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Provided it doesn't come at Pakistan's cost No problem with US developing partnership with India: Asif

Pakistan should not be pushed into a situation where it has to make very hard choices; "We would like to have good relationships with them neighbours; Pakistan's nuclear assets are not for any jingoistic or hostile intentions."

ISLAMABAD (INP): Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said that Islamabad does not have any problem with the United States (US) developing a partnership with India if it is not at the cost of Pakistan.

During an exclusive interview with American magazine Newsweek, the defence minister said, India is a very big market of over 1.3 billion people.

"Everywhere in the world, the other big economies will need to have them as partners. But Pakistan is not a very big economy, and [is] a vulnerable economy," he added.

"All we have is a geographical location, which is strategic, which attracts. I would say, not all the good things, it sometimes attracts some things which really make us even more vulnerable."

The minister said he personally feels that some appreciation is required in Washington about their situation, and they should not be pushed into a situation where they have to make some very hard choices.

He maintained that Pakistan has common borders with China, Afghanistan, Iran and India, adding, "We would like to have good relationships with them."

"We would like to improve our relationships with them if the relationship is not good. We want to live in peace," he added.

The minister said that Pakistan gives great value to its ties with the US, adding, "We want that relationship to flourish."

"Hindu nationalist government" Terming the incumbent government in New Delhi "Hindu nationalist", Asif said the Indian outlook towards regional politics completely changed since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came into power.

"The secular ideology, which India pursued since 1947, since the subcontinent was divided and we became independent, that was abandoned because of Modi's politics."

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SUKKUR: Migrants from Ketki Bandar and adjacent areas began to return after Cyclone Biporjoy subsided, in Sukkur



LAHORE: A delegation of Albayrak Group led by its President Ahmet Albayrak calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

Allied govt starts consultation on dissolution of NA before completion of its term

PM consults top allies on political situation

ISLAMABAD (Online): The allied government has started consultation on dissolution of National Assembly (NA) before completion of its tenure in connection with holding general election.

The coalition partners will meet after Eid ul Azha for final decision.

According to government sources federal government has started deliberating over dissolution of NA before completion of its tenure. NA constitutional term will complete on August 13, 2023. Government is making consultation on dissolution of NA on August 9 or 10 to hold

general election in first week of November. The election will have to be held within 60 days in the event of completion of tenure of NA on August 13.

As per sources that during the meeting between Maulana Fazlur Rehman and PPP delegation the matters of general election and dissolution of NA before completion of its tenure came under discussion.

The sources told Online that in the event of dissolution of assembly before completion of its term, the election will have to be held within 90 days.

The election will take place in November in case

of the option of 90 days.

Government is considering the option of November to gain maximum time for election campaign.

The sources disclosed heads of allied parties will meet after Eid in connection with final decision.

The Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif will make a brief stay in London on his way to Paris for attending international conference and he will make consultation with PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif on this matter.

As per sources the meeting between Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif

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QUETTA: President All Pakistan Anjuman Tajirun Ajmal Baloch, Abdul Rahim Kakar, Mir Yasir Mengal and Hazrat Ali Achakzai photographed with Corps Commander Balochistan Lt. General Asif Ghafoor after a meeting

Govt revives development journey, halted by PTI: Fazal

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Saturday said the government has revived the development journey in the country which was halted during PTI government.

He stated this while addressing a public gathering after inaugurating PESCO's 132-KV Grid Station in Abdulkhel area which was also attended by Federal Minister for Communication Maulana Asad Mahmood, Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) Chief Arif Khan Sadozai, Project Director Sardar Aslam Khan Gandapur, JUI-F local leadership and other officers of PESCO were also present.

The Abdulkhel grid station was completed with a cost of Rs95 million which

would have four feeders and 40-km long transmission lines.

This grid station, benefiting a huge population, would help reducing the load on Bandkorai grid station besides removing the backwardness of the area. Besides, the electricity related issues including the low voltage would also be resolved through this new grid station. The foundation stone of this project was laid down by Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl (JUI-F) Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman in 2018.

Fazl said he was feeling happy to see that this backward area has been put on the path of development once again.

He said the journey of progress, which was halted during the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) gov-

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PPP ready for elections, peace in Afghanistan in interest of region: Bilawal

SWAT (APP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman and Foreign Minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari here Saturday said that his party strongly believed in democracy and was ready for general election.

He also directed the party workers to start campaign for general election. Addressing a public gathering here at Khwazakhela, he said that any political party that achieved people's mandate in free and transparent election would have all the right to form Government and address the country's problems.

He said that PPP has recently won by-election and its candidate was elected a Mayor of Karachi that was a big achievement. Bilawal Bhutto said PPP has strong roots in masses that would win the upcoming elections and complete the mission of former prime ministers Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto Shaheed.

Bilawal Bhutto underlined the need for allocation of funds for reconstruction of flood-hit areas in the budget 2023-24.

He said that PPP strongly believed in

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SWAT: Foreign Minister and Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing a public gathering

Incompetent people brought back terrorism to Pakistan: Maryam

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President and chief organiser Maryam Nawaz hit out at the PTI, saying "incompetent people" caused resurgence of terrorism in the country.

She expressed the views in a meeting with a delegation led by former lawmakers Shah G Gul Afridi and Taj Afridi, who has recently joined the

PML-N.

Maryam Nawaz welcomed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-based lawmakers to the party and assured them that the government would rid the public of problems. She also vowed to strengthen the party in every part of the country.

She also slammed the PTI, which ruled the KP province for a decade, for their incompetent and corruption.

