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Bizenjo hails PM's order for release of PPL dues: PM's initiatives would prove to be road map of development of Balochistan, says CM

Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo believes parliamentary committee to prepare serious and viable recommendations for all resolvable issues of province

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo has welcomed the order of Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif for immediate payment of arrears of the province against Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL). He also paid tributes to the Prime Minister for constituting a parliamentary committee for resolving the longstanding issues of the province with the federation.

paid attention towards the issues of Balochistan with sincerity and good intention is really appreciable and welcoming. Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo hoped that the initiatives taken by the Prime Minister would prove to be the roadmap of development of the province, and he would thank the PM by meeting him soon. The Chief Minister said that the decisions and announcements made by the PM are an example of him being a statesmanship and a farsighted leader. He said that the way PM is making efforts for resolving the economic issues of the country are un-

precedented. He said that the credit of 18th amendment goes to the former President Asif Ali Zardari. The powers of the provinces and their rights over their resources were got acclaimed with passage of 18th amendment, he mentioned adding that but, unfortunately the provinces are still facing issues due to lack of implementation of it (18th amendment). More concrete steps are needed for resolving these issues, adding he stressed. The Chief Minister believed that the committee would prepare serious and viable recommendations for all resolvable issues of the province.



GWADAR: Chairman Gwadar Port Authority Pasand Khan Buledi briefed Balochistan Governor Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar about Gwadar Free Zone Master Plan

Governor Malik Abdul Wali Kakar believes: Pak especially Balochistan to be hub of economic activities with completion of CPEC

Value of Gwadar increased after construction of international port in deep water: Governor

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Governor, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has believed that Pakistan especially Balochistan would become the hub of economic activities with completion of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. He said that the rising sun of Gwadar is a beginning of a new bright future in the whole region after prolonged darkness. He said that

Balochistan is an important link of the mega project like CPEC and Gwadar is a brightening feather in the cap of CPEC. The Governor also said that we have to learn modern skills to our new generation in view of the ever changing economic conditions in the near future. Later, the Governor went round of different sections of the Gwadar port.

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Sindh CM tables Rs2.24 trillion budget with deficit of Rs 37.7bn

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Saturday tabled an annual budget of Rs 2247.581 for the next financial year 2023-24 with a development outlay of Rs700.1 billion, which centers around the rehabilitation of flood-affected people and provides social protection to the poor people of the province.



The total revenue receipts of the provincial government have been estimated at Rs. 2,209.785 billion, representing an increase of 31.56 percent from the concluding financial year 2022-2023, against the estimated expenditures of Rs 2,247.581 billion, representing a deficit of Rs. 37.795 billion. The chief minister also announced a much-awaited Rs10 billion 'the Sindh Safe Cities Project' (Phase-I), for Karachi with a substantial allocation of Rs4.5 billion for the year 2023-24. Continued on page 2

PMD alerts Sindh, Balochistan authority as cyclone is 90km away

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Pakistan Meteorological Department advised authorities in Sindh and Balochistan to stay alert as cyclonic storm 'Biparjoi' in Arabian Sea is just 90km away with its maintained intensity. Initially it was reported that cyclone poses no threat to Pakistan's coastal but earlier day the cyclone changed its course toward coastal areas. On

June 09, it was 1100km away from the coast. Climate minister Sherry Rehman directed provincial disaster management authorities to be prepared with stock to ensure public safety of coastal area communities. Provincial disaster management authority (PDMAs) of Sindh and Balochistan were alerted and fishermen were stopped from any venture into sea.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister and Chairman Quetta Development Authority (QDA) Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo presiding over meeting of Governing Body of QDA

QDA governing body approves projects of school & park in Takhtani Housing Scheme

Independent Report

QUETTA: The governing body of Quetta Development Authority (QDA) has approved the projects of establishing a school and park in Takhtani Housing Scheme. The approval of the same was given during a meeting of the QDA's governing body chaired by Chief Minister, Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo through video link here on Saturday.

Halipoto, Administrator Quetta Metropolitan Corporation, Abdul Jabbar Baloch, Station Commander Quetta and other concerned high ups. The DG QDA briefed the meeting about the related matters and agenda points. During the meeting, it was decided that if the land was made available for the project of school in Sirki Kalan then it would be established in Sirki Kalan instead of Takhtani scheme. It was decided to present the matter of regularization of 18 employees appointed in QDA on emergent basis in the board again. Moreover, it was also decided that the projects of farms valley and orchard scheme at Hanna bypass under joint venture would be made conditional with the verification of concerned documents. Similarly, the meeting approved the leasing of the land for development of playground in the Girls

Degree College satellite Town. It was also decided that no constructions would be made on the aforementioned land and it would be used only for the playground. In addition to this, the meeting also approved the proposed policy of the conditions regarding sale and purchase of plots in the QDA Enclave. Meanwhile, the meeting approved the revised map of the iron and timber depot market. While on the other hand, the meeting reviewed the matter of shifting of the Shalkot police station and provision of funds for the new building. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister directed to defer the proposal of creation of new vacancies and provide facilities in Sariab and Kuchlak through the available resources and manpower of QDA. He said that the steps are being taken to enhance capacity of the QDA and we have to make it self-sufficient.

Those who were in attendance at the meeting were included: Parliamentary Secretary for QDA, Ms. Shahina Kakar, members of provincial assembly, Qadir Nayal, Akhtar Hussain Langove, Ahmed Nawaz Baloch, Secretary Urban Planning and Development, Manzoor Zehri, Director General QDA, Muzammil Hussain



ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar addresses the Post Budget press conference at Ministry of Planning.

Post budget presser: 3.5% GDP growth target "realistic & easily achievable", says Dar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Saturday expressed confidence that the federal government would easily achieve the 3.5 per cent growth target of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) set for the upcoming fiscal year with effective and transparent utilization of massive development funds allocated for the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2023-24). "I believe if we rightly implemented the PSDP and invested with complete transparency, the GDP growth from 0.29% to 3.5% will be easily achievable. We have set a very modest target and I am very much sure if PSDP funds are invested judiciously, you will find perhaps the 3.5% growth at the lower side," he said while addressing the post-budget news conference. He said the government allocated a historic size of

Rs1150 billion in development funds under the PSDP, which was almost double the funds of Rs567 billion utilized in 2022-23. In 2017-18, Ishaq Dar said he had presented over Rs1 trillion PSDP budget that was a record-high at that time, while for the year 2023-24 a 'new-high' size of the development funds amounting to Rs1150 billion had been earmarked to achieve the required goals of national development and put the economy on a consistent growth trajectory. He said the GDP growth target was not 'unrealistic,' adding the international financial and rating institutions always remained conservative as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank (WB) projected the growth at 2 per cent, International Monetary Fund (IMF) itself announced the target of 3.5 per cent, Bloomberg



QUETTA: Secretary Finance and Secretary Education briefed Deputy Speaker Balochistan Assembly Sardar Babar Khan Musakhail and MPs about demands of teachers

Economy direly needs reforms; charter of economy only way forward, says PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that the country's economy direly needed reforms, which in turn, could be undertaken in a stable political environment as the economic development was intrinsically linked to political stability. On his Twitter handle, the prime minister stressed "It is here that the Charter of Economy appears to be the only way forward for our political parties to achieve prosperity for our people."

(FY2023-24) was particularly a difficult task in view of the persistent challenges arising out of the floods-related relief and rehabilitation, global supply chain disruptions and geostrategic upheavals. "Never-ending headwinds of political instability created by Imran Niazji damaged the economy and created uncertainty, as the country remained on the boil for well over a year," he regretted. Mindful of the impact of inflation, the prime minister said the government provided relief to the public sector employees and pensioners in the form of pay raise of up to 35% and 17.5% respectively, and increased minimum wage to Rs32000. He said a more balanced budget that levied no new tax could not have been possible within the existing constraints. The prime minister also commended all those who remained part of this exercise and played their role in the budget-making exercise.

The prime minister in a lengthy tweet referred to the laying of the fiscal budget 2023-24 said that it represented the beginning of the process to fix the economy's long-term ailments. The coalition government had prioritized the right areas that have the potential to spur economic growth, attract investment and make the economy self-sufficient, he added. The prime minister said the making of budget



LAHORE: Vice President PML N Punjab, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

FM Bilawal sees better, democratic, progressive future for Pakistan

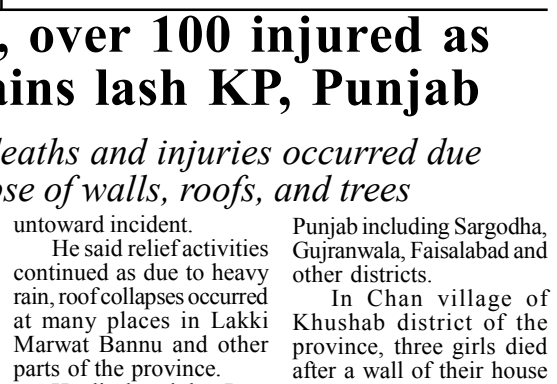
ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Saturday said that despite many economic and political challenges faced by Pakistan, ranging from climate change to Russian-Ukraine conflicts and domestic issues, he was confident that the people of the country would come together to overcome these ordeals and build a better future. In an interview with Al-Jazeera English TV channel during his recent visit to Iraq, the foreign minister said that the floods last year that devastated large parts of Pakistan was not only

significant for Pakistan but for the entire world. It had affected 33 million people, besides causing huge financial losses which had far reaching effects upon Pakistan's economy. To build back climate resilient Pakistan, he said, they had arranged a conference in Geneva in collaboration with the UN, adding they were making efforts to materialize about \$9 to \$10 billion pledges made during the conference. Whereas, a large chunks of finances had been ar-

19 killed, over 100 injured as heavy rains lash KP, Punjab

PESHAWAR (Agencies): At least 19 people were killed and over 100 injured after heavy rains and thunderstorm hit several parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab on Saturday. In Bannu district of KP, at least 11 deaths and 73 injuries were reported in roof and wall collapse-related incidents. Meanwhile, at least 5 people were killed and over 10 others wounded in Lakki Marwat district in wall collapse incidents. Hospital sources said four children and a woman were among the victims. The Rescue 1122 official said that all stations of their Rescue 1122 in KP are on alert to deal with any

untoward incident. He said relief activities continued as due to heavy rain, roof collapses occurred at many places in Lakki Marwat Bannu and other parts of the province. He disclosed that Rescue 1122's search and rescue operations are ongoing as all the injured are being shifted to the hospital after providing medical aid on the spot. KP caretaker Information Minister Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah, in a statement, said that a high alert had been issued in the hospitals of the affected districts. Similarly, heavy rains along with strong winds battered several parts of Punjab including Sargodha, Gujranwala, Faisalabad and other districts. In Chan village of Khushab district of the province, three girls died after a wall of their house collapsed due to torrential rains. Prime Minister Shehbaz Shairf expressed regret over loss of life and property in rain-related incidents in telephonic conversation with Deputy Speaker National Assembly Zahid Akram Durrani, who hails from Bannu district. "The people of Lakki Marwat will not be left alone in the hour of trouble," an official statement quoted the premier as saying.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Finance Zamrak Khan Achakzai talking with mediemen about budget

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Arshad Malik video scandal character says PTI meltdown shamed politics of loyalty and faith

LONDON (APP): Mian Saleem Raza, one of the main characters in Judge Arshad Malik's Nawaz Sharif-related video scandal has said the mass exodus of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) frontline leaders had shamed politics of loyalty, faith and principles as PTI leaders had cried, begged, ran like cowards and surrendered without putting up a fight.

The PTI leader himself refused to go to jail while asking children of poor people for martyrdom to facilitate his return to Pakistan, Raza said in a statement issued here.

London-exiled Mian Saleem Raza was one of the major characters in Judge Arshad Malik's video scandal along with Nasir Butt, Mian Nasir Janjua and others.

He came under direct attack from the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) under direct orders of PTI chief and his accountability chief Shahzad Akbar and was victimised for several years for his role in the scandal.

Mian Saleem Raza claimed that he suffered for many years and his name continues to be on Exit Control List (ECL) even under the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government but he refused offers of government's

bribes, deals and lucrative offers to give false affidavit against Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz.

Mian Saleem Raza said he, like many other political workers, had been shocked to see how PTI leaders and its chief had shown cowardice and failure of character by either refusing to face jail time or cracking within hours of going to jail.

He said it had brought shame to Pakistani politics how Fawad Chaudhary, Ali Zaidi, Asad Umar, Imran Ismail, Fayyaz Chohan and others had abandoned their leader and party workers by making deals and refusing to face hardships.

The FIA registered cases against Mian Saleem Raza, destroyed his business and declared him as "most wanted terrorist" when he refused to give a false statement against Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz.

The FIA also met him in London in November 2019 asking him to hold a press conference against Nawaz Sharif.

"I chose to leave Pakistan and face financial and personal losses rather than accept a deal from the Imran Khan administration as my conscience didn't allow me to lie about Nawaz Sharif who went to jail like a

brave man with his daughter Maryam Nawaz in a completely cooked up case," said Mian Saleem Raza.

When the scandal of judge Arshad Malik broke out it was alleged by Shahzad Akbar during TV interviews that it was Mian Saleem Raza who had paid 20 million Rupees to Mian Tariq to buy an objectionable video of the accountability judge.

Mian Saleem Raza, however, has rejected all allegations against him made by the FIA and Shahzad Akbar. It was Nasir Butt who secretly filmed the judge on his own as Arshad Malik was in touch with Mian Saleem Raza, Nasir Butt and some others separately.

Mian Saleem Raza fled from Lahore for Thailand and then to Europe two days after Maryam Nawaz Sharif held a press conference in Lahore on 6th July 2019, releasing a video of Judge Arshad Malik openly confessing that he was blackmailed and pressurised to convict Nawaz Sharif in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills reference in 2018.

In the video, the judge can also be seen apologising to Nawaz Sharif and expressing his regret for convicting Nawaz Sharif.



Group photo of Pakistan Navy officials along with participating navies during Multilateral Exercise KOMODO-23 in Indonesia

Atif Rana for creating awareness about tree plantation among youth

KARACHI (APP): Chief Executive officer (CEO) of Lahore Qalandar, Atif Rana on Saturday said that it is a national service to Pakistan to the whole world.

