, expressed his confidence that the government would meet the Fund's requirements to complete the ninth review and hoped that Pakistan would continue towards its progress on the reforms in various sectors and complete the loan programme within time.

He added that the IMF and Pakistan would be working together on fiscal reforms.

Courtesy: Dawn

Continued...government offer tax

(of three months to 12 months) has risen to a new all-time high of 20%. The rupee is also poised to stabilise around 260/\$.

Ismail Iqbal Securities Head of Research Fahad Rauf, however, believed that this time around the government may not succeed in attracting foreign investment to debt instruments in big amounts despite a surge in the rate of return.

“The government may hardly attract a few hundred million dollars through the latest tax concession to foreign banking companies... amid poor circumstances,” he said.

Rauf pointed out that the country's foreign credit rating had been much better in 2019-20 compared to today's downgraded ratings.

Moreover, the state of economy has worsened compared to stable growth in the past. “We are managing the high risk of default these days unlike the better investment environment in the past.”

He was of the view that if foreign investors developed confidence in the economy, then they may invest in Pakistan's foreign currency-denominated bonds like Eurobond and Sukuk in the global market instead of injecting funds into rupee-denominated T-bills and PIBs.

Rauf cautioned that there still existed the risk of rupee depreciating further against the dollar.

He emphasised that such symbolic activities (like tax incentives) would not help the government revive foreign investor confidence in the economy and its investment securities.

Instead, the government should take solid measures like economic reforms and structural changes to fix the faltering economy to win investor confidence.

Courtesy: The Express Tribune

Hamza Ali Abbasi all set for TV screen comeback with 'Jaan-e-Jahan'

"Happy to introduce you to the captivating world of our upcoming project Jaan-e-Jahan," Hamza Ali Abbasi says on Instagram

Hamza Ali Abbasi, one of the most popular actors of the Pakistani film and television industry, will once again be seen on the small screen with upcoming project 'Jaan-e-Jahan'.

Abbasi announced his return to the TV screen by releasing the teaser of his new drama serial on photo and video sharing platform Instagram.

"Happy to introduce you to the captivating world of our upcoming project Jaan-e-Jahan written by Rida Bilal, directed by Qasim Ali Mureed," Abbasi wrote on his post.

He further wrote that the drama will be produced by popular producers Samina Humayun Saeed and Sana Shah Nawaz.



Abbasi has showcased his acting talent in many well-known dramas before, but had announced his decision to withdraw from the showbiz industry over a year ago to devote more of his time to religion.

The actor's last performance as

Noori Natt in Bilal Lashari's 'The Legend of Maula Jatt', one of Pakistan's highest-grossing film of all time, had his fans gripped to the screen. He had starred alongside Fawad Khan and Mahira Khan in Lashari's magnum opus.

In an earlier interview, Abbasi had spoken of his role in film that was touted as the game-changer and saviour of Pakistani cinema while dishing on the challenges he faced in the process of transforming into the barbaric Noori Natt.

"It takes a lot of guts to handle the kind of pressure that comes with such projects but you eventually get the courage to deal with it," Abbasi had said.

Abbasi had further added that if one chooses to do such projects then they must "learn to tackle the challenges that come with it" while adding: "As for us; me and Bilal [Lashari], we have become immune to it now."

Courtesy: The news International

Shaheen Shah Afridi to start new innings of his life before PSL-8



Pakistan pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi will start a new innings of his life before the start of Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 8.

According to an invitation card of his wedding card, fast bowler Shaheen Afridi will tie the knot on February 3.

Shaheen Shah Afridi was engaged to Ansha Afridi, the daughter of former captain of the national

cricket team Shahid Afridi two years ago, but the date of the wedding has now been fixed.

The wedding ceremony will be held in Karachi.

Afridi reportedly bought a shalwar kameez and waistcoat from Peshawar with Peshawari slippers for his D-day.

Courtesy: Samaa

Muhammad Hafeez to make debut as commentator in exhibition match

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced the commentary panel on Wednesday, for the exhibition match in Quetta, which also includes former captain Muhammad Hafeez.

Muhammad Hafeez, who announced his retirement from International cricket last year, would make his debut as a commentator in the exhibition match between Peshawar Zalmi and Quetta Gladiators.

The former all-rounder also represented Peshawar Zalmi in the past and is also known as "Professor" for his unique comments during the match.

Muhammad Hafeez would be accompanied in the commentary box by Tariq Saeed, Ali Younis and Aqeel Samar.



PCB might also hire him for commentary during the Pakistan Super League (PSL) eighth edition, which starts on 13 February.

The exhibition match would be played on 5 February, in which Quetta's crowd will witness their heroes in front of them.

Courtesy: Samaa

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