Info Minister stresses need to end emerging trend of fake news

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb has termed fake news a big challenge for the world as the culture of fake news is very dangerous for politics.

While participating in a PTV programme, she urged all stakeholders to play their due role to end the emerging trend of fake news from society.

The Minister said that she is not in the favor to close the social media platforms but many countries closed the social media platforms due to fake news.

Castigating the PTI Chief Imran Khan, she said he sowed the seeds of hate in the minds of youth and tarnished the societal fabric by using the religious card for vested interests. She further said that Imran Khan is responsible for the promotion of the politics of hate, anarchy and chaos.



QUETTA: Provincial Adviser Information, Mitha Khan Kakar along with others express solidarity with members of Government Teachers Association Balochistan during their protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands

Previous governments intentionally targeted Lahore with vengeance: PM

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday regretted that during the previous government's dark period, Lahore was intentionally targeted with renege and the international companies were unjustly harassed. Moreover, with political inducements, he said the companies and institutes were destroyed.

"The nation will not forget those who stalled the country's journey towards progress and development," the prime minister

said while talking to a delegation of Albayrak Group, a renowned Turkish company, led by its President Ahmet Albayrak that called on him, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

During the meeting, the prime minister appreciated the group's services in solid waste management and public transport.

PM's adviser Ahad Cheema, PML-N senior leader Khawaja Hassan, Board members of Albayrak Group and other relevant authorities were present on the occasion.

The prime minister

said that during their previous tenures, they had provided the residents of Lahore with international standard facilities. With global investment, they introduced the latest traveling, solid waste management facilities and created job opportunities, he added.

The delegation expressed its deep interest in investment in different sectors of Pakistan. During his recent visit to Turkey, the Board had apprised the prime minister of its keen interest to invest in different sectors of Pakistan and their upcoming visit.

PM initiates efforts to revive IMF loan programme

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has once again initiated efforts to revive the loan program from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

According to the sources, the Prime Minister has become active again to save the IMF program.

Sources reported that the PM held extensive consultations with treasury officials. After the consultations, it was decided that the government will address all objections from the IMF before the approval of the federal budget 2023-24.

The Prime Minister has issued special instructions to make every possible effort to resolve IMF's objections and ensure that the budget includes no unauthorized objections from the IMF for the ninth review.

12 Pakistanis identified among survivors of Greece capsized boat: FO

ISLAMABAD (Online): Foreign Office says twelve Pakistanis have been identified among survivors of the capsized boat off the coast of Greece.

In a statement, Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said at this stage, we are unable to verify the number and identity of Pakistani nationals among the deceased.

She said the Pakistan Mission in Greece, under the leadership of Ambassador Aamar Aftab, remains in contact with the local authorities for identification and recovery of Pakistani nationals among the deceased and providing relief to the survivors.

Trial of civilians in military courts challenged in SC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Barrister Aitzaz Ahsan has filed petition in Supreme Court (SC) against trial of civilians in military courts.

The petition has been filed by advocate Suleman Akram Raja on behalf of barrister Aitzaz Ahsan.

The petitioner has taken plea in the petition that federal government played part of rubber stamp in corps commander conference decision on trial in military courts.

TLP calls off protest march after agreement with government

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah on Saturday announced that after the successful negotiations with the government, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) had called off its "Pakistan Bachao March" (Save Pakistan March).

He was addressing a press conference flanked by TLP's leader Shafiq Amini.

The minister said that after the second round of talks, crucial matters were settled with the TLP.

He said that talks were primarily focused on safeguarding the Prophethood, and curbing blasphemy which is integral to every Muslim's faith.



Regarding the TLP's demand for the release of Aafia Siddiqui, Sanaullah described her case as a national issue that saddened every Pakistani.

He urged human rights organizations to pay attention to her situation and assured that the government would write a letter to United States (US) authorities regarding her imprisonment, considering her 86-year sentence unfair.

Rana Sanaullah said that the government also accepted other demands of TLP, including a reduction in petrol prices.

He said Finance Minister Ishaq Dar briefed the TLP negotiators about how petrol prices were determined and assured them to decrease petrol prices and resolve issues peacefully.

The TLP leader appreciated the government for avoiding confrontation, unlike its predecessor.

13 dead, 25 injured in Kallar Kahar bus accident



ISLAMABAD (Online): At least 13 people died and 25 sustained injuries in a bus accident on the Islamabad-Lahore motorway near Kallar Kahar on Saturday, according to rescue and police officials.

Rescue 1122 spokesperson Farooq Ahmed confirmed the toll to media, adding that it could further increase.

Separately, the National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) said in a statement that according to pre-

liminary reports, the accident occurred at Kallar Kahar due to brake failure with a bus going to Lahore from Islamabad.

It added that the injured were being moved to a hospital for treatment.

The statement added that NHMP personnel were present at the site of the accident and engaged in rescue activities, monitored by DIG (Motorway) Mohammad Yusuf Malik and the sector commander, Commander Nafri.

PCB announces 16-player squad for Sri Lanka series

Uncapped all-rounder Aamir Jamal and batter Mohammad Huraibra also in squad

LAHORE (INP): Fast bowler Shaheen Afridi has returned to Pakistan's Test squad for the two-match series against Sri Lanka next month as Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) unveiled 16-member squad Saturday.

According to media reports, the men's national selection committee has also included uncapped batter Mohammad Huraibra and all-rounder Aamir Jamal in the 16-strong squad for what will be Pakistan's first assignment in the third cycle of the ICC World Test Championship.