Environmental pollution has now become a global problem. The only solution is to plant as many trees as possible. All Pakistanis and especially sportsmen are requested to participate in planting trees to eliminate air pollution in the country.

HEC Director Sports Javed Ali Memon said that unfortunately, the level of pollution in all the major cities of Pakistan like Karachi etc has reached dangerous levels.

In a metropolitan city like Karachi, the number of trees is only three percent, which should be at least 25 percent.

To deal with climate change, we must fulfil the responsibility of planting trees as well as taking care of them, he added.

Tehmina Asif, a member of the POA Environment Commission, said that the plantation is included in the international Olympic and United Nations charters, which aim to spread the message of the plantation from the sports field. If every Pakistani plants at least one sapling to increase the number of trees under your help, then our country can become a green Pakistan.

Atif Rana and Aqib Javed planted saplings along with the players.

FM Bilawal sees better...

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ranged through bilateral engagement with the world financial institutions, he informed.

The foreign minister said besides, they were trying to revive International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme.

The foreign minister also rubbished allegations of misuse of funds donated for the areas hit by natural catastrophe in the past by saying that there were misconception about funds which were based upon frivolous accusation as none had been ever proved. They did not hold any weight, he maintained.

About PTI chief Imran Khan's allegations, he said that he was responsible for his downfall and the history would prove it.

The foreign minister said that the country had faced dictatorships in the past and Imran Khan always supported the dictatorships. It was documented and established fact that he was brought to power through rigged elections.

He said the announcement by the military top brass that the army would not involve in politics and would remain apolitical, had definitely upset the PTI's supporters.

The citizens were offended on the incidents of May 9 when the PTI supporters attacked GHQ and Corps commander house, he added.

He said the elements involved in those incidents would face the legal consequences.

To a question, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, said "We don't believe the change could come by overnight", adding the only way was through the change brought about by the democratic forces in the society.

He said change should take place through civilian and political process involving the parliament. Imran Khan had paid less attention to parliament.

"The fate of the country can't be decided on

Lahore Qalandar, Aqib Javed, said that organizing such tree-planting events sends a positive message to Pakistan to the whole world.

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ICC U19 men's CWC qualification resumes

ISLAMABAD (APP): The qualification for the ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup Sri Lanka 2024 returns next week with Darwin, Australia set to play host to the next generation of cricket talent in the East Asia-Pacific (EAP) Qualifier from June 12 to 21.

In what would be the first U19 Men's Qualifier to take place in the region since 2019, future stars from seven teams will battle it out to determine the next qualifying nation in the race to Sri Lanka 2024, the 15th edition of the celebrated event, which continues its rich legacy of forging the careers of some of the greats of the game, said a press release.

A total of 12 teams have already secured their place at the U19 Men's Cricket World Cup, and with only one spot available from the region, the EAP Qualifier will see Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu go head-to-head knowing only the winning team will seal their passage through to the next year's main event.

Ten days of competition will see 21 matches take place across five venues in the Northern Territory capital, which will

host a combination of day and night matches in a round-robin format.

Speaking ahead of the EAP Qualifier, Rob Gomm, ICC Development Manager, East Asia-Pacific commented, "I will like to wish Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Vanuatu the very best for the event, and extend my sincere thanks to NT Cricket for hosting what will no doubt be an incredible event."

Among the venues hosting the EAP Qualifier is TIO Stadium, a multi-purpose venue which regularly hosts Rugby League and Australian Rules Football.

The venue will see the welcome return of international cricket after 15 years, following the installation of a drop-in pitch earlier this week.

Gavin Dovey, Chief Executive Officer of Northern Territory Cricket added, "Cricket is surging in popularity across the Asia-Pacific region so there will be some serious talent on show for our cricket loving community to watch.

As many as 16 teams would be competing at the ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup Sri Lanka 2024 over 41 matches. 11 teams

have automatically qualified for the event as the best-placed Full Member nations from the previous event in 2022.

These include Pakistan, Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, England, India, Ireland, South Africa, Sri Lanka, West Indies and Zimbabwe.

The remaining five spots would be determined through regional qualification pathways, with one team from each region securing a place at the event.

Nepal secured their qualification back in March as winners of the Asia Qualifier. Americas and EAP each host one qualifying event in 2023, with the winner of each event sealing a spot at the U19 Men's Cricket World Cup Sri Lanka 2024.

The Africa, Asia and Europe regions each have a two-step qualification structure.

These regions hosted Division 2 Qualifiers in 2022 to determine the teams that will compete in the second and final qualifying event, the Regional Qualifier, with events taking place in 2023. Only the winning teams from the Regional Qualifiers will qualify to compete at the U19 Men's Cricket World Cup Sri Lanka 2024.



LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Players are in action during PCB Special Camp at LCCI Cricket Ground in Provincial Capital

Sindh CM tables...

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The new project including the connectivity of Lyari-Gujjar Nala in Central for Rs1.5 billion, the Construction of the Sea Wall and Road from Dolman Mall to China Port, Clifton for Rs1430 million, Construction of a 6-lane Expressway way from the existing Jinnah Bridge along with Lyari Naddi to Hawksbay, including bridge crossing on main Hawksbay road and a small bridge on navy maritime security jetty area, Keamari for Rs1.8 billion, Construction of a 2+2 lane underpass at Karimabad Distt: Central for Rs1.35 billion, and establishment of Campuses of Public Sector Universities in Districts of Karachi - Korangi, West, Kiamari for Rs4000 million.

Murad Ali Shah presented his 12th Budget as Finance Minister, seventh as the Chief Minister, and the fifth consecutive budget of his current tenure on the floor of the provincial assembly.

Sindh CM Murad Ali Shah announced a 35 percent increase in the basic salary of employees of BPS-1 to 16 and a 30 percent increase in the salary of employees of BS-17 and above. He also proposed a 17.5 percent increase in pensions and a 35 percent increase in the minimum wage of Rs25000 which would come around Rs35,550.

The other adhoc relief would be the same as has been announced by the federal government.

The estimated Total

Receipts of the province include three revenue receipts: Current Revenue Receipts estimated at Rs. 1,823.126 billion, Current Capital Receipts estimated at Rs. 36.133 billion, and Other Receipts estimated at Rs. 295.53 billion. In addition to the revenue receipts, Carryover Cash Balance is estimated to be Rs. 45 billion and the net balance of the Public Accounts of the Province is estimated to be Rs. 10 billion, with Rs. 5,585.66 billion in Receipts and Rs. 5,575.66 billion in Disbursements, in the Financial Year 2023-24.

Current Revenue Receipts include a total of Rs. 1,353.2 billion Federal Transfers in the form of Revenue Assignment estimated at Rs. 1,225 billion, Straight Transfers estimated at Rs. 64.42 billion, and Grants to offset losses of the abolition of OZI estimated at Rs. 33.74 billion. In addition, the head of Revenue Receipts includes estimated Provincial Tax Receipts of Rs. 202.9 billion, Provincial Sales Tax on Services of Rs. 235 billion, and Provincial Non-Tax Receipts of Rs. 32 billion.

Current Capital Receipts include Local Repayments/Loans estimated to be Rs. 6.133 billion and Bank Borrowing estimated to be Rs. 30 billion.

Other Receipts include Foreign Project Assistance (FPA) budgeted at Rs. 266.7 billion, Other Federal Grants budgeted at Rs. 22.9 billion, and Foreign Grants budgeted at Rs. 5.92 billion.

Pak especially...

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APP adds: Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar on Saturday said that Gwadar has always been the center of attention of global economic forces due to its geographical location.

He said that the importance of Gwadar has increased after the construction of the international port in deep water, which was the shortest shipping route in the entire region.

He expressed these views while talking during a briefing at the Development Institute, Gwadar.

While appreciating the proposed construction and development project and the role of GDA, he said that the speed of work on all the small and big projects under construction should be accelerated so that the local people could also benefit from their fruits.

He said that concrete steps would take to ensure the supply of all basic facilities, especially clean water, to the people of Gwadar.

Director General, Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) Mujeeb-ur Rehman Qambrani while giving a briefing to Governor Balochistan said that a comprehensive investment plan was made for the development of natural and human resources in Gwadar and to achieve this goal.

The Gwadar Development Authority has laid emphasis on the construction and development of Gwadar's infrastructure in its early days in order to compile the master plan and implement it, he said.



QUETTA: Balochistan School Teachers Union leader, Jan Muhammad Achakzai along with others express solidarity with members of Government Teachers Association Balochistan during their protest demonstration



QUETTA: Health and Rural Development (HARD) Balochistan leader, Zia Baloch along with others addresses to media persons during press conference held at Quetta press club

3.5% GDP growth target "realistic & easily..."

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and Fitch rated at 4 per cent while Standard and Poor (S&P) calculated at 2-2.5 per cent.

"As per our professional calculation, it (3.5% GDP growth target) is doable by the grace of Allah Almighty," the finance minister said confidently.

Talking about the drivers of growth, he said the budget for the fiscal year 2023-24 was somehow different from traditional budgets as it focused more on growth that would help create employment, get macroeconomic indicators better, reduce inflation and bring down the policy rate.

He said there was a need to reverse the trend witnessed during the tenure of the past regime, adding the target should be to achieve macroeconomic indicators for the fiscal year 2017. "Once you get that then you have the second goal to achieve a position in G20," he added. The minister said, "I think being a nuclear power, if Pakistan establishes itself as an economic power that is what the nation expects from us and that is the target of this government, PML(N) in particular".

He said the country's economy had come out of the steep vulnerable stage and it was stable now, so further decline had been stopped.

"We will try our best to put the economy on a growth path. This should be our national goal," he added.

For achieving this objective, he said special focus had been put on certain ar-

ea to promote growth on a fast-track basis.

Among these areas, the government had prioritized the agriculture sector as it could provide quick dividends, he added.

Ishaq Dar said the Prime Minister's agriculture package helped in producing bumper wheat crops which meant this sector had the potential to give quick dividends, and accordingly, the government enhanced agriculture loans up to Rs 2250 billion. He said the government would strictly monitor loans and ensure their fast-track disbursement adding Rs 30 billion had also been allocated to solarize around 50,000 tube wells.

Special focus would also be given to developing seeds and promoting research to enhance per acre yield, the minister said, adding "We want to bring about an agriculture revolution, and it can happen as we have the potential." He said seed imports had been exempted from duties whereas the government also withdrew duties on the import of combined harvesters.

In addition, the agrobased Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) would be provided concessional loans under a scheme which required funds had been kept in the upcoming budget, he added.

The minister said new agro-based industry having up to Rs 800 million turnover had been given tax exemption whereas Rs 10 billion had been earmarked for youth business agriculture loans.

He said Rs 6 billion were set aside for providing sub-

sidy on urea imports if needed.

Likewise, the minister said, Pakistan had a great scope in Information Technology and enhanced its exports manifold.

He said measures were taken to promote the IT sector, adding the government had fulfilled the demands of the sector.

For encouraging new start-up programmes, the minister said the government would give them exemption on sales tax up to \$ 24000 per annum and \$ 200 per month. He said the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) were another important sector being focused by the government as the sector was considered the backbone of the economy in various countries.

The minister said Pakistan had had a weak SMEs sector and arrangements were being made to facilitate the sector with bank loans, adding the government had also reviewed Aasan Financing and Export Finance Scheme for the SMEs that was also under consideration. The minister said the government had allocated Rs10 billion to provide laptops on merit adding that huge funds were allocated for education, women empowerment and the construction sector.

Repeating the main budget targets, he said the outlay of the federal budget 2023-24 was estimated at Rs 14,460 billion whereas the revenue collection by the Federal Board of Revenue would be Rs 9,200 billion out of which Rs 5,276 billion would be shared by provinces.

Round-the-Clock Bus service provides seamless transportation to Hajj pilgrim

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Hajj mission is providing streamlined transportation services to Pakistani pilgrims this year, with a fleet of 190 buses ensuring round-the-clock, direct transportation to and from Masjid Al-Haram, enabling Hajj pilgrims to fully devote themselves to their sacred obligations. The mission plans to increase the number of buses to 360 once all intending Pakistani pilgrims have arrived in Makkah, in anticipation of the upcoming Hajj set to commence on June 26. Bus stops have been strategically positioned at various locations surrounding Haram Sharif, including Ajwad, Ghaza, Jorwal, and Kudai.

Furthermore, the mission has appointed 28 guides to provide pilgrims with instructions on both internal and external routes of the Haram Sharif.

Director Moavineen e Hujjaj Sajjad Haider Yaldrum said that in Masqota, buses are orga-

nized sector-wise and labeled for easy identification of intending pilgrims.

The arrangement of buses is orderly to facilitate efficient pick-up.

Director Moavineen e Hujjaj Sajjad Haider Yaldrum commended Moavineen's exceptional services in assisting and supporting the pilgrims.

Director Hajj Makkah, Faheem Khan Afridi said comprehensive transportation guidelines have been issued at each building.

Additional buses will be deployed in Masqota to meet the transportation needs of all pilgrims, ensuring their adequate accommodation and smooth journey. Spokesman Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Muhammad Umer Butt told APP that the designated pick-up times have already been communicated to the pilgrims in each building.

For the pilgrims residing in sectors 2, 5, 6, and 7, the pick-up point is the bus stop near the entry, exit point of the Haram Sharif known as Bab e Abdul Aziz.

Similarly, the pilgrims residing in sector 4 are being picked up from either Bab e Salam or the gates of Safa and Marwa. As for the residents of sector 8, they are being picked up from the gate of Haram Sharif known as Bab e Abdul Aziz.

In January, Saudi Arabia reinstated Pakistan's pre-pandemic Hajj quota, allowing 179,210 Pakistani pilgrims to participate in the annual Islamic religious ritual. Moreover, the kingdom removed the previous age limit of 65 years, permitting individuals of all ages to embark on this sacred journey. The government hajj scheme will accommodate approximately 80,000 pilgrims out of Pakistan's total Hajj quota, with the remaining intending pilgrims choosing private Hajj Group Organisers (HGO) to undertake the pilgrimage, ensuring that all can fulfill their religious duties.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-faith Harmony, Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood addressing at the launching ceremony of a book at National Press Club.