According to PCB, the squad has been designed keeping in mind the conditions that the team will encounter in Sri Lanka. The team boasts four spinners, four fast bowlers, six specialist batters and two keeper-batters.

Shaheen is one wicket away from reaching a century of Test wickets and no Pakistan bowler has picked up more wickets than him since the left-arter made

his debut on 3 December 2018. Shaheen, 23, averages 24.86 and has an economy of 3.04.

Expressing his pleasure to be back in the Test side, Shaheen Afridi said: "I am very excited to be returning to the Pakistan Test side after a year. I dearly missed Test cricket and it was tough for me to be away from this format."

"After missing our entire home season because of the injury I suffered in Sri Lanka, I am eager to make an impactful comeback in the same country and complete a century of wickets in Test cricket. I want to thank my fans who have provided me support in tough times and I am ready for the challenges ahead," Shaheen Afridi added.

Huraibra has played 24 first-class, 10 List A and six T20s and he has earned the spot after an impressive run. He was the leading run-scorer in the last two iterations of the Quaid-e-Azam Trophy. In the 2022-23

edition, the 21-year-old, who hails from Sialkot, was the only batter to breach the 1000-run mark, playing an integral role in helping Northern to maiden first-class title. In 11 matches, Huraibra smashed four centuries and two half-centuries on his way to 1,024 runs at an average of 73.14.

He continued his first-class form on the tour of Zimbabwe last month scoring 178 and 64 against Zimbabwe A at Kwekwe and Mutare. He holds the record for being the second youngest batter to score a first-class triple-century in Pakistan, behind legendary Javed Miandad. Huraibra achieved the feat in the 2021-22 season, hitting 311 off 343 in Northern's thumping win of an innings and 170 runs over Balochistan at the State Bank Ground, Karachi.

Huraibra will be joined by his Northern and Shaheens' teammate Aamir. The 27-year-old, who hails

from Mianwali, topped the wicket-takers chart for the fast bowlers in Quaid-e-Azam Trophy 2022-23, taking 31 scalps at 29.71 and recorded two five-wicket hauls. He was the leading wicket-taker in the recent six-match One-Day series between Zimbabwe Select and Pakistan Shaheens with 16 dismissals at an average of 21.

Aamir's career's highlight, however, was defending 15 runs in the last over against England's Moeen Ali on his Pakistan debut in September last year. Aamir's immaculate death bowling helped Pakistan to a thrilling six-run win over England in the fifth T20 International of the seven-match series. Aamir has the experience of two T20Is, 23 first-class, 23 List A and 20 T20s.

Reflecting on the squad, Haroon Rashid, the national men's chief selector, said: "I want to congratulate all the players who have been selected in the side, especially Mohammad Huraibra and Aamir Jamal who have pushed their case through impressive performances over a period of time."

"We have devised this squad with the conditions and challenges that our players will encounter in Sri Lanka. This is our first series of the third round of the ICC World Test Championship and this squad is fully capable of providing us a solid start."

"The conditions in Sri Lanka largely favour finger spinners - something that we have seen over the years and during Pakistan's last visit to the island - so we



LAHORE: Former Minister of State and MNA, Syed Javed Ali Shah calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

Social media propaganda on foreign settlement of majority of former army chiefs abroad false, fabricated: Defence ministry

ISLAMABAD (Online): Defence ministry while rejecting negative propaganda being launched on social media that majority of retired military leadership is settled abroad has made it clear that majority of retired military officers is settled in Pakistan.

Only two former officers are settled in Canada. Gen (Retd) Ashfaq Parvez Kayani has no island in Australia.

While stating the facts ministry of defence sources said social media is misleading the people that 164 retired generals are settled in Canada.

Only two among all the generals who have retired from army from 1974 so far are settled in Canada. About 230000 Pakistanis are settled in Canada. Two generals constitute 0.0008 percent of this population.

Several false information about non presence of former army chiefs in Pakistan are circulating on social media. The facts are otherwise.

Former army chiefs Gen Tikka Khan, Gen Zia ul Haq and Gen Asif Janjua passed away in Pakistan. Gen Aslam Beg, Gen Wahid Kakar are settled in Pakistan.

Gen Musharraf passed away in UAE and he is laid to rest in Pakistan. Former Army chief Gen Ashfaq Kayani is in Pakistan. He is neither in Australia nor has he any island therein. Gen (Retd) Raheel Sharif is in Saudi Arabia with the permission of government. Gen (Retd) Qamar Javed Bajwa is also in Pakistan. No one among the former 10 COAS is settled permanently outside the country.

Security agencies have started investigation against those behind fomenting false propaganda so that they could be brought to justice.



Kashmiris, rights bodies to protest against Modi's US visit next week

WASHINGTON (INP): A prominent Kashmiri advocacy group has announced that Kashmiris and their supporters will stage a protest rally near the White House on June 22 when the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, will be meeting the US President, Joe Biden, in Washington, amid India's escalating atrocities in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the Secretary-General of the World Kashmir Awareness Forum (WKAFA), Dr Ghulam Nabi Fai, in a media interview said that he was getting immense response from the community members as well as expressions of support from several other organizations in the effort to highlight India's brutal suppression of the Kashmiri

people.

He said that the people from all over the US and Canada were expected to come to Washington to join the demonstration that will serve as a reminder that the UN-pledged right to self-determination to the people of Jammu and Kashmir has still not been implemented and that they continue to suffer under Indian occupation.

Dr Fai said WKAFA has also hired three digital trucks that would flash messages like "Fascist Modi does not belong to White House" as they pass by key buildings and landmarks in this capital city. Other digital messages include, "Trade with India not fine when human rights are on decline", "Indian democracy: Dead in Kashmir", "Kashmir at the brink of Genocide" and "Modi guilty of crimes

against humanity in Kashmir".