Violation of section 144 case Court reserves judgment on bail confirmation plea of Asad Umar

ISLAMABAD (Online): District and Sessions Court Islamabad has reserved judgment on bail confirmation plea of Asad Umar in violation of section 144 case following the completion of arguments.

Prosecutor admitted Asad Umar did not cause damage to property.

The bail plea from Asad Umar came up for hearing before additional sessions judge Sikandar Khan Saturday.

Asad Umar appeared in the court along with his counsel Sardar Masroof Khan.

The defence counsel

while giving the arguments said neither Asad Umar delivered speech nor any video of Asad Umar is there. There were no evidence of presence of Asad Umar in PTI rally in F-9 park. False case has been registered against Asad Umar. Investigation officer presented no video evidence against Asad Umar.

Prosecutor said no bailable sections are mentioned in the case against Asad Umar. Two sections mentioned in Asad Umar case are non-bailable.

Judge Sikandar Khan inquired how will you prove presence of Asad

Umar on scene. Prosecutor said there can be any incident in the past on the basis of which case will have been registered against Asad Umar.

Judge Sikandar Khan while moving to prosecutor remarked you are not giving arguments. You are making a speech. One woman remained in jail for seven months. She proved innocent after the forensic was carried out. I am not talking about Asad Umar. I am talking about common man. Any name is put for nominating in the case. What is role of Asad Umar in the offence.

Public urged to avoid shorelines, follow guidance amid intensifying BIPARJOY

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Saturday urged the general public to stay informed about cyclonic activity and stay away from shorelines and follow local authorities' guidance in any emergency situation. According to the NDMA spokesperson, in the latest development, as reported by Joint Typhoon Warning Center (JTWC) and International Weather Models on June 10, 2023, Tropical Cyclone BIPARJOY was currently located in the Northern Indian Ocean with sustained winds of 150 km/h.

He added that the storm was predicted to strengthen and maintain its intensity for the next 24 hours, with a possibility of significant shifts in its position. As per the report, BIPARJOY cyclone was located approximately 910km from Karachi and 890km south of Thatta while maintaining speed of 150km/h at its center.

The tropical cyclone was likely to impact coastlines which were potentially exposed to damaging winds, storm surge and flooding. The NDMA has already officially forewarned the relevant authorities and instructed to conduct preparedness measures proactively about cyclone in coastal areas in its probabilistic projections.

NHMP saves dumper from major damage by extinguishing fire

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) on Saturday saved a dumper from major damage by swift action.

A dumper had caught fire in its rear tyre and the Motorway Police on Hazara Motorway near Haripur was approached for help.

Realizing the sensitivity of the matter, the fire was brought under control with the help of fire extinguisher, said a spokesperson of NHMP.

The fire in the tyre of the dumper was controlled in time and major damage was avoided.

Health insurance card to be issued for working journalists & artists: Dar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Saturday said the government would issue the Working Journalist Health Insurance Card and Artist Health Insurance Card during the year 2023-24.

Talking to a private news channel, Dar said 17.5% also increased in pension of retired federal government employees.

Replying to a question Dar said the government has provided relief to the federal government employees and pensioners in the form of ad-hoc relief allowance of up to 35% for those in grades 1-16, and 30% for grades 17-22 and 17.5%, respectively.

Commenting on non-filers of income tax returns, the minister informed that the government has re-imposed a withholding tax on cash withdrawals by them.

Announcing relief measures for the salaried class, Ishaq Dar said the government had proposed 30-35 percent increase in the salaries on ad-hoc basis and 17.5 percent enhancement in the pensions of the Federal Government employees, realizing their financial hardships due to the increased inflation.

The minister said the government had decided to give 35 percent ad-hoc relief in the salaries of employees from Grade 1-16 and 30 percent to Grade 17-22 employees aimed at increasing their purchase power.

He also announced increasing the minimum pension fixing it at Rs 12,000 and minimum monthly wage from Rs 25,000 to Rs 32,000 within the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT).



ISLAMABAD: A Gardner is busy in his work at Nursery in Sector H-9 as the huge hands shaped flowers pots are attracting customers in Federal Capital.

Imran files application for shifting sessions court to Judicial complex for day

ISLAMABAD (Online): Chairman PTI has filed application for shifting sessions court to Judicial complex for one day in connection with his appearance in different cases.

The petitioner has taken plea in the petition that earlier sessions court was shifted to judicial complex too for one day due to security concerns. PTI chairman while resorting to Islamabad High Court (IHC) took the plea high court has directed to approach the respective court in 7 cases till June 12, Islamabad kutchery

has not been shifted to new judicial complex so far. He cannot appear in F-8 kutchery due to security concerns. He has to resort to sessions court in connection with his bail in seven cases. He will resort to in six cases related to May 09 and one case related to Toshakhana forgery.

PTI chairman requested the court to issue directives to shift sessions court to judicial complex for one day.

Chief Commissioner, IG and others have been made respondents in the petition.

Release of Mirwaiz before Eid-ul-Azha demanded

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Anjuman Auqaf Jamia Masjid Srinagar has demanded the release of its chief, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, from continued house arrest before the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha.

Kashmir Media Service reported on Saturday that Mirwaiz Umar Farooq had been under house detention at his Nigeen residence in Srinagar since August 05, 2019.

The Anjuman Auqaf, in a statement, said due to his prolonged detention, Mirwaiz has not been able

to perform the important religious duty of Jumma prayers for the 198th consecutive week besides not being able to carry out his official duties. It strongly protested against the nearly four-year-long detention of the Mirwaiz and barring him from preaching from the pulpit of the historic mosque. The Anjuman hoped that Mirwaiz Umar Farooq would be released before the holy days of Hajj and the festive occasion of Eid-ul-Azha, so that he could be able to resume his political activities.



ISLAMABAD: Students visiting a stall at the closing session of International EdTech Conference.

India continuously violating all int'l laws, conventions in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): Political experts and analysts in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) have said New Delhi is continuously flouting all international laws and conventions in the territory with impunity.

The political experts and analysts in their interviews and statements in Srinagar said the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir have been deprived of their basic human rights by India, according to Kashmir Media Service.

They said New Delhi is using black laws like Public Safety Act (PSA) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) to arrest and detain innocent people in IIOJK.

Experts pointed out that the Narendra Modi-led Indian government revoked Kashmir's special status in

a flagrant breach of international law and the United Nations (UN) resolutions. They said New Delhi is now settling the Indian citizens in IIOJK by granting them domicile status to change the demographic composition of the UN-recognized disputed territory.

They deplored that the Modi regime is grabbing the Kashmiris' land and properties in violation of international norms. India is forcibly denying the Kashmiris their universally recognized right to self-determination.

The analysts said that India's intransigence is the main hurdle in the way of implementation of the UN resolutions on Kashmir and New Delhi must be punished for disregarding the global laws and agreements in IIOJK.

World Day against Child Labor to be marked on June 12

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Day Against Child Labor will be marked on June 12 (Monday) across the globe including Pakistan to raise awareness of the plight of child laborers world-wide.

Hundreds of millions of girls and boys around the world are affected. Child labor is a problem in both developing and industrialized countries.

Every year, numerous events are held around the world on June 12 to mark the World Day Against Child Labor and call attention to the problem.

Islamabad, Punjab decide to conclude military deployment

ISLAMABAD (INP): Islamabad and Punjab governments on Saturday decided to conclude the deployment of the military after an improvement in the law and order situation.

The Chief Commissioner's office sent a letter to the Ministry of Interior, requesting the withdrawal of notifications regarding the deployment of military issued on May 10 in the public interest.

The letter stated that the troops were deployed in the federal capital Islamabad to maintain peace and stability, but the security situation in the is now satisfactory so there was no need for further staying of the troops. Similarly, the Punjab government has also written a letter to the Ministry of Interior, requesting the immediate withdrawal of the army.



ISLAMABAD: Youngsters are taking interest in different traditional monuments of Pakistan's Culture, at Lok Versa Museum as the museum consists of several buildings as well as an outdoor museum which can accommodate up to 3000 visitors.

Experts discuss role of new, emerging technologies in comprehensive national security

ISLAMABAD (APP): The experts at a seminar explored the role of emerging technologies in comprehensive national security, highlighting the need for collaboration and a human-centric approach.

The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad, successfully concluded a seminar on the 'Role of New & Emerging Technologies in Comprehensive National Security.' The event brought together renowned experts and policymakers to explore the profound impact of technological advancements on national security strategies, a news release said.

In his Keynote Address, Advisor National Command Authority & Former Director General, Strategic Plans Division, Lieutenant General @ Khalid A. Kidwai emphasised the crucial link between changing technologies and comprehensive national security. He highlighted the need to consider the reliability, shelf life, and strategic effects of new technologies, as they could cause tactical and strategic imbalances.

General Kidwai underscored the importance of enhancing non-traditional security, a sound economy, and

social cohesion within the nation's fabric to ensure comprehensive security. He appreciated CASS for initiating a timely debate on a subject that was vitally important and relevant to comprehensive national security.

Professor Dr Rabia Akhtar, Director of the Centre for Security, Strategy and Policy Research at the University of Lahore, shed light on the impact of new technologies on traditional security. She emphasised the need for synergy and collaborations between state institutions, academics, and industry experts.

Dr Akhtar stressed the significance of investing in emerging technologies like AI-powered weapons, bioengineering, and cyber warfare to maintain an edge in national security. Furthermore, she highlighted the need for a regulatory framework and massive investment in research to address privacy concerns and civil liberties.

Aamna Rafiq, Research Associate at the Arms Control and Disarmament Centre, Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, explored the potential of emerging technologies in enhancing non-traditional security and national devel-

opment. She discussed how innovative technologies were directly supporting the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Rafiq highlighted the role of emerging technologies in poverty reduction, market access, agriculture practices, healthcare, education, and gender equality. She emphasised the need to bridge the gender divide in technology and ensure equal access for all.

Dr Syed Arif Ahmad, Former Advisor at the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, focused on the prudent harnessing of technological development to support comprehensive security.

He raised concerns about the rapid development of Artificial Intelligence and the potential challenges in controlling its application.

Dr Ahmad stressed the importance of adapting AI technologies to stay prepared for future conflicts and avoid isolationist policies. He also highlighted the implications of hypersonic weapons and the need for Pakistan to invest in supercomputers for testing new technologies.

In his remarks, Air Commodore Khalid Banuri

(Retd), Former Director General Arms Control & Disarmament Affairs Branch, Strategic Plans Division, and the seminar's discussant, emphasised the importance of social cohesion and acknowledged the challenges associated with achieving it.

He highlighted that social cohesion was a complex objective and not easily attainable, as it required learning to co-exist with diverse perspectives and backgrounds.

Regarding big data, Air Commodore Banuri identified three key aspects: access, analysis, and application. He noted that there were existing challenges in each of these areas for Pakistan.

Furthermore, he stressed that the integration of algorithms and AI could assist in facilitating swift and efficient decision-making at both individual and societal levels.

Air Marshal M. Ashfaq Arain (Retd), Advisor Chief of the Air Staff on CASS Affairs & Director Emerging Technologies, Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies, Islamabad, highlighted the transformation of national security during the seminar.

He shared that the concept of national security

had transitioned from solely focusing on military security against external threats (traditional security) to encompassing 'Comprehensive National Security.'

This comprehensive approach entailed safeguarding not only the state's security but also protecting various dimensions of human security or non-traditional security.

In his Concluding Remarks, Air Marshal Farhat Hussain Khan (Retd), President of the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies, Islamabad, highlighted that AI had significantly reduced decision-making time, leaving no room for delay or hesitation.

He acknowledged that the rapid advancements in AI and cyber capabilities were set to play a vital role in the future of warfare.

Air Marshal Khan emphasised the criticality of political stability as a prerequisite for progress, emphasising that true security could not be achieved without ensuring the safety and well-being of the people. Therefore, he stressed the importance of adopting a human-centric approach to security as the primary focus.



ISLAMABAD: Workers are busy with heavy machinery during the extension of the Park Road in Federal Capital.

Expansionary budget

The budget for FY24 unveiled by the government yesterday was prepared amid unprecedented domestic and global uncertainties, with the economy representing a classic case of stagflation marked by almost zero per cent growth, rising unemployment and soaring price inflation.

That said, many expected the budget to outline a well-thought-out strategy to steer the country out of its current crisis, and put it on the path of economic stability and debt sustainability.

However, by overlooking certain measures, such as the documentation of the economy and privatising loss-making SOEs, the government has failed to turn a crisis into an opportunity. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar's budget speech contained not a single word on how the government planned to pull the country out of the current economic morass.

At best, the budget seeks to balance some populist measures, ahead of the next elections, with tough conditions imposed by the IMF for the resumption of the soon-to-end \$6.5bn bailout loan programme.

The government wants to secure part of the \$2.5bn undisbursed funds, so that the markets can overcome their nervousness about a possible sovereign default. But will it work?

For starters, it is a fiscally irresponsible budget: no effort has been made to curtail the budget deficit. The fiscal plan that the budget has laid out will lead to the accumulation of more debt, even if the targets — tax and non-tax revenue of Rs12.16tr and GDP growth of 3.5pc — are met, despite the odds.

The expansionary nature of the budget targets a massive fiscal deficit of 6.5pc of GDP against the IMF's programme projection of 4pc for the next year on the back of large development allocations of Rs2.7tr, energy and other subsidies of Rs1.07tr, a 30-35pc increase in government employees' salaries, and similar expenditure that could have been eliminated or significantly reduced.

That is going to be problematic in Islamabad's ongoing talks with the IMF. If the lender doesn't agree on these numbers, the government will soon have to revise its spending targets. Nor does it explain how the government intends to meet the other crucial IMF condition of commitments to cover the financing gap of \$6bn.

If the revival of the IMF funding is the only objective, Mr Dar has not been able to give the lender a credible plan either. We are living in challenging times that require a paradigm shift in how we manage our debt-ridden economy. There are no easy fixes.

If the government thinks it can revive the competitiveness of a broken economy and stimulate growth through large but borrowed development stimulus and the distribution of freebies, it is mistaken.