On the other hand, the US human rights groups are planning to hold similar protests against Modi's US visit over the deteriorating human rights situation in India.

The Indian American Muslim Council, Peace Action, Veterans for Peace and Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition are set to gather near the White House on June 22.

The groups have also added flyers that read "Modi not Welcome" and "Save India from Hindu supremacy". The groups have also planned an event in New York featuring a show titled "Howdy Democracy", referring to 2019's "Howdy Modi!" rally in Texas featuring Modi and the then-US President Donald Trump.

CTD arrests six 'terrorists' in different areas of Punjab

LAHORE (APP): The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) Punjab has arrested six alleged terrorists during operations in different areas of Punjab.

According to a spokesman, the CTD Punjab conducted 55 intelligence-based operations (IBOs) in different districts of the province, interrogated 50 suspected persons, arrested six alleged terrorists and recovered weapons, explosives and prohibited

material from them.

Among the arrested terrorists, three belonged to Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, and they were identified as Liaquatullah, Nadeem Khan and Inayatullah. One arrested terrorist is a member of Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, who was identified as Muhammad Younis, one Muhammad Ammar belongs to Daesh, and the last one Ijaz Ahmed is a member of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, the spokesperson said.



KARACHI: Sindh Governor, Kamran Khan Tessori cuts ribbon during inauguration ceremony of the Education Exhibition held at Expo Center in Karachi

PPP ready for elections...

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 people's wellbeing and welfare.

He paid glowing tributes to the people of Swat, who stood against terrorism with bravery and steadfastness. He said PPP Government had fulfilled the promise of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto by hoisting the national flag in Swat.

Bilawal Bhutto said that democracy was the best revenge and former President Asif Ali Zardari had raised the slogan of Pakistan "Khapay" after Benazir Bhutto Shaheed was martyred outside Liaquat Bagh on December 27, 2007.

He said that a selected Prime Minister was ousted from power through a successful no confidence motion under the Constitution.

He said the entire nation had seen the vandalism and barbaric mindsets of attackers involved on ransacking of defence installations on May 9 after a selected former Prime Minister was arrested in a NAB case. Bilawal Bhutto underlined the need for strict action against elements involved in May 9 vandalism so that no one can dare to attack defence installations, public and government properties and ransacked statuses of martyrs.

He said that Quaid-e-Awam ZAB and Benazir Bhutto Shaheed had given all rights to people including employment and land ownership.

He said majority of the country's population was comprised on youth and demands of our skilled workforce in Middle East

and Europe has increased, adding people knew that a selected prime minister had deprived youth of jobs.

Bilawal said country's problems could be addressed by strictly adhering to the PPP manifesto of Shaheed ZAB and Benazir Bhutto Shaheed.

He said that PPP has started the revolutionary Benazir Bhutto Income Support Program to eradicate poverty.

He said PPP's struggle is against hunger, poverty, unemployment and price hike and not against any political party.

Bilawal Bhutto said that Imran Khan's cypher drama has been badly exposed before masses.

He said the world was keen to work with Pakistan as evident of USD 10 billion pledges and commitment by the international community for an assistance of the flood victims of Pakistan.

He said peace in Afghanistan was vital for regional peace and development. Bilawal Bhutto said that PPP has always given respect and honour to its workers while a selected Prime Minister deceived his workers in the name of change. He thanked the party workers for the successful public meeting at Swat.

Minister of State Faisal Karim Kundi and others PPP KP leaders were present.

On this occasion, former member national assembly, Dr Haider Ali Khan along with his supporters announced joining of Pakistan People's Party.

Allied govt starts...

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 is likely to take place on June 22.

INP adds: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held separate meetings with a high-level Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) delegation and JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman and discussed political situation in the country.

In a meeting with the PPP delegation, the prime minister had a detailed discussion on the current political situation in the country.

Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar, Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman, Minister for Water Resources Syed Khurshid Shah, Advisor to PM on Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Affairs Qamaruz Zaman Kaira, Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah and Senator Nisar Khuro were part of the PPP delegation.

Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar and Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal also attended the meeting.

During the meeting, the PPP leadership appreciated the prime minister for measures for public welfare in the budget despite the difficult economic conditions.

Separately, PM Shehbaz Sharif on Friday met Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) president Maulana Fazlur Rehman and discussed the overall political situation in the country.

According to a statement issued by Prime Minister's (PM) office, Federal Minister for Communication Asad Mahmood also attended the meeting.

Govt revives development...

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 ernment, has been started again.

During the PTI tenure, backwardness was increased, country's economy was ruined and all the mega development projects including China Pakistan Economic Corridor were stopped. Besides, the electricity producing projects which were initiated in 2016-17 were also halted, he said. The PDM Chief said now the development in the country has been revived.

He said an interchange has been built to connect Kattikhel and Rehmanikhel areas on Dera-Hakla Motorway. The next interchange would be constructed at Paniala, he vowed.

Similarly, a road has been approved to be constructed from Abdulkhel Interchange to Kloorkot via Dhakki and Laali areas, he said and added that it would ensure an easy approach to Punjab for the people of this area who used to go to other province for laboring purpose.

This road was approved at the time of approval of CPEC and a

bridge was supposed to be built over the Indus River. The previous government had constructed that bridge but no road on either side was built, he said and added that now the roads on both sides of the bridge would be constructed.