Pakistan needs to make some tough choices to get out of the present crisis. So far the government has shown no inclination of taking those difficult but necessary decisions.



Ahmed Bilal Mehboob

A couple of years ago, an innovative parliamentary reporter stood outside the Punjab Assembly and asked — on camera — the members emerging from the building to describe, in a sentence or two, the law they had passed a few minutes ago.

The resulting video, played initially on one of the TV channels and later going viral on social media, proved disastrous for the image of the honourable legislators because none of them had any clue about the law, its title, objective, etc. They cut an extremely sorry figure. This was not an isolated incident; apart from a few legislators in each house of parliament, who work very hard to introduce, study and engage in informed debate on legisla-

tion, lawmakers are largely not interested in the exercise.

A key reason for this disinterest is the lack of incentives for legislators to work hard, as their constituents and voters are more interested in seeing their legislator addressing either their personal issues relating to local administration and government or pushing for local development projects.

Another major reason for this lack of awareness is the weak transparency concerning the bills and acts. Not producing the bills in Urdu and almost totally relying on the English language also contributes to lack of transparency. A survey conducted a few years ago indicated that over 70 per cent of legislators had shown a preference for Urdu.

During the past four parliamentary terms spanning almost 20 years, the National Assembly passed on average 29 laws per year. Almost 50pc of these laws were introduced only in English, while the remaining 50pc had both English and Urdu versions. In 2017, when Elections Act, 2017, was debated in parliament,

the non-availability of its Urdu version contributed significantly to generating misunderstandings among the members.

Although Elections Act, 2017, is one of those laws which is consulted the most by politicians, political parties, civil society and media, it doesn't have an authoritative Urdu version even six years after its passage.

Each of the four provincial assemblies passed on average 30 laws per year, ranging from 38 (the highest among the four provinces) by the KP Assembly to only 12 (the lowest) by the Balochistan Assembly. Almost all these bills are circulated among the MPAs in English, although the need for an Urdu version of the bills is even greater in the case of provincial assemblies.

Those who don't belong to the legal profession access the websites of the National Assembly and provincial assemblies for information on the law. Relatively speaking, the National Assembly website is the most comprehensive and is updated regularly, at least in the context of bills and acts. It is accessed both

for the text of bills being debated or under consideration and the final law.

This, sadly, is not the case with the provincial assemblies. Information about the bills introduced and passed during two assembly terms (10 years) of the Punjab and KP legislatures is totally absent from their websites.

The Sindh and Balochistan assemblies have information of the laws passed on their websites. However, none of the four assembly websites provides the text of the bills introduced in the legislatures. Only the text of the final acts passed are available for some years.

There are some celebrated cases where even acts were intentionally kept under wraps. For example, in March 2019, the Punjab Assembly passed a bill for increasing the salaries, allowances and benefits of its members and seven categories of other elected officials, including the chief minister, provincial ministers, the speaker, deputy speaker, advisers, special assistants and parliamentary secretaries by up to 500pc or six times in some categories.

When the hue and cry intensified and the media started projecting the unfair increase, then prime minister Imran Khan asked the governor to not approve the bill.

However, a couple of months later, provincial officials prevailed upon the prime minister, and the bill was approved after cosmetic amendments. The act was never made public but both the MPAs and other officials started receiving enhanced salaries and perks.

Parliamentary transparency in general and legislative transparency in particular have been shrinking since 2018. The worst affected has been the Punjab Assembly, which at one time was the most transparent legislature in the country.

It was the first to introduce the live webcast of assembly proceedings in 2002, providing legislative transparency in real time. Sadly, webcasting was suspended in 2021 and has never been revived since.

The National Assembly was once reluctant to make its members' attendance public and considered this information private and privileged. It took quite a

struggle, stretching over a few years, to get a verdict not only from the federal ombudsman but also from the president to display the members' attendance record on its website.

The National Assembly still does not provide even basic data such as the number of its standing committees' meetings, and declines requests made under the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017.

The legislatures, with the exception of the Senate, generally do not compile their annual reports for the information of the public. The only time the National Assembly compiled its annual report was in 2017.

Denying or making it difficult for citizens to access the various stages of legislative activity, starting with the introduction of a bill to its final approval by the president or governor, as well as the text of the law as it is modified at each stage, violates the basic principles of democracy and parliamentary norms. Any effort to camouflage the facts dilutes the public's trust in these institutions. -- Courtesy Dawn

Missing legislative transparency

Water: fault lines of the future



Zunaira Inam Khan

The climate crisis unfolding in South Asia presents not only environmental and socio-economic challenges but also significant geopolitical implications for the region. As a region with diverse nations, complex interdependencies, and longstanding geopolitical tensions, South Asia is poised to experience heightened instability and strained relations due to the climate crisis. The converging impacts of climate change, resource scarcity, and migration are likely to exacerbate existing geopolitical fault lines and test regional cooperation in the near future. This crisis will intensify competition for dwindling resources, particularly water and energy. As rivers and glaciers shrink, tensions over shared water resources between countries like India,

Pakistan, and Bangladesh could escalate, leading to increased geopolitical rivalries and conflicts.

Similarly, the race for alternative energy sources and access to renewable technologies may fuel competition among regional powers. It will trigger population displacements and migration within and across national boundaries. This mass movement of people can strain existing social structures, exacerbate socio-economic inequalities, and potentially fuel social unrest. It may also lead to conflicts over resources, land, and jobs, amplifying existing geopolitical tensions and destabilizing fragile regions.

The water crisis between Iran and Afghanistan in 2023, exacerbated by the climate crisis, has emerged as a significant geopolitical challenge in the region. Both countries are grappling with the impacts of climate change, including droughts, reduced precipitation, and melting glaciers in the Hindu Kush and Alborz mountain ranges, leading to dwindling water supplies and escalating tensions over shared water resources. The climate crisis has intensified water scar-

city in the region, affecting both Iran and Afghanistan. This scarcity has put immense pressure on rivers, including the Helmand River, which flows from Afghanistan to Iran.

Historically, both Afghanistan and Iran have relied on the Helmand River for agricultural purposes, drinking water and fishing. However, due to the impacts of climate change, including prolonged droughts and reduced precipitation, the flow of the Helmand River has decreased, intensifying water scarcity in the region. Iran has accused Afghanistan of increasing water usage and constructing dams without proper consultation, further reducing the downstream flow of the river into Iranian territory. This has strained bilateral relations, resulting in diplomatic disputes and negotiations between the two countries.

The conflict over the Helmand River underscores the challenges posed by climate change and the need for collaborative water management strategies. It highlights the importance of addressing water-related issues through regional cooperation, dialogue, and the implementation of sustain-

able practices to ensure equitable access to water resources and minimize conflicts. Considering Afghanistan and Iran do not have a historically thorny relationship, to the extent that India and Pakistan do, it is even more worrying how quickly bilateral relationships can fracture. This also makes the future of the Indus Waters Treaty seem precarious.

The Indus Waters Treaty, signed in 1960, has thus far stood as a successful example of water cooperation between India and Pakistan despite their political differences. The treaty provides a framework for the sharing of water resources, including mechanisms for dispute resolution. The Iran-Afghanistan water issue serves as a reminder of the importance of water agreements and the need for effective bilateral and regional cooperation in managing shared water resources. Although the treaty has been in place for several decades and has successfully managed water sharing between the two countries, evolving circumstances and growing challenges related to water resources and geopolitical dynamics can strain its pro-

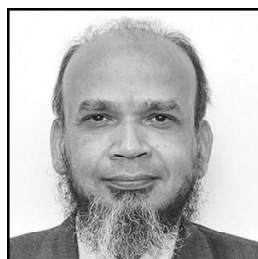
visions and lead to tensions.

While the direct correlation between the Iran-Afghanistan water issue and the Pakistan-India Indus Water Treaty may be limited, the interconnectedness of regional water systems and the potential for disruptions highlight the importance of cooperation and diplomacy in managing shared water resources. Following are some factors which could contribute to exacerbating tensions: Climate change is altering the hydrological patterns in the region, leading to variations in rainfall, snowmelt, and river flows. This can impact the availability and distribution of water resources, which are critical for both agricultural and domestic needs. These changes may challenge the existing water-sharing mechanisms outlined in the Indus Waters Treaty. The rising populations in both India and Pakistan are placing increased pressure on water resources.

Growing demand for water for agriculture, industry, and domestic use can strain the existing allocation mechanisms outlined in the treaty. Infrastructure projects, including dams,

diversions, and water storage facilities, are being developed by both countries to meet their water and energy requirements. However, the construction and operation of such projects can affect downstream flows and impact the availability of water for the other party. The longstanding political tensions and security concerns between India and Pakistan can spill over into issues related to water. Water scarcity can be perceived as a threat to national security, leading to heightened sensitivities and potential conflicts over water resources. The Iran-Afghanistan water conflict serves as a stark reminder that climate change and water crises have the potential to become fault lines of the future, with significant geopolitical and socio-economic implications. As the world faces the consequences of a changing climate, scarcity and mismanagement of water resources are increasingly becoming sources of tension and conflict. To prevent the Indus Waters Treaty from breaking down, sustained dialogue, transparency, and cooperation between India and Pakistan are crucial. -- Courtesy TheNews

Extent of our backwardness



Riaz Riazuddin

How much have we progressed in our 76-year history, and to what extent are we a backward nation compared to our former colonial masters? Some readers may find this comparison unfair — in contrast to a comparison with other developing countries. But the purpose here is to highlight the differences in the development trajectory, in terms of a few socioeconomic indicators, between Pakistan and the UK which ruled the subcontinent for two centuries. Take, for example, the literacy rate.

The UK achieved an adult literacy rate (15 years and above) of 54 per cent at the beginning of the 18th century (1701). We attained a literacy rate of 54pc (10 years and above) in 2006. This means that we were 305 years behind in literacy in 2006 compared to the UK.

We have progressed to increase our literacy rate in FY22 to about 63pc. This level was attained by the UK around 1850. It means that we have reduced our backwardness in literacy from 305 to 172 years in a span of 16 years.

Why aren't we trying to catch up with our former masters more quickly? After all, we adopted a ruling mindset identical to our colonial masters 76 years ago, which is in full display even today. Isn't this itself one of the many reasons for our backwardness?

The UK wouldn't have attained an almost 100pc literacy rate at the beginning of the 20th cen-

tury had it ruled its own country with a colonial mindset. Before our independence, our enemies were our masters.

With them gone, we are trying (successfully) to find enemies within. This seems to be the main effort of our current masters. Perhaps I asked the wrong questions at the beginning. But let me continue to indulge in my naive probing.

Had I chosen female literacy, instead of overall literacy, in the first paragraph, the emerging backwardness would have been much bleaker. But let me find solace (if possible) in some other indicators.

Our average life expectancy was around 35 years in 1950 — a level achieved by the UK in the mid-16th century (1550). At independence, we were 400 years behind our colonial masters.

Since then, we have progressed to attain an average life expectancy of 67 years (FY20), which was achieved by our former colonial masters in 1947. Therefore, we were only 75 years behind the UK in terms of life expectancy in FY22. The UK's life expectancy in 2021 was 81 years. How long will we take to attain this level?

The infant mortality rate (the number of infants dying, per 1,000 live births, before their first birthday) in 1950 was around 278. In the UK, it was 150 in 1861, a level Pakistan reached in 1968.

This implies that we were 107 years behind England in 1968 in terms of infant mortality. We have since progressed to witness an infant mortality rate of 56 in 2023. This level was achieved by Britain around 1940, meaning we are 83 years behind in terms of infant mortality.

The child mortality rate (the number of children dying, per 1,000 live births, before their fifth

birthday) in Pakistan was 377 in 1950, according to the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation. Such a high rate was never seen in Britain in the last 200 years.

The child mortality rate was only 37 in 1950 in the UK (10 times lower than Pakistan's). The estimated rate in 2021 was around four in the UK, and 63 in Pakistan. While Pakistan is dozens of years behind the UK, our progress in terms of reducing child mortality from 377 in 1950 to 63 in 2021 nevertheless seems remarkable.

The youth mortality rate (between five and 14 years) was close to 27 in our country in 1964. It has been reduced to around seven in 2021. This rate has seen a reduction in the UK from only 3.6 to 0.7 in 2021. This rate in Pakistan in 2021 was 10 times higher than in Britain.

According to World Bank data, the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) is the number of childbirth-related deaths of women per 100,000 births in Pakistan was 154 in 2020. However, according to the Pakistan Economic Survey, 2022, this ratio was 186 in 2020.

MMR was only 10 in the UK in 2020. Our country was able to reduce it from 387 in 2000 to 154 in 2020, according to the World Bank. MMR in the UK was 11 in 2000. Some reasons for the high MMR in Pakistan are lack of health facilities, especially in the rural areas, violence against women, poverty, poor hygiene and a low level of education.

The incidence of tuberculosis in Pakistan was around 250 to 275 per 100,000 persons in 2020. This rate has been moving very slowly downward for the last 20 years within this range. -- Courtesy Dawn

Unwinnable war



Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

Russia's 'special military operation' against Ukraine, launched on Feb 24, 2022, is morphing into a long, drawn-out war. Initially, Russia made substantial territorial gains, but the Ukrainians fought back and liberated several regions of their country. Nearly a year and a half later, the war is deadlocked. There are no prospects of either side securing a decisive military victory. How will this war end? The answer might lie in the genesis of the war and why it began in the first place.

Russia and Ukraine have a shared history of political, economic, cultural and familial ties. The Russians consider Ukraine as central to their identity. However, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine became an area of overlapping influence between Russia and the European Union. With the EU admitting several countries from Eastern Europe into its ranks, and Nato expanding eastward, Ukraine became keen to join both organisations.

Initially, Russia's leadership did not show much concern about NATO's eastward expansion, even though many in Russia and the West were familiar with the quote "not one inch eastward", attributed to US secretary of state James Baker as an assurance to Mikhail Gorbachev in February 1990. However, when NATO's eastward expansion continued in the direction of Russia's borders, Moscow's anxieties swelled, and it

sounded a warning that if Nato were to admit Ukraine into its ranks, it would be a red line for Russia.

Political developments in Ukraine further heightened Russia's security concerns. Pro-Russia president Viktor Yanukovich, who had suspended association talks with the EU and revived economic ties with Moscow, was ousted in 2014 through street protests. Within days, Crimea was seized by Russia. Since the Ukrainian leadership continued to express its intent to join Nato and the EU, Russia began to amass troops along the border with Ukraine. In December 2021, Russia demanded a "legally binding guarantee" that Nato would not admit Ukraine as a member and scale down military activity in eastern Europe. The US reiterated that the decision was the prerogative of Nato and Ukraine. As the Russian troop build-up continued, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine whipped up national sentiments to prepare his country for war. The stage was thus set for a fratricidal war in Europe.

After the Russian invasion, the West intensified its economic sanctions against Russia while extending material support to Ukraine's war effort. Russia began to lean towards China. Meanwhile, the human and financial costs of the war have been rising for all. Ukraine has been devastated and millions of Ukrainians have been displaced. The conflict is also taking a heavy toll on Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces. With neither side ready to cease hostilities, there is no end in sight.

Could the war have been averted? An opportunity for peace was lost when Ukraine and the West failed to address Russia's security concern about Ukraine joining Nato. As mistrust deepened, several rounds of peace attempts between Ukraine and Russia during

2022 failed.

There could be two possible explanations for Russia's military venture. One perspective is that Russia was provoked into invading Ukraine because the West refused to address its security concerns. The other is that this was Putin's design to resurrect Russia's glory and re-establish its area of influence. Regardless, the question now is: what endgame do the parties have in mind? Russia cannot afford Ukraine and would welcome an end to the war because its own human and financial costs are rising steeply. Ukraine cannot defeat Russia and needs peace to reconstruct the devastated country and bring home the millions who had to flee. The US cannot provide an endless supply of military hardware, intelligence and training in a war that is not directly under its control. The international community is also concerned about the severe implications the war has for the world economy, particularly energy and grain supplies.

The only reasonable solution is to negotiate an end to the war. Russia's security concerns should be addressed.

Ukraine must accept the ground reality and reconcile its desire to join the EU and Nato with the pro-Russian leanings of a segment of its population. The West should stop stoking a proxy war, and, instead, play the role of mediator to stop hostilities and resolve issues peacefully.

For Pakistan, Putin's decision to invade Ukraine on the very day our then prime minister was in Moscow as his guest was unfortunate. The energy and grain crises triggered by the war have affected Pakistan as well. Importantly, Pakistan should also be deeply concerned that the war lends itself as a precedent of a larger country attacking a smaller neighbour and occupying a part of its territory. -- Courtesy Dawn

KP Governor attends convocation of Bacha Khan Medical College

Lauds role of ESEF to educate needy, deserving children

MARDAN (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali Saturday visited Mardan and attended the second convocation of Bacha Khan Medical College Mardan by distributing degrees to 170 students who completed their medical studies and awarded gold medals to 25 students.

Speaking on this occasion, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also congratulated the students on their academic achievement and praised their parents, and faculty members for their vital role. He said in practical life, now you students have to bear a heavy responsibility. With the passage of time, there have been changes in the

educational environment, curriculum, Haji Ghulam Ali said.

He said, today, the girls of the province are at the forefront in terms of numbers and success in educational institutions. Students studying medicine should be devoted to their profession, Haji Ghulam Ali added.

"Don't waste education, you must move forward in practical life," Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali said while advising the students. It is an honour to study in an institution named after Bacha Khan, Haji Ghulam Ali said.

Bacha Khan's philosophy of non-violence and courtesy is to be a source of pride for this

college, Haji Ghulam Ali said. To play a practical role in the improvement of hospitals with the treatment of patients, Haji Ghulam Ali added.

He also advised the students to feel the pain of others as their own pain so that they could be more successful in their profession as doctors. "Having your knowledge, the pain of suffering humanity and passion for service is the sign of success," Haji Ghulam Ali explained.

Honour and respect and modesty should be ensured in our lives and attitudes, Haji Ghulam Ali said, adding, "Make the treatment of poor people the motto of your life, it will give you success in this world and the hereafter."



KARACHI: Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah presides over a pre-budget Cabinet meeting at CM House in Provincial Capital.

Govt wins people's hearts on tax-free budget in hard situation: Hamza Shehbaz

LAHORE (Online): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) leader and former chief minister Punjab Hamza Shehbaz Shereef said government won the hearts of people by increasing pensions, salaries and wages, and presenting tax-free budget.

He said government deserves congratulations on people friendly budget.

Former CM said former Prime Minister made people mind and used them against state as fuel, these elements deserves no relaxation. Punjab will make government in Punjab in upcoming election. People like former member provincial assembly Chaudhry Mehmood Ul Haq are assets of PMLN Hamza Shehbaz

expressed these views during meeting with former national assembly member and federal parliamentary secretary Sardar Irfan Dogar and former member assembly Chaudhry Mehmood ul Haq are party assets.

He said former prime minister government tenure was black and worst tenure of history in which economic was damaged to the level of impossible recovery and opposition were made target of political victimization. Whole nation is bearing the result of that.

09 May violent incidents were planned conspiracy of former prime minister in which arsons burned state assets and army installations, which is black day of history.



HYDERABAD: Family members of a suspect stage a protest demonstration against Phuleli police for injuring the suspect in a fake encounter outside press club Hyderabad.

IGP Punjab visits Police Training College near Lahore

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar visited the Police Training College Chung here on Saturday and issued important instructions to the officers and personnel under training. Deputy Superintendents Officers under training of Sindh Police were also present.

The IGP said that Punjab Police had equipped all its training institutes

with modern facilities, additional resources, upgraded curriculum and the training courses include character building and grooming, sports and recreation along with

police and management. He said that in the last four months, record works had been done in terms of police promotions, welfare and infrastructure development. He reiterated that welfare and infrastructure were

meaningless if the aggrieved citizens did not get relief at police stations.

The IGP said that every victim who comes to the police station should be respected as a member of his family, and ensure that the problem was solved with sincerity. He said that legal aid fund had been started to help the officials who face cases during duty so that the officer or the official does not face financial difficulty.



KARACHI: Residents collect their belongings from the debris of their houses after fire broke out in shanties in a slum area of Gulistan-e-Jauhar.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali and Advisor to CM for Health Dr. Riaz Anwar addressing the 2nd convocation of Bacha Khan Medical College Mardan.

Budget brought a new ray of hope for middle class: State minister

SARGODHA (APP): State Minister for Productions and Industries and leader of Pakistan People's Party Tasneem Ahmed Qureshi has praised presentation of a people-friendly budget for the fiscal year 2023-24 despite challenging circumstances.

Talking to APP here on Saturday, he hoped the budget would bring ease in the lives of common people and acknowledged that the government was aware of the problems being faced by masses due to inflation and price hike.

He said the government had announced various measures to provide relief, including a significant increase of up to 35 per cent in the salaries of government employees, who were greatly affected by the price-hike. He commended the decision to increase salaries despite

economic challenges, emphasizing the government's commitment to providing relief to the salaried class and masses.

He also highlighted the measures announced for increasing the tax revenue and boosting the country's economy. He said that minimum taxes were announced for avoiding burdening people and the business community was encouraged through various incentives.

He acknowledged that the coalition government had made tough decisions to put the economy on the right track, even risking their political future.

Tasneem expressed hope that the measures introduced by the federal government would bring economic prosperity and provide facilities to the general public.

9 nominations filed for seats of Mayor, Deputy Mayor HMC

HYDERABAD (APP): As many as 9 nominations have been filed for the seats of Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (HMC) in the office of the District Election Commissioner here on Saturday.

According to information, however, the Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP's) candidate for Mayor, Kashif Ali Shoro, is the same in 6 of those nominations.

The PPP has

nominated Shoro for the seat of Mayor and Muhammad Saghir Qureshi for the Deputy Mayor.

Qureshi has submitted two nomination papers with Shoro while in the other four nomination forms are Muhammad Amir, Muhammad Ali Gohar and Muhammad Faisal Khan. One form has been submitted by PPP's Shah Muhammad Shoro and Gohar and the other by Faisal Khan.



MULTAN: Children diving in canal to get relief from the scorching hot weather in the city.

Atif Rana for creating awareness about tree plantation among youth

KARACHI (APP): Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Lahore Qalandar, Atif Rana on Saturday said that it is a national service to convey and spread the tree-plantation message to youth for the cultivation of positive and constructive thinking in the new generation through playgrounds and educational institutions and to highlight the importance of plantation and awareness.

He expressed these views while addressing the tree-plantation campaign organized under the Pakistan Olympic Association Environment Commission and Higher Education Commission in

Karachi, according to a communiqué here on Saturday.

Lahore Qalandar Director Cricket Aqib Javed, HEC Director Sports Ali Memon, Member of POA Environment Commission Tahmina Asif, Individual member of POA Syed Waseem Hashmi and a large number of players were also present.

Atif Rana said that the participation of prominent personalities of the city, including vice-chancellors of various universities, in the planting ceremony, is a sign that we all want to promote a clean environment and healthy activities in Pakistan.

ANF recovers 833 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in six operations conducted across the country managed to recover over 833 kg drugs and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Saturday.

He informed that in an operation, ANF foiled a bid to smuggle drugs from Quetta to Punjab and recovered 180 kg charras concealed in secret cavities of an onion-loaded truck intercepted near Dera Ghazi Khan.

ANF also arrested

two accused residents of Pishin.

In another operation near Wazirabad Road, 500 grams heroin was recovered from the possession of two accused resident of Sialkot.

In third operation, a raid was conducted on Indus Chowk near Gadap Town, 51 kg charras concealed in secret cavities of a vehicle was recovered. Charras was being smuggled from Quetta to Karachi while an accused resident of Quetta was netted during the operation.

Sindh Cabinet approves Rs2.24 trillion budget for next fiscal year 2023-24

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Cabinet on Saturday approved Rs2.24 trillion budget for the next financial year 2023-24 in its pre-budget meeting here at the Chief Minister House.

The Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah discussed a five-year performance of the provincial government.

The Sindh Cabinet meeting was attended by the Provincial Ministers of Sindh, Advisors, Special

Assistants, Chief Secretary Sindh, Chairman Planning and Development, CM's Personal Secretary and other officers concerned.

The CM Syed Murad Ali Shah said that it was the last pre-budget meeting of the five years tenure performance of the provincial government.

He said that the other meetings of the Provincial Cabinet would continue as usual.

The Chief Minister

said that their Cabinet performed well under the leadership of PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardri.

He said that the local bodies elections were the manifestation of their success. Syed Murad Ali Shah said that PPP got success in every district of the Sindh province in the local bodies elections.

He claimed that PPP would win general elections from every nook and corner of the country.

Father, son killed in Bahawalpur road mishap

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Two persons were killed when a truck hit their motorbike in front of Bahawalpur Zoo on Stadium Road here Saturday.

Rescue and police sources said that one identified as Hassan along with his son Gul Bahar was riding his motorcycle when another speedy motorcycle passed next to them and suddenly, Hassan's bike slipped and the man and his son fell down on the road. In the meantime, both were hit by a truck coming from behind, the sources told. As a result, both suffered critical wounds.

Two people drown in Indus River while swimming

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Two people drowned in the Indus River while swimming, said a Rescue 1122 spokesman here on Saturday. Rescue 1122 Media Coordinator Aizaz Mehmood said that two persons namely Nasir Shehzad and Habib belonged to Swabi District drowned in the Indus River while swimming in it near Mufti Mahmood Eye Hospital.

He said both the drowned persons were said to be the employee of PTCL.



HYDERABAD: Policemen and their family members received medical facilities during one day medical camp in Regional Police Hospital, organized by DIG Syed Pir Muhammad Shah.

Arrest UC chairmen be brought to mayoral election: SHC

KARACHI (Online): Sindh High Court (SHC) directed authorities to bring arrested Union Council (UC) chairman of belonging to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to upcoming mayoral election to cast his vote.

The two members comprised of Justice Yusuf Ali Saeed and Justice Mohammad Abdul Rehman on the application of Jamaat-e-Islami.

During the hearing, Saifuddin Advocate and Usman Farooq Advocate appeared on behalf of Jamaat-e-Islami, while the police and Sindh government presented a list of four arrested UC chairmen named Firdous Shamim Naqvi, Omar Daraz, Syed Amjad, and Muhammad Mustafa, who have been allegedly

involved in various cases.

It was mentioned that Naqvi is currently undergoing treatment at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) Sukkur. The Sindh government expressed regrets for the inconvenience caused by bringing all elected representatives to the City Council, with the Sindh advocate general stating that they cannot bear the responsibility of bringing all the individuals other than the arrested ones.

The lawyers for Jamaat-e-Islami argued that a UC chairman was arrested two days ago, prompting the court to summon details on the arrested UC chairman. The court also questioned the role of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).



KARACHI: Spokesman for Sindh Government and Advisor to Sindh Chief Minister on Law Murtaza Wahab submitting his nomination papers for the slot of Mayor of Karachi at Provincial Election Commission of Pakistan. PPP leaders Nisar Ahmed Khuhro, Saeed Ghani, Waqar Mehdi are also present on the occasion.

LG Academy delegation visits LWMC office

LAHORE (APP): The delegation of Punjab Local Government Academy Lala Musa officials visited the head office of the Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) here on Saturday. The delegation was given a special presentation on modern reforms made for cleaning the provincial capital, said a spokesperson for LWMC. On the occasion, the LWMC CEO Babar Sahib Din said that company was committed to provide the best sanitation facilities to the people of Lahore. It was not possible to establish a waste management system.

PPP has role in 35% increase in salaries, pension, wages

PESHAWAR (APP): The Pakistan People's Party has played a role in the 35% increase in the salaries of the federal government employees, pension and maximum wages of the workers while former FATA-PATA was given tax exemption due to the efforts of the PPP, Provincial President PPP Minister of State Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha told APP here on Saturday.

Ali Shah Bacha said that Pakistan People's Party has tried to make the budget people-friendly

despite the current bad financial situation.

He said PPP has played a key role in the 35% increase in salaries of the employees, pension and maximum wages of the workers.