The CPEC which was passing through Daraban would connect Daraban area with Indus Highway via Musazai, Chodhwan, Kirri Shamoza and Ramak.

In the same way, three districts including Lakki Marwat, Bannu and Karak would also be connected with CPEC.

The Bannu road would be connected with Chashma road from three different points including Khundal, Dhakki and Mufti Mahmood Chowk on Dera Bypass.

Similarly, Yarik to Tank road, Pezu to Tank road and Yarik to Paharpur via Bandkorai road would also be constructed soon.

Fazl said a widespread road network was being laid down in the region which would help increasing trade and business activities. He was of the view that the better road infrastructure was first step towards de-

velopment.

The current government of PDM, during its one-year tenure, has started multi-projects in Dera Ismail Khan Region, he said.

Fazl said that he had a clear stance from the very first day that the anti-Pakistan people who were hindrance in the way of national development should be separated from the government as they were following any foreign agenda rather the agenda of Pakistan, adding, his stance has been proven true with the passage of time.

"Today, Imran Khan's politics is over and we will also form the next government with the support of masses," Fazl added. He said this evil would not be allowed to be imposed on this country again.

At the end, the symbolic keys of two bucket cranes worth Rs 15 million each were also handed over the Dera Ismail Khan and Tank Circles of PESCO.

Superintendent Engineer of Dera Circle Nadir kundi and Superintendent Engineer of Tank Circle Hayat Barki received the symbolic keys.



HYDERABAD: Displaced people from Cyclone Biporjoy restore their makeshifts and clean their Boats for Fishing in Sea at Zero Point near Golarchi

Attempt to supply arms to bandits foiled

By Tanveer Ahmed Soomro

MIRPUR MATHELO: In Ghotki district, the attempt to supply arms to bandits foiled, police action on M5 Motorway, one arms smuggler was killed, two were arrested, the dead arms smuggler was a police sub-inspector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, five Kalashnikovs, one Repeater, three pistols, 600 rounds recovered, cases were also registered against the smuggler who was killed in Mardan.

According to the details, SHO Police Station Belo Mirpur Abdul Jabbar Pathan stopped a suspected car GLL at picket number 68 of CPEC while patrolling. So the suspects in the car fired blindly at the police party, in the retaliatory firing of the police, one suspect Mukhtiar Ali son of Gohar Zaman Sukna Mardan was killed in the encounter, while two suspects Qasim Khan Yousafzai and Janat Gul

Yousafzai were arrested by the police.

It has been found out from the information that the dead and arrested accused were involved in inter-provincial arms smuggling, who belong to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, these accused are running inter-provincial arms smuggling racket, it has also been found that the dead accused Mukhtiar Ali is from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

There was a sub-inspector in the police who was performing duty in Islamabad police on deputation today, the police searched the car and found 05 Kalashnikovs, 01 repeater, 600 rounds of ammunition, 03 pistols, while the accused were arrested. And from other sources, the police is investigating the incident further, the dead smuggler's body has been transferred to the Mirpur Mathelo District Headquarters Hospital, while the police are investigating further in this regard.



LAHORE: Pakistan Cricketers are in action during practice session ahead of Pakistan hosting Asia Cup at LCCI Cricket ground in Provincial Capital

No problem with US developing...

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Lashing out at Indian PM Modi, the minister said, "If you look at his politics in Gujarat, it was again based on anti-minority, it is based on communal tensions and of voting Hindu nationalist support by fanning sentiments against the community, and minorities, both Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, and so many other communities that are very large."

To another question, the defence minister said that Pakistan's nuclear capability, or nuclear assets, are not for any jingoistic or hostile intentions.

"So, I think it's something which underwrites our security, it's not for any hostile—no, absolutely no, absolutely not.

India had become a nuclear power. And we were compelled not to be gobbled by India over the years or over the decades. This is something which underwrites the peace in our region and to a great extent, our security. Otherwise, we have absolutely no intentions. Absolutely no," he added.

Asif maintained that it is a program which is certified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and even as recently as a month back, there was a statement from the IAEA that all the standards—even from the United States—that our program is safe. "We will not, never, never, ever cross that threshold. It is something that just guarantees our independence," he added.

Three-day int'l conference to be held on July 11 to promote tourism: Ramesh

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State, Chairman for Prime Minister Task Force on Gandhara Tourism Dr. Ramesh Kumar Vankwani Saturday unveiled that three-day first ever international conference on tourism would be held from July 11 to 13 here to attract tourists from across the world to promote tourism in the country.

Addressing the participants at the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA), the minister said international conference would not only project the tourism but also generate revenue as well.

He said, "We would welcome and highly appreciate the foreign dignitaries and facilitate them in every respect, including safety, security, visas, transportation, and accommodation in Pakistan." The conference would pave the ways to promote the soft image of the country at international level, the chairman added.

He said it was his vision to bring 0.5 million international tourists from worldwide to generate billion of rupees, adding that the incumbent government was seriously focusing on tourism's promotion in the country.

He said Pakistan was rich with religious and cultural tourism and was home to a multitude of heritage sites, monuments and historic buildings, which demonstrated the diverse layers of history of the region.

Visualizing the immense potential in tourism around Gandhara civilization, the Prime Minister Task Force was making all-out efforts to promote Gandhara tourism in the country, he maintained.

The chairman said that religious sites of Hinduism and Buddhism were existing in the federal capital and other parts of the country. He stressed the need

to develop positive image of the country internationally as Pakistan is a peaceful and peace-loving country.

The minister said, "I have written columns in national newspapers in English, Urdu and Sindhi, besides taking part in talk shows on national and foreign media to inform the local and foreign dignitaries about rich potential of tourism in the country."