It is hoped that good results will come out of this budget despite the difficult conditions, Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha said. Reacting to the federal budget, he said that Pakistan People's Party is the people's party, it is well aware of the financial conditions and difficulties being faced by the common man.

Pakistan targets \$1 billion of export to China through land route: Commercial Counselor

BEIJING (APP): After successful transportation of seafood cargo container to Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region through Karakoram highway, Pakistan will be targeting \$1 billion of trade with China through land route in coming years, Commercial Counselor, Embassy of Pakistan, Ghulam Qadir said on Saturday.

"It is very heartening that export of food items especially seafood from Pakistan to China has started through land route. This is a big success and we want to build on it to increase our export," he told APP in an interview.

"He informed that the Pakistani side is targeting that \$ 1 billion worth of trade should happen in the long-run through land route.

"However, keeping in view the current situation, we hope that this year, we have millions of dollars export and trade from this route in coming fiscal year," he added.

"While commenting on export of seafood from Pakistan to China through land route, a spokesperson of the Chinese foreign ministry welcomed quality agricultural products from Pakistan to enter its market and said that the Chinese side stands ready to continue to work with Pakistan to boost bilateral trade through land transportation.

"As all-weather strategic cooperative partners, China and Pakistan have engaged in close cooperation in trade and other fields," he added. "Pakistan's first-ever seafood cargo container has

recently arrived in Kashgar city of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region through Karakoram Highway.

This is the first time that seafood containers from Pakistan have been transported by road from Karachi to Kashgar city along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

"We welcome quality agricultural products from Pakistan to enter China's market and stand ready to continue to work with Pakistan to boost our trade through land transportation, achieve sustainable growth, bilateral trade and deliver more benefits to our two peoples," the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson added.



LAHORE: Chairman LESCO Hafiz Nauman calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Special focus given to agri-sector, credit limit enhanced to Rs 2,250 bln

Says around 12 int'l companies interested in outsourcing bidding of airports

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar here on Saturday said that special focus was given to agriculture sector in Federal Budget 2023-24 and credit limits were enhanced from Rs 1,800 billion to Rs 2,250 billion.

Addressing the post budget press conference, he said that State Bank of Pakistan would monitor the credit disbursement for ensuring the credit

availability and access of the growers to the lending institutions to take the quick existing dividends in the sector. The minister further said that Rs 30 billion was earmarked for the solarization of electric agriculture tube wells, besides removing all the taxes from imported seeds that would enable to harvest higher per-acre output of all major and minor crops. The government has also announced special tax and

duty relief measures on the import of agriculture machinery including combine harvesters, dryers, rice planter and seeders, he said adding that concessional loans for agro-based small and medium enterprises to encourage agriculture value addition in the country. He said that tax exemptions would also be provided for setting up new agro-based industrial units with turn of Rs 800 million, adding Rs10 billion.

FCCI welcomes budget focus on agriculture, IT

Faisalabad (APP): The government has focused on agriculture and IT to give a quick start to the economy by doling out substantial incentives to the sectors despite critical and trying times.

This was stated by Dr Sajjad Arshad, senior vice president Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), while giving reaction on the federal budget 2023-24 during a press conference here. He said that agriculture was an important sector of the national economy and it could immediately produce positive results if incentivised through positive steps. He further said that the incentives

would not only increase the overall agriculture production but also create much-needed jobs for the unemployed youth. He said that incentives had also been given to the IT sector that would pave the way to earn precious foreign exchange. However, no tangible facilities had been given to the textile sector to fully exploit its inherent potential as it was also a mainstay of the economy. "We are critically analysing this situation and will inform the government about our genuine reservations which will help the government make necessary adjustments in the budget document before its approval," he added.

Industrial sector ignored in the federal budget

ISLAMABAD (Online): President of Islamabad Industrial Association (IIA) Muhammad Ahmed said on Saturday that the budget is not very pleasing for the industrialist community.

Lauding the budget has said that IT, SME, solar, agro-based industry, will take a boost after getting tax holidays as well as reduced tax tariffs, and minimum compliance of documentation.

Speaking at the post-budget press conference, Muhammad Ahmed Waheed said that

Super Tax has been imposed across the board on income above Rs150 million, which was

previously Rs300 million and only applicable on ten sectors including banking which is against the claim that no new tax has been imposed.

He said that energy tariff for the industrial sector is very high resulting in enhanced cost of doing business compelling this sector to use energy efficient devices but duties and taxes have been increased which is disappointing.

He added that investors of erstwhile FATA and PATA will be able to get their investments recovered because of extensions of income tax and sales tax exemptions for one year.

PM briefed about LESCO solarization projects

LAHORE (APP): Chairman Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) Hafiz Nauman called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Saturday.

Hafiz Nauman briefed the prime minister about the power supply and demand situation and steps taken by LESCO to stop theft of electricity. He also informed the PM about the projects of solarization in the jurisdiction of LESCO especially the solarization of grid stations.

DC fixes fresh milk price for public at Rs 190 per liter

HYDERABAD (APP): The Deputy Commissioner of Hyderabad Fuad Ghaffar Soomro has revised the prices of milk for dairy farmers and retailers by increasing the official rate from Rs160 per liter to Rs190 per liter for the public. According to a notification issued here on Saturday, the dairy farmers could sell milk to the retailers at the rate of Rs184 per liter.

The DC directed the Assistant Commissioners, Mukhtarkars and Assistant Director Bureau of Supply and Prices to implement the new prices and to take action against the violators. The new prices were based on rates worked out by the Sindh Livestock and Animal Husbandry Department.

ICCI backs govt for presenting business friendly budget

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Baktawari Saturday appreciated the federal government for presenting a balanced, business-friendly budget amid tough economic conditions.

Increasing incentives for sectors like IT, agriculture, solar energy, and construction is a positive step that helps achieve sustainable economic growth in the country, said Baktawari while addressing a press conference here.

The ICCI President extended his felicitations to the Prime Minister, Finance Minister and the entire government for giving priority to the poor segments in the budget 2023-24.

"Relief was also poured into the traders, the steps taken for the energy sector are welcome, it is hoped that on the basis of this budget, next financial year will open more balanced and development paths for Pakistan," he

remarked. Baktawari urged the government to focus on political stability for economic development as unpredictable conditions are not good for business.

He said that the government has made several important announcements for economic recovery in the budget.

The decision to increase the salaries of government employees is welcome, he said adding that the policy regarding bringing dollars to Pakistan from abroad is also encouraging.

Appreciating the incentives given to agriculture, he said that last year was the most difficult year for the economy as floods caused losses to the tune of \$30 and on the other hand the country suffered a lot due to political instability.

He said that the business community of the entire country, including the Islamabad Chamber, demands a Charter of Economy.



MULTAN: Laborers off loading fruit crates from delivery truck at the fruit market.

BMP says: Short-term, ad-hoc and expansionary Budget in testing time of eco crisis

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Federal Budget 2023-24 can be termed as a short-term, ad-hoc and an expansionary budget in an unusual time of economic emergency, looking like an interim budget, with short-term policies, lacking solid measures to stabilize the economy, having no focus on changing economic priorities. These views were expressed by the SAARC Chambers of Commerce and Industries' (SCCI) newly-elected Vice President and FPCCI's Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar while giving his

reaction over the new budget.

The FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman said that the present budget lacks major objective of giving a long-term direction to economy, as no visible reduction in cost of doing business or cut in taxes in budget has been announced to speed up the growth or create new jobs in the country. He said that Pakistan needed millions of jobs annually but the government had not taken any concrete step in federal budget for job creations for the unemployed youth.

Macao's new residential mortgage loans drop 18.7 pct in April

MACAO (Xinhua/APP): The new approvals of Macao's residential mortgage loans (RMLs) and commercial real estate loans (CRELs) both decreased month on month in April, the special administrative region's monetary watchdog said on Friday.

According to statistics released by the Monetary Authority of Macao, the new RMLs approved by Macao banks

in April dropped by 18.7 percent month on month to 1.55 billion patacas (192 million U.S. dollars).

The new RMLs to residents, representing 98.5 percent of the total, fell by 18.8 percent to 1.53 billion patacas. The non-resident component decreased to 22.97 million patacas.

The new CRELs fell by 6.0 percent monthly to 2.37 billion patacas. Within this total, new CRELs to



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister Jibran Adeel along with others take keen interest at stall during Gems and Jewelry Exhibition held in Peshawar.

Pakistani handicrafts shine at int'l cultural industries fair in China

BEIJING (APP): The dazzle of 'Made in Pakistan' handicrafts including wood carving, bronze carving and carpets won the hearts of visitors by its beautiful and artsy look and the deeply rooted tradition behind it at the 19th China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair (ICIF) this week.

Kicked off in Shenzhen, Guangdong, China on June 7, the five-day national-level fair is expected to inject new impetus into the development of the country's cultural industry.

Made-in-Pakistan

handicrafts are internationally popular because of their striking appearance, alluring hues and magnetizing textures. In addition, these unique works of craft add to Pakistan's name worldwide. A visitor told China Economic Net (CEN) that the handicraft industry of a country deeply reflects its culture.

"Like other forms of arts, Pakistani handicrafts are the expression of the thoughts and feelings of artisans influenced by their environment, culture and social patterns," he said, adding that he and his friends are quite into such exotic handicrafts.

Federal govt offers big relief to industrial sector: HCCI

HYDERABAD (APP): The President Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) Adeel Siddiqui on Saturday said that the federal government had offered big relief to the industrial sector by levying no new taxes which were otherwise being anticipated in view of present trying times.

In his statement on the federal budget 2023-24 here on Saturday, he also agreed with the government's view of preferences determined in the budget.

He said that these priorities were in the larger interest of people.

He termed the present budget as a balanced one.

The HCCI President said that economic conditions were not hidden from anyone and the business community had feared that corporate, trade and industrial sectors would face difficult conditions in the upcoming budget once again.

He hailed concessions and exemptions given in the budget for industry, exports, imports, agriculture, IT, SMEs, construction and solar energy.

He termed Prime Minister's youth business loan as the need of the hour which would enable youths to become entrepreneurs.

Egypt's annual inflation up to 33.7% in May: statistics

CAIRO (Xinhua/APP): Egypt's annual headline inflation rose to 33.7 percent in May, up from 15.3 percent in the same period of 2022, the country's official statistics agency reported on Saturday. Urban inflation increased by 2.7 percent in May month on month, among the highest records, said a report by the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS). The high inflation in May was mainly driven by a rise in food prices, which grew by 58.9 percent year-on-year, health care costs, which increased by 18 percent year-on-year, and hotel and restaurant prices, which rose by 48.8 percent compared to the same period last year, the report explained. Also on Saturday, Egypt's Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade launched a national project for establishing strategic warehouses of food commodities in the northeastern Suez Canal city.



GWADAR: Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar presides over the meeting of Gwadar Chamber of Commerce (GCC).

Budget 2023-24: A true reflection of people, Govt employees' aspirations

PESHAWAR (APP): In spite of tough economic, financial, and climate change challenges, the federal government has presented a historic budget for the financial year 2023-24 by providing maximum relief to all segments of society including government employees, pensioners, laborers, and industries, thus laid a strong foundation to quickly turnaround the national economy and achieve economic prosperity.

Following massive losses to agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and forestry sectors by the last year's devastating floods in Pakistan and global

economic recession, the federal government came up with the people and farmers' expectations by announcing a mega development and relief package for the uplift of agriculture-related industries, which is being widely appreciated in KP. Shah Zaman, General Secretary, of KP Beekeepers Association on Saturday welcomed the abolishment of all taxes on imports of agricultural machinery, custom duties, and taxes on import of quality seeds and Rs30 billion allocation for shifting 50,000 tub wells on the solar energy that would help bring green and white revolution in

Pakistan. "The beekeepers were adversely affected by the last year's catastrophic flooding in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where many bees boxes and precious 'Ber tree and Palosa' honey were wasted by the gushing water," he recalled. Shah Zaman suggested the plantation of "ber tree and palosa" by imposing a complete ban on the cutting of these trees to promote beekeeping and increase honey production in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Welcoming an increase in agricultural loans to Rs2250 billion, he said that allocation of Rs5 billion loans for agro-based

industries besides abolishment of customs duties on inverter solar panels would help increase wheat, sugarcane, rice, and edible oil production in Pakistan.

Zahid Shinwari, former President, of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) said that there are many good measures were announced in the budget 2023-24 focusing on the uplift of agriculture, seeds, and mechanization, IT-enabled exports, providing much-needed financial relief to the price hike-stricken employees and pensioners besides women SMEs.

He said the reduction

in minimum tax on listed companies is the right step, adding our economic challenges call for bold action to address the country's inherited economic problems.

Shinwari underlined the need for expanding the tax net, investing in education and human development, managing the mounting fiscal deficit, and foreign loan burdens, and creating an enabling business environment imperative for economic revitalization.

He said Pakistan can prosper only if we generate higher exports and equitable tax revenues from real estate, agriculture, IT, textile, and retail sectors.



LAHORE: Skilled persons make brass and copper metal pots in traditional way at their work place.

Russia still dissatisfied with Black Sea grain deal after UN talks

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russia is still not satisfied with how a Black Sea grain deal is being implemented, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Vershinin said on Saturday after meeting senior U.N. trade officials a day earlier, the TASS news agency reported. Russia has threatened to walk away from the grain deal on July 17 if demands to improve its own food and fertilizer exports are not met. The deal, struck in July last year, facilitates the "safe navigation" of grain, foodstuffs and fertilizers - including ammonia - for export to global markets.

"We cannot be satisfied with how this memorandum is being implemented," Vershinin was quoted as saying. "Barriers

to our exports remain." Russia agreed to a two-month extension of the deal last month but has said the initiative will cease unless an agreement aimed at overcoming obstacles to Russian grain and fertilizer exports is fulfilled.

The demands set out by Moscow include the resumption of the transit of ammonia from Russia via Ukrainian territory to Pivdennyi port in Odesa, from where it is exported. Transit of ammonia, an important part of nitrogen-based fertilizers, was halted via the pipeline after Russia sent its troop to Ukraine last year.

Russia's demands to improve its grain and fertilizer exports include the

reconnection of Russian Agricultural Bank (Rosselkhozbank) to the SWIFT international payment system.

While Russian exports of food and fertilizer are not subject to Western sanctions, Moscow says restrictions on payments, logistics and insurance have amounted to a barrier to shipments.

Russia's foreign ministry said in a statement that U.N. representatives' attention was drawn to obstacles facing Russian agricultural producers and suppliers.

"(They) are still forced to overcome numerous restrictions and barriers provoked by illegal anti-Russian sanctions associated with bank payments.



Canada's Trudeau visits war-time Kyiv, announces military aid

Zelenskiy guarded on Ukraine's counteroffensive, but says generals happy

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Saturday that Ukrainian counteroffensive operations were underway, but remained discreet on details beyond sending a message to the Kremlin that his top generals were in high spirits.

Zelenskiy shrugged dismissively at a press conference in Kyiv when asked to comment after Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday that Ukrainian forces had certainly begun their much-awaited counteroffensive.

"Counteroffensive and defensive actions are taking place in Ukraine, but I will not say in detail what stage they are at," he said, listing Ukraine's top military brass by name.

"They are all in a positive mood. Pass that on to Putin," he said with a smile alongside visiting Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Ukraine has said for months it plans to conduct a major counteroffensive to recapture tracts of land occupied by Russia in the south and east, but it is enforcing strict operational silence and has denied it has begun the main operation for now.

Russia says Ukraine launched a big offensive push this week, but that Kyiv's forces failed to breach its defences and also sustained heavy casualties.

With scant independent reporting from the front lines, it has been difficult to assess the state of the fighting.

Britain's Ministry of Defence said Ukraine had conducted significant operations in several eastern and southern parts in the last 48 hours, with Russian defences breached in places.

"In some areas, Ukrainian forces have likely made good progress and penetrated the first line of Russian defences. In others, Ukrainian progress has been slower," it said, characterising the Russian military's performance as mixed.

"Some (Russian) units are likely conducting credible manoeuvre defence operations while others have pulled back in some disorder, amid increased reports of Russian casualties as they withdraw through their own minefields."

Huge blast at Turkey's ordnance factory kills 5; sabotage ruled out

Monitoring Desk
ISTANBUL: At least five people were killed and many injured after a massive explosion tore through an explosives factory in Turkey, authorities reported Saturday, which supplies arms and ammunition to the armed forces of the Eurasian republic. The explosion occurred at a state-owned Mechanical and Chemical Industry Corporation factory in the Elmadağ district, located 40 kilometres east of the Turkish capital, Ankara, on Saturday morning. According to the BBC, the explosion caused several other injuries and broke windows in adjacent homes and businesses.

Authorities said that an accident in the factory's explosives department was to blame for the explosion.

Meanwhile, state media stated that injured personnel had been transported to nearby hospitals, and regional governor Vahap Sahin said that no more employees or staff members were still trapped in the rubble.

However, many are reportedly in critical condition. Sahin told reporters that the explosion was the result of a chemical reaction, according to technical staff, and that it happened at 08:45 am local time (05:45 GMT).

Alpaslan Kavaklioglu, the deputy defence minister, said in a statement that investigators had reviewed a video taken inside the structure just before the explosion and found nothing out of the norm up to the moment of the explosion.



One of several cameras set up to capture live debate in the chamber of the Nebraska Legislature is shown in Lincoln, Neb.

Syria's Kurds to try IS fighters after their home countries refused to repatriate them

Monitoring Desk
QAMISHLI: The Kurdish-led authority in northeast Syria announced Saturday that hundreds of fighters with the Islamic State group held in prisons around the region will be put on trial after their home countries refused to repatriate them.

The statement by the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria said it still calls for the creation of an international tribunal to put those fighters on trial. It called on the United Nations, international rights groups and local organizations to help facilitate the trials.

The U.S.-backed and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF, is holding over 10,000 captured IS fighters in around

Turkiye seizes \$1 billion of counterfeit money headed for Africa

Monitoring Desk
ISTANBUL: Turkish security forces seized \$1 billion of counterfeit money in Istanbul and arrested six people involved in the operation, including one Ghanian and three Swedish nationals, the governor's office said on Friday.

Gendarmerie forces tracked the suspects to a storage space in Istanbul's Kagithane district, where they seized the fake \$100 bills meant to be sent to African countries, the office said.

The suspects' homes were searched and their cash and jewellery confiscated. The Swedish and Ghanian consulates were notified.

The counterfeit haul was the largest in Turkey's history, the governor's office said.

German Chancellor Scholz says he plans to speak to Putin soon

Monitoring Desk
FRANKFURT: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on Saturday he planned to speak to Russia's President Vladimir Putin by phone soon to urge him to withdraw Russia's troops from Ukraine.

Addressing a convention of the German Protestant church in Nuremberg, Scholz said he had spoken to Putin by telephone in the past.

"I plan to do it again soon. It's not reasonable to force Ukraine to approve and accept the raid that Putin has perpetrated and

US gives Havana embassy a facelift after years of neglect

Monitoring Desk
HAVANA: When the U.S. embassy in Havana reopened last May to Cubans seeking visas after a nearly five-year hiatus, the once proud 1950s vintage building was in shambles.

Pieces of its stone facade were crumbling from top floors, threatening passersby. A rusty perimeter fence, decrepit and obsolete, wobbled with the trade winds. Hurricane Irma had damaged lower windows, a guard post, and granite facing. Even the ambassador's dramatic perch - a balcony overlooking the Gulf of Mexico.

Canada's Trudeau visits war-time Kyiv, announces military aid

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced new military aid for Ukraine during an unannounced trip to war-time Kyiv on Saturday, as Ukraine braces for a counteroffensive against Russian forces and grapples with regular air strikes.

Trudeau paid his respects at a memorial site in central Kyiv to Ukrainian soldiers who have been killed fighting pro-Russian forces since 2014, and also met President Volodymyr Zelenskiy for talks.

"We will be there with (you) as much as it takes, for as long as it takes," he said, sitting across from the Ukrainian leader in footage of the talks released by Kyiv authorities.

NATO member Canada, which has one of the world's largest Ukrainian diasporas, has supplied military and financial assistance to Kyiv during the full-scale invasion launched by Russia in February 2022. "Today, I can announce that we will provide 500 million dollars in new funding for military assistance," he told reporters at a joint press conference.

Ukraine wants to join the NATO military alliance as fast as it can, but Zelenskiy has said he recognised that cannot happen while the war with Russia is raging.

"Canada supports Ukraine to become a NATO member as soon as conditions allow for it. Ukraine and Canada look forward to addressing these issues at the NATO Summit in Vilnius in July 2023," said a joint declaration adopted after the talks. At the talks, Zelenskiy said Ukraine was grateful to Canadians for their support: "Thank you so much. The people of Canada, and of course, to all your team, to the government and parliament. Really. It's (such) necessary help," he said. Trudeau's trip to Kyiv followed a night of Russian missile and drone attacks on targets outside the capital, including Odesa, Poltava region and Kharkiv.

UN aid chief says Ukraine faces 'hugely worse' humanitarian situation after the dam rupture

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: The humanitarian situation in Ukraine is "hugely worse" than before the Kakhovka dam collapsed, the U.N.'s top aid official warned Friday.

Undersecretary-General Martin Griffiths said an "extraordinary" 700,000 people are in need of drinking water and warned that the ravages of flooding in one of the world's most important breadbaskets will almost inevitably lead to lower grain exports, higher food prices around the world, and less to eat for millions in need.

"This is a viral problem," he said in an interview with The Associated Press. "But the truth is this is only the beginning of seeing the consequences of this act."

The rupture of the Kakhovka hydroelectric dam and emptying of its reservoir on the Dnieper River on Wednesday added to the misery in a region that has suffered for more

Myanmar halts access to cyclone survivors

Monitoring Desk
BANGKOK: Myanmar's junta has suspended travel authorisations for aid workers trying to reach hundreds of thousands of people in the cyclone-ravaged Rakhine state, the U.N.'s humanitarian affairs office said on Friday.

Cyclone Mocha brought lashing rain and winds of 195 kilometres per hour to Myanmar and neighbouring Bangladesh last month, killing at least 148 people in Myanmar.

The cyclone destroyed homes and brought a storm surge to Rakhine state, where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya minority refugees live in displacement camps following decades of ethnic conflict.

Junta authorities this week suspended "existing travel authorizations... for humanitarian organisations."



Gray smoke was seen rising from the compound as ambulances and fire trucks rushed to the area.

Washington, NY breathe easier as smoke drifts south

Monitoring Desk
NEW YORK: The mass of smoky air that choked New York, Washington and other US cities earlier this week moderated on Friday as it drifted as far south as the Florida Panhandle, and conditions improved to "moderate" along most of the Eastern Seaboard.

The US National Weather Service said air quality had improved in areas along the East Coast, but hazy skies and degraded air quality persisted in pockets of the mid-Atlantic, the Ohio Valley and Eastern Great Lakes region.

The haze, emanating

Iran police shooting at car to stop thief killed his 9-year-old son, authorities say

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: A boy was shot and killed by police after his father stole a car in the southwestern Khuzestan province and drove off with him, Iranian authorities said.

Ruhollah Bigdeli, chief of police in Shushtar County, said - via Iran's official police website - that several officers tried to stop the "stolen vehicle by shooting at it." The boy died on the spot. Police said they issued the man several warnings before they started shooting, adding that he had a criminal record, including car theft and drug smuggling.

The Iranian Jamaran news website identified the boy as 9-year-old Morteza Delf Zaregani.

Blinken to be in Beijing for talks on June 18: US official

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will travel to China next week for long-delayed talks aimed at stabilizing relations, and a U.S. official said he is expected to be there on June 18.

Reuters reported on Wednesday that Blinken would travel to China in the coming weeks, citing an official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

An official on Friday said Blinken would be in Beijing on June 18, but gave no other details. In February, Washington's top diplomat scrapped a planned trip to Beijing, which would have been the first by a U.S. secretary of state in five years, over a suspected Chinese spy balloon that flew over the United States.

Washington has been keen to reschedule the trip, and the timing emerged after the Wall Street Journal reported on Thursday that China has reached a secret deal with Cuba to establish an electronic eavesdropping facility on the island roughly 100 miles (160 km) from Florida.

The spokesperson for the White House National Security Council on Thursday said the report was not accurate, while saying that Washington has had "real concerns" about China's relationship with Cuba and was closely monitoring it.

The State Department, White House and Pentagon did not, however, immediately respond to requests for comment on a subsequent New York Times report that said China was planning to build a facility in Cuba that U.S. officials were concerned could be capable of spying on the United States by intercepting signals from nearby U.S. military and commercial facilities.

Women rule on the Greek island of Karpathos

Monitoring Desk
KARPATHOS: "Here it is women who command!" declared Rigopoula Pavlidis, as she sang the virtues of her remote village on the island of Karpathos, one of Greece's rare matriarchal societies.

Sitting at a desk across the room painting religious icons, her husband Gianni nodded silently. "My husband can't do anything without me, not even his tax return," Pavlidis laughed as she embroidered a traditional dress inside her workshop.

In contrast to most of patriarchal Greece, the women of Olympos play a commanding role in village life. Isolated from the rest of the Dodecanese island, the spectacular hillside village has safeguarded this centuries-old tradition, which has survived the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century and Italian rule in the 20th.

Until the 1980s, there was no asphalt road to Olympos. Among the traditions that survive is a Byzantine-era inheritance system that gives a mother's property to the eldest daughter, said local historian

Giorgos Tsampanakis. Rigopoula, the seamstress, is one of the beneficiaries of the tradition. She inherited 700 olive trees from her mother. "The families did not have enough property to divide among all the children... and if we had left the inheritance to the men, they would have squandered it," she said. Greek women traditionally moved into their new husband's home upon marriage. In Olympos, the opposite takes place.

And women's prominence is also reflected in their names. "The eldest daughter took the first name of the maternal grandmother, unlike the rest of Greece, where it was that of the paternal grandmother," said Tsampanakis. "Many women still call themselves by their mother's surname and not their husband's," he added.

The role of women in Olympos was further strengthened in the 1950s when the village men began to emigrate for work - mainly to the United States and European countries - leaving their wives.



The 2019 killing of the secondary school pupil revived outrage in France.

Judge in FTX bankruptcy rejects media challenge, says customer names can remain secret

Monitoring Desk
DOVER: The names of individual customers of collapsed cryptocurrency exchange FTX Trading can be permanently shielded from public disclosure, a Delaware bankruptcy judge ruled Friday.

Following a two-day hearing, Judge John Dorsey rejected arguments from lawyers for several media outlets and for the U.S. bankruptcy trustee, which serves as a government watchdog in Chapter 11 reorganization cases, challenging FTX's request to keep the names of customers and creditors secret.

Dorsey ruled that customer identities constitute a trade secret. He also said FTX customers need to be protected from bad actors who might target them by scouring the internet and the "dark web" for their personal information.

"It's the customers that are the most important issue here," he said. "I want to make sure that they are protected and they don't fall victim to any types of scams that might be happening out there."

Katie Townsend, an attorney for the media outlets, had argued that the press and the public have a "compelling and legitimate interest".

French court sentences man to 18 years for burning alive pregnant teenager

Monitoring Desk
BEAUVAIS: A court in France sentenced a man to 18 years in prison on Friday (Jun 9) for stabbing and then burning alive his 15-year-old girlfriend.

The 2019 killing of the secondary school pupil, identified in court only as Shaina, revived outrage in France over the number of women who die at the hands of intimate partners.

GPA plans 20 MW for Gwadar Port, both free Zones

GWADAR (INP): Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) has finalized plan to supply 20 MW to energize Gwadar Port, Gwadar Free Zone South and Gwadar Free Zone North.

Around Rs 727.738 million has been earmarked under public sector development program (PSDP) in Federal Budget 2023-24 presented by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on June 09. Quetta Electric Supply Company (QESCO) has already okayed administrative and structural procedures to make sure power supply to all three entities, according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Saturday.