He said the Prime Minister Task Force had arranged a series of visits to various cultural and historical sites, including Shah Allah Ditta, Takht-i-Bahi, and Swat on every Wednesday within a month to promote sacred sites and monuments built during the Gandhara era.

In the end, Taxila odyssey cultural show, Kelash dance, Leva performance, mantra performance and folk performance by Jhangir Sagar had entertained the participants.

ICCPO visits Security Division, orders to enhanced security

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital City Police Officer, Dr. Akbar Nasir



Nasir Khan inspected various police vehicles, including the Hino Truck, Mazda Truck, Foton Pickup and Toyota Hiace Ambulance. Emphasizing the significance of maintaining a reliable fleet for VIP movements and foreign delegations, the ICCPO issued strict instructions to the MTO regarding regular inspections and prompt repairs of any defects discovered. During the inspection, the ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan commended the drivers of the vehicles and the MTO Security Division for their dedication and exemplified the need for cleanliness and upkeep.

"The Islamabad Capital Police is steadfast in its commitment to upholding security standards and ensuring the safety of our citizens, guests, and dignitaries," stated Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan. "Our police officers play a crucial role in this endeavor, and it is imperative that they are maintained to the highest standards to fulfill their responsibilities effectively."

Pakistan Sweet Home organizes blood donation camp at Bahria University

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Sweet Home organized blood donation camp at Bahria University here Saturday to save precious lives of the children affected by Thalassemia.

On this occasion, head of Pakistan Sweet Home, Zamurraad Khan (Hilal e Intiaz) said that today, he was extremely happy to see that the students of Bahria University were fully engaged in the great mission of saving innocent lives by donating blood in large numbers. Our youth is second to none in selfless service to humanity, he said and added, youth are the valuable assets of the country and the nation who can change the destiny of the country and the nation. The spirit of service among the youth is admirable. Today, the selfless spirit of serving humanity has won the hearts of young students, he expressed.

The Chairman Pakistan Sweet Home expressed his gratitude to the students and girls of Bahria University, especially the administration, for responding to his voice today and their participation in this good cause. Undoubtedly, young students always donated blood in large numbers for Thalassemia

affected children in every difficult situation. I appeal to other educational institutions, colleges and universities including engineers, professors, lawyers and people from all walks of life and other circles to support us in this great journey of service to humanity and be our companions in this good work, he expressed.

He termed the blood donation by the students of Bahria University a practical expression of love for humanity, saying that donating blood was a great continuous charity and an act of worship. Pakistan Sweet Home is not only changing the lives of thousands of orphans but also bringing hope to millions of children battling thalassemia and hemophilia who are in dire need of continuous blood donations to survive, he added. On this occasion, Asad Bin Azam, Project Director of Pakistan Sweet Home Blood Bank said that the blood donation by the students of Bahria University was actually an expression of solidarity with the children who were fighting for their lives. In the coming days, due to extreme heat and vacations in educational institutions, there is a risk of severe blood shortage.

ISLAMABAD (APP): The five-day Saqafati Mela opened here Thursday at National Institute of Folk & Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) to entertain the people of twin-cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad with vibrant colours of Pakistan's cultural heritage.

A contingent of about one hundred master artisans, folk artists, rural musicians and dance groups are participating in the Mela, bringing with them their creativity in arts and crafts.

The main focus of the festival is on Provincial Harmony and National Integration highlighting contribution of people from diverse communities in building future of Pakistan.

Saqafati Mela is a unique opportunity to experience the colours and warmth of diverse cultures from all over Pakistan. Provincial food courts, folk music, theater, display of art and crafts as well as traditional heritage from every corner of Pakistan are part of the Mela to celebrate the dynamic creativity of Pakistan's traditional craftsmanship and promote rural folk artisans at the national level without involvement of middleman. The festivities of Saqafati Mela will continue till 19th June, 2023.



ISLAMABAD: Youngsters are bathing in water outside Rawal Dam spills ways to cool off during high temperature in Federal Capital.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman PM's Taskforce on Gandhara Tourism, Dr. Ramesh Kumar Vankwani along with foreign diplomats visits a Culture Exhibition on Gandhara Civilization exhibiting 50 prominent Gandhara heritage sites in honor of diplomats at Pakistan National Council of the Arts.

Politics of PML-N is public welfare based: Amir Muqam

ISLAMABAD (APP): Adviser to Prime Minister for National Heritage and Culture Division Engineer Amir Muqam on Saturday said that the politics of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is purely based on public welfare and the development of the country.

The PML-N was utilizing every penny of public money in an honest and transparent manner for the welfare of the people and the provision of basic facilities to them, he said while speaking to a Private news channel.

He lauded PDM-led government under the leadership of Shahbaz Sharif for their remarkable achievement in steering the country away from the brink of default despite inheriting severe economic hurdles.

He said with regard to this year's 2023-24 budget, the government has paid special attention to the provision of quality education, and vocational training to the youth, boosting the IT sector and improving the agriculture sector.

"We are also working on the policy to maintain balanced relations with all other countries", he added.

Replying to a question, he said every patriotic Pakistani condemned the violent acts of 9 May and urged to take strict actions against the culprits involved in organized attacks on state institutions and military installations.

Attacking the military Installations is a serious crime across the globe and it must not be forgiven, he added. "Our courts need to understand the gravity of the situation and punishment must be given to the culprits involved in the 9 May incidents according to law and constitution, he demanded.

The stakeholders must ensure that such violent acts cannot happen again in future, he added.