COPHC official told Gwadar Pro that COPHC has hired a consultant for designing of transmission line infrastructure. "As soon as the layout is finalized, electricity network, to be laid down within the premises of Gwadar Port, will be connected to Main

Gwadar Grid Station."

In addition, he said GPA in collaboration with Qesco set in motion two packages of transmission lines. "One package includes around 12 kilometers transmission through Energy corridor (service road) along Eastbay Expressway to outside the boundary of Gwadar Port.

Second Package includes around 350 meters transmission line from Gwadar Grid Station to Gwadar Free Zone North," he added.

"It is highly likely that electricity tariff will vary between Rs 35 to Rs 45 for industrial purpose as per normal and peak hours with uninterrupted manner free from outage like 24 hours," he disclosed.

The move will allow Gwadar Port and Gwadar Free Zones to liberate themselves from expensive electricity being produced by installed 8.5 MW diesel-powered generator. From

2015 to 2023, Gwadar port is using diesel-generator apparatus for electricity purpose on bulky cost that has been taking a heavy toll on financial bill.

GPA official said that 20 MW power supply will promise impetus to tenacious economic activities and acceleration of industrialization in Gwadar, Gwadar Port and Gwadar Free Zones.

Gwadar port has continued to struggle to meet high cost of diesel generated electricity since 2015.

Previously, Gwadar Port operator had to come up with a proposal to install a 50 MW Independent Power Producer (IPP)'s plant in collaboration with Chinese power producers.

For long, Chinese companies are overstressed by overpriced power production by 8.5 MW generators in Gwadar Free Zone against the backdrop of non-availability of power supply from government.



GWADAR: Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar presiding over a meeting regarding ongoing development projects.

Settlement of Kashmir conflict only key to peace in region: Anwar

MIRPUR (AJK): (APP): Terminating the resolution of the Kashmir dispute as a key to regional peace, Prime Minister of Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq on Saturday urged the international community to play its much-needed role to help resolve the lingering dispute peacefully.

In a statement issued here, the PM said that sustainable peace in South Asia hinged on a just and equitable solution to the Kashmir issue.

He said that it was high time that the international community should play its role to resolve the long pending dispute that has been pending on the UN agenda for the last 75 years.

Terminating Kashmir's ongoing freedom movement as a legitimate struggle, he said, "Hundreds of thousands of Kashmiris have

sacrificed their lives to achieve their cherished goal of freedom".

Referring to the massive human rights violations taking place in the Indian-occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the PM said that bloodbath of innocent civilians, extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and molestation of women at the hands of occupation forces have become a new normal in Kashmir. "Despite all these cruel tactics, India could not suppress the spirit of freedom from the hearts of Kashmiris", he said. He said that international human rights organizations should take notice of the woeful plight of Kashmiri Hurriyat leaders who have been booked under draconian laws and left to rot in jails. The Prime Minister also urged the world leaders to take notice of India's stubbornness.

Court stops police from arresting Qureshi

ISLAMABAD (INP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Islamabad on Saturday approved Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi's interim bail till June 27 in three different violence cases.

Accepting Qureshi's bail pleas against surety bonds worth Rs100,000 each, the court stopped police action against the PTI leader till June 27.

PTI Vice Chairman and former foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi was released from Adiala Jail Rawalpindi on June 6.

Addressing media outside Adiala Jail Shah Mehmood Qureshi had said that the 'flag of justice' is in his hands and he would meet the PTI chief tomorrow and discuss the current political situation of the country with him.

Governor vows for sustainable solution to problems of GCC

QUETTA (APP): Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar Saturday said that providing all necessary facilities and new employment opportunities to the traders and industrialists of the coastal belt was need of the hour.

He said that the government would soon take serious steps for a sustainable solution to the problems of Gwadar Chamber of Commerce (GCC).

He expressed these views while talking to people associated with industry and trade under the leadership of GCC President Shamsul Haq Kalmati here.

The governor said that the large-scale development process in Gwadar, sustainable solution to the long-standing problems of the

local population and the implementation of the plans to provide them with all the basic facilities were commendable.

He said that Gwadar was becoming a modern international city of the region as it would become the main commercial center to stabilize the economic system of the country and the province.

Abdul Wali Kakar said that the first right on the development Gwadar belonged to its residents.

He said that the investment of international and local investors in Gwadar would help in development of infrastructure of the city.

The members of Gwadar Chamber of Commerce informed the governor about their difficulties and new employment opportunities.



QUETTA: Deputy Inspector General of Police Ghulam Azfar Mahesar examining the ammunition, seized by Police during operation against culprits, in Provincial Capital.

PUC gears up for Ulema, Mashaykh conference to address national issues

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC), a prominent religious organization, is set to host the highly anticipated Ulema and Mashaykh conference on Sunday here at Al Hamra Hall.

The conference aims to address the pressing challenges facing the nation, including the recent May 9 tragedy, and present a comprehensive plan of action to guide the country's future.

Under the distinguished leadership of Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman and International Interfaith Harmony Council President, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, the conference will provide a pivotal event in shaping the nation's course of action.

With the arrangements now finalized, the stage is set for the distinguished scholars and religious leaders to convene and deliberate upon crucial matters affecting the nation.

PUC Secretary General Punjab, Maulana Muhammad Aslam Siddiqui, emphasized the significance of this conference, stating that it holds the potential to provide a clear roadmap for both the Ulema and Mashaykh, as well as the entire nation, regarding the current state of affairs.

The plan of action, which will be announced during the conference, is expected to shed light on critical issues and offer viable solutions.

The gathering of religious scholars and leaders will serve as a platform to discuss the prevailing situation in Pakistan, including the aftermath of the tragic events that unfolded on May 9.

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QUETTA: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam leader, Maulana Abdul Wahid Siddiqui along with others express solidarity with members of Government Teachers Association Balochistan during their protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands.

MoS Hina Khar holds wide ranging talks during Denmark, Finland visit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (MoS) Hina Rabbani Khar paid a two-day visit to Denmark and Finland on June 8-10 in which she held government level interactions and engaged with think tank and local media.

In Denmark, the MoS met the Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy, Dan Jorgensen.

The two ministers agreed on building collaboration in renewable energy sector, under the recently signed Green Framework

Engagement Agreement.

She hoped that the Danish Minister's upcoming visit to Pakistan next week (16-18 June 2023) would be instrumental in this regard and assured Minister Jorgensen warm welcome and full cooperation on the government's behalf, Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release on Saturday.

In a meeting with Prehn Rasmus, a Member of the Danish Parliament, the MoS underscored the importance of parliamentary engagement in further cementing mutual ties.

Munir pays tribute to UN peace keepers

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations held a photographic exhibition in commemoration of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers.

According to the details the exhibition was titled as "Tribute to Fallen Peacekeepers and Pakistan's proactive engagement and constructive contributions to UN peacekeeping".

The exhibition was open for display from June 1st to 9th of this month in the Vienna Cafe of the United Nations Headquar-

ters, with a reception commencing on the final day, hosted by the Pakistan Mission.

The welcoming address was made by the Permanent Representative of the Pakistan Mission Ambassador Munir Akram. Under Secretary General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix was the Guest of Honor of the reception.

On the occasion, Ambassador Munir paid the highest tribute to all U.N. peacekeepers and other personnel who lost their lives in the service of the U.N."



Commandant Officer PNS TIPPU SULTAN presenting ceremonial salute to Commander of Indonesian National Armed Forces during International Fleet Review at Multilateral Exercise KOMODO-23 Indonesia.

Rana unveils secure, reliable, hassle-free passport system

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Saturday announced the successful development of a robust and reliable passport system in the country, which complies with international standards and is crucial in providing secure travel documents to citizens and facilitating visa-free travel.

He was addressing the launching ceremony of passport processing counters, inland online passport renewal facility and e-passport facility for the residents of Islamabad Capital Territory at the Directorate General of Immigration and Passport (DGI&P) Headquarters. Director General I&P Yawar Hussain and Chairman NADRA Tariq Malik were also present on the

occasion.

The minister said the introduction of e-passports, an online passport renewal system within the country and passport processing counters would empower our citizens, streamline their travel and contribute to the overall development and prosperity of our nation. Efforts were being made to strengthen partnerships and cooperation with other countries to enhance facilitation, he added.

Expressing his joy and pride, the interior minister highlighted the significance of this milestone in Pakistan's technological advancement and public service delivery. He said the initiative includes the establishment of 30 passport processing counters in

NADRA offices located in areas where dedicated passport offices are not available besides the online renewal of passports within the country and the launch of the e-passport facility in Islamabad. Rana Sanaullah said that the accomplishment was the result of a collaborative effort between the DGI&P and NADRA and commended Yawar Hussain, Tariq Malik, and their dedicated teams for their hard work. Emphasizing the importance of these measures, the minister said they aim to enhance passport security and provide convenience to citizens. "The e-passport facility incorporates state-of-the-art security features, such as biometric data and digital signatures, effectively reducing the risks of passport fraud.



QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Kalat Munir Ahmed Durrani meeting with Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Lango

Imran Khan made horrifying agreement with IMF: Khurram

GUJRANWALA (APP): Federal Minister for Energy Engineer Khurram Dastgir said on Saturday that former premier Imran Khan made a horrifying agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2019, and then violated it in an appalling manner, which forced the incumbent coalition government to set aside a huge amount of Rs 7,000 billion for payment of foreign loans.

Addressing a press briefing at GEPCO headquarters, he said: "Had the PTI chairman not signed such agreements and acquired loans, the repayment amount would have been restricted to Rs 3,000 billion, instead of Rs 7,000 billion."

The minister regretted that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project had been paralyzed during the Imran Khan government, which inflicted huge losses on the nation. He said that work on Thar

coal project was also halted, adding that cheaper electricity could have been generated if work on project had not been stopped. He said a big chunk of amount was repaid in the budget during the tenure of PTI government.

Khurram Dastgir said Imran Khan spoiled relations with China, Turkey, the USA and Saudi Arabia. Even after passage of 14 months, the friendly countries were not ready to trust the Pakistan government, he complained.

The energy minister said the Shehbaz Sharif-led coalition government got restarted work on CPEC.

Regarding elections, he said that decision on elections would be made by the ruling coalition Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) as per the Constitution.

He said an amount had also been set aside in the budget for elections.

Mariyoun hailed for promising health insurance to journalists

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Bahawalpur Press Club President Muhammad Akmal Chohan and other body members have thanked Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Mariyoun Aurangzeb for allocations for health insurance of journalists in Federal Budget 2023.

In a press release issued here, the Press Club President said the journalist community was thankful to the Federal Minister for playing a remarkable role in allocations for health insurance of the journalists' community in the Federal Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-24.

Khattak says: No intention to affiliate with any other political party

PESHAWAR (Online): Former defence minister Pervez Khattak has said he has no intention to affiliate with any other political party.

While contradicting the reports on settlement of matters with Jahangir Tareen he said he has no intention to associate with any other political party.

He said in his statement on twitter "the media reports circulating about him are baseless and absolutely incorrect.

"I have not met Jahangir Tareen, he added.

CM lauds Quetta police successful actions against anti-social, criminal elements

Independent Report QUETTA: The Chief Minister, Mir Abdul Qudus Bizenjo has expressed satisfaction and pleasure over the successful actions taken by the Quetta police against the anti-social and criminal elements.

While appreciating the performance of Quetta police, he congratulated the Deputy Inspector General of Police Quetta, Ghulam Azfar Mahesar and his team on recovery of the theft

weapons as well as dismantling of the drug manufacturing factory and arrest of the accused in these successful actions in Quetta and its surrounding areas.

He expressed the hope that the Quetta police would maintain its performance and ensure the protection of life and property of the people. He also assured every possible support and patronage to the police for curbing crimes in the metropolis.



QUETTA: PTM Chief, Manzoor Pashteen addresses to express his solidarity with Members of Voice of Baloch Missing Persons during their protest camp.

PN Ship Tippu Sultan participates in multinational Exercise Komodo-23

ISLAMABAD (PR): Pakistan Navy Ship TIPPUSULTAN visited port Makassar, Indonesia for participation in Multinational Exercise KOMODO-23. The visit of PN Ship is aimed at strengthening bilateral ties, enhancing interoperability and exploring new vistas of cooperation between Pakistan and Indonesian Navy. Upon arrival at Makassar, the ship was warmly welcomed by officials from Indonesian Navy.

During meetings with Indonesian officials, matters of mutual interest, bilateral naval collaboration

and PN contribution to regional peace and maritime security were discussed. Commanding Officer of PN ship conveyed well wishes from Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi for general and host navy in particular. Later, PNS TIPPUSULTAN participated in International Fleet Review at Makassar which was witnessed by Commander of Indonesian National Armed Forces. Concurrently, Ship's officers and crew participated in various conferences, seminars, knowledge sharing sessions.

PM, political leaders discuss political situation

LAHORE (APP): The political leaders called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Saturday and discussed the current political situation in the country.

The leaders who held separate meetings with the prime minister included former members National Assembly Sardar Ghulam Abbas, Abdul Ghaffar Dogar and former provincial assembly member Mehwish Sultana.

Country's economy still in dire straits, QWP

PESHAWAR (Online): Commenting on the federal budget, Quami Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Saturday said the country's economy was still in dire straits, hoping that the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s programme would soon be restored.

Speaking at a meeting of party office-bearers of Union Council Mandani and Harichand at Sherpao village, he maintained that the IMF programme's restoration was vital for the country as it was grappling with rising debt and other economic challenges.

The QWP leader lauded the government for announcing the increase in the salary of its employees in the face of skyrocketing inflation.

Two killed, six injured as oil tanker rammmed into passenger van

ATTOCK (APP): Two persons including a woman were killed while six others sustained injuries as a speedy oil tanker recklessly driven by an unknown driver rammmed into a passenger van on Rawalpindi road near village Jaffar in the limits of Fatehjang police station on Saturday.

Police and rescue 1122 sources said that the Fatehjang bound passenger van coming from Rawalpindi when reached near village Jaffar- a speedy oil tanker recklessly driven by an unknown driver rammmed into a passenger van.



QUETTA: Provincial Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries and MPAs presenting their proposals on budget 2023-24 during Balochistan Assembly session chaired by Speaker Mir Jan Muhammad Khan Jamali