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad district and sessions court said Istehkam-i-Pakistan Party leader Fawad Chaudhry who left Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf after May 09 crackdown, would be indicted on June 24 in a case of threatening and "inciting violence against a constitutional institution" — the Election Commission of Pakistan.

During the hearing today, Fawad appeared before Additional Sessions Judge Tahir Abbas Supra.

The court provided a copy of the case filed against him to Fawad and adjourned the hearing till June 24, along with ordering that his appearance be ensured that day.

On Feb 1, Fawad was granted bail on the condition that he would not repeat any such words that can incite violence against a constitutional institution. However, in March, the ECP had issued a bailable arrest warrant for him.

Greece boat tragedy: NA Speaker directs action against human traffickers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ahsraf on Saturday directed the quarters concerned to take stern action against the elements involved in human trafficking and putting the lives of innocent people at risk.

The directives came after the House's attention was drawn towards the tragic incident of a boat capsizing in the Greek waters which allegedly claimed the lives of people on board, including some Pakistanis, attempting to enter the country illegally from Libya.

The speaker observed that human smuggling was a horrific act to dodge innocent people in the name of sending them abroad and left in the lurch to face such a situation, asking the government to take an "immediate action" against those who ever found involved in it and give them exemplary punishment.



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Qandi Aftab, daughter of Muhammad Aftab addresses an event to pay tribute to the legacy of Ex-DGAPP Mr. Muhammad Aftab (Late President ICLAPAP) organized by Islamabad Cleft Lip and Palate Association Pakistan.

IHC Bar condemns filing of reference against Justice Kiyani

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court Bar Association has strongly condemned a reference filed against Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, declaring it false and baseless. A declaration of the IHCBA meeting was issued on Saturday.

The declaration strongly condemned the filing of a 'false and baseless' reference against Islamabad High Court judge, Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani.

"The IHCBA expresses serious concern over the inclusion of the names of its respected members in the reference. The reference is an attempt to defame the members of the bar and the respected judges. We will not allow the image of the judiciary and the bar to be tarnished," the declaration stated.

The IHCBA said that it could not sit silent over the filing of false and baseless references against bar judges. Respected judges are performing their judicial responsibilities conscientiously, it added. The bar has decided to fully support the honourable judges and bar members. A conspiracy to blackmail the bar judges and bring our institution into disrepute will not be allowed to succeed.

Modi regime turned IOJK into gigantic prison: GA Gulzar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Vice Chairman of All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Ghulam Ahmed Gulzar, has said that Narendra Modi-led Indian government has turned illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir into a gigantic prison ahead of Hindu pilgrimage Amarnath Yatra in the name of security for the yateers.

According to Kashmir Media Service, Ghulam Ahmed Gulzar in a statement in Srinagar said the deployment of an additional 60000 troops will further increase the miseries of the Kashmiris who are under the constant siege since 5 August 2019.

He said the Kashmiris are not against the Yatra but deployment of more and more forces' personnel and extension in the duration of the pilgrimage is disastrous for the already fragile environment of occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

"In addition to that the large inflow of people will also result in environmental pollution and melting of glaciers which may result in scarcity of water resources and drought," he said. Ghulam Ahmed Gulzar pointed out that the Modi regime is bringing more and more Hindus to IOJK to intimidate the Muslim population. He said Indian forces have intensified search and cordon operations, arrest spree and other atrocities on a large scale.

Special Assistant to PM Minister on Interior visits CPO, meets ICCPO

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Interior Muhammad Jawad Sohrab Malik paid a visit to the Central Police Office Islamabad, where he met with Islamabad Capital City Police Officer, Dr Akbar Nasir Khan and discussed various important issues, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, during the meeting, the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister expressed his appreciation for the dedicated efforts of the Islamabad capital police in ensuring the security of the federal capital.

As part of his visit, he also toured the Safe City Project Islamabad, where he received a comprehensive briefing from CPO Safe City regarding various aspects of the project. The Special Assistant commended the initiatives taken to safeguard the lives and properties of the citizens, as well as the effective management of law and order in the city.

He was also briefed that the coverage of the Islamabad Safe City project has been significantly expanded to encompass different areas of the federal capital. Additionally, the integration of cameras from private buildings, toll plazas, and metro buses with the Safe City system has been successfully implemented.

Efforts are underway to further enhance the capabilities of the project, with ongoing upgrades and advancements. To ensure prompt and efficient service delivery, various emergency services of the Islamabad capital police have been consolidated under one roof



within the Safe City premises. This integration aims to provide citizens with timely assistance and a wide range of facilities. The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister lauded the remarkable efforts of ICCPO Islamabad and his team in this regard.

Outdated manual systems burden ICT teachers

ISLAMABAD (APP): In an era of advanced technology and digitalization, teachers in Islamabad continue to grapple with time-consuming manual tasks, impeding their ability to focus on quality education.

The prevalent use of archaic methods such as manual attendance registers and paper-based examination systems has drawn attention to the urgent need for an overhaul of the education system.

Teachers are burdened with the responsibility of manually calling out the roll of students and maintaining attendance records throughout the academic session.

This outdated practice not only consumes valuable teaching time but also results in inefficiencies and potential inaccuracies.

In contrast, many countries have adopted electronic biometric attendance system for students, streamlining the process and enhancing efficiency.

Furthermore, the reliance on manual methods extends to crucial aspects such as student enrollment records and contact information of parents.

These records, often stored manually, are vulnerable to damage or loss, leading to potential communication gaps between schools and parents.

Similarly, the examination system remains mired in a manual process. Teachers are burdened with the task of manually preparing student results, a time-consuming endeavour that often extends beyond regular working hours.

As a result, teachers are forced to carry attendance registers and result sheets home, further encumbering their personal lives and adding to their workload.

The old system of record-keeping also poses a threat to the preservation of student data. The old cupboards where these records are stored are often prone to termite infestations, leading to irreversible damage to important documents. This haphazard storage practice threatens the integrity of academic records and hinders educational institutions' ability to track students' progress over time.

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP)'s rescue operation is underway as a Lahore-bound bus has met with an accident in Kallar Kahar apparently due to the failure of brakes.

A spokesperson of NHMP on Saturday said that injured persons were shifted to the hospital.

He said due to the accident, two lanes of the Lahore-Islamabad Motorway were closed, while the third one was open for land traffic.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Motorway Police Muhammad Yusuf Malik and Sector Commander were engaged in supervising the rescue operations at the spot.

NHMP rescue activities underway at bus accident site in Kallar Kahar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Health experts on Saturday stressed awareness for youngsters using earphones as long-term exposure to loud music makes the hair cells eventually lose their sensitivity to vibration and asked to avoid sharing earphones which will lead to infection from one person to another person.

Around a billion youngsters across the globe including Pakistan could be at risk of hearing loss because of unsafe listening habits through earphones, ENT Specialist Dr Saifullah Mir said while talking to a Private news channel.

He further explained that using earphones has become quite common in this digital world, adding, it has also been observed that people do share their earphones amongst friends and family members which is quite dangerous.

Earphones and AirPods no doubt have become mandatory accessories for the present life but they are also triggering ear infections, he added.

Replying to a question, he said ears producing wax can protect the skin of the canal, help in cleaning and lubrication, and also provide protection from dust and other foreign particles.

The expert added that people need to clean their ears a good chance to allow themselves, so encouraged a switch to over-ear alternatives instead.

Continuous listening at higher sound volume for long hours is weakening the listening ability also," he added.

Replying to another query, he replied ear problems are not just related to working professionals, but school children who have to attend online classes are also having such complaints.

"If youngsters are using headphones at the sound of more than 60 decibels, it will naturally put a strain on their hearing power," he said.

He also suggested that people should regularly sanitize the headphones to stop a buildup of bacteria, sweat and shed skin.

ISLAMABAD: Foreigner family purchasing traditional carpet during Saqafati Mela at Lok Virsa.

Wearing earphones regularly for long-hours can cause ear infections, ENT expert warns

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Rain thunderstorm expected in several parts of country

ISLAMABAD (Online): Dust / thunderstorm-rain with isolated heavy falls & hailstorm is likely in south-east Sindh, eastern Balochistan, north/eastern and south Punjab, Pothohar region, Kashmir and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the next twelve hours.

Intense dust-storm with thunderstorm and rain is expected in southeast Sindh. Dust storm/dust raising winds are likely over plain areas of the country.

Temperature of some major cities recorded this morning: Islamabad twenty-five degree centigrade, Lahore twenty-eight, Karachi thirty-one, Peshawar twenty-seven, Quetta twenty-two, Gilgit eighteen, Murree seventeen and Muzaffargarh twenty-one degree centigrade.

LSM contraction

The new data on large industry output reinforces the impression that the government might have 'pressured' the National Accounts Committee into manipulating key economic numbers to show positive growth during the present fiscal. The delay in compiling key output data ahead of the FY24 budget announcement had triggered speculation that the government might be prodding the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics to 'fudge' the numbers amid projections of negative growth. Hence, GDP growth is estimated at 0.3pc against independent projections of a contraction of up to 2pc to 3pc, premised on the fact that the industrial sector remains the main driver of growth and that the present economic crisis is being driven largely by contracting large-scale manufacturing output due to import curbs to prevent dollar outflows and avoid default.

The new PBS data shows that LSM shrunk by over 21pc in April for the tenth month running; 20 out of 22 sectors declined because of economic uncertainty and political turmoil. Besides import restrictions, high energy costs, currency depreciation and expensive credit have also contributed to the LSM contraction. Many factories have shut down or slashed their output and retrenched workers in order to cope with the unprecedented balance-of-payments crisis. Overall, the data points to negative growth or a contraction of 9.4pc in the period July-April from a year ago. The contraction in the first nine months was recorded at 8.1pc. Therefore, doubts over the veracity of key official economic data for the ongoing year, as well as estimates and targets announced for the next one, aren't without reason. This will further hurt the government's credibility.

The present crisis is not going away anytime soon. Investors are nervous and trying to cut their losses. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar's recent outburst against the IMF following its criticism of a fiscally careless budget may have pushed Pakistan even further away from a bailout deal with the lender. Indeed, Pakistan is a sovereign country and cannot accept everything the lender demands, as stated by Mr Dar on Thursday. Yet blaming the delayed revival of the deal on geopolitics is misplaced. If there is anyone to blame for derailing the IMF programme it is the minister himself. 'Geopolitics' is a far-fetched conclusion and would make friendly countries such as China and Saudi Arabia a part of that conspiracy. His public outburst against the IMF will not help us. Indeed, China has helped us survive through the last few months. But it would be unrealistic of us to expect Beijing or any other capital to replace the IMF. Mr Dar needs to stop blowing hot and cold where the IMF is concerned, and come up with a credible plan to get the economy out of this mess. Or he should give up his portfolio.



Ahmed Bilal Mehboob

In Pakistan, this time of the year is a regular reminder of how farcical the role of parliament has become when it comes to ensuring that the annual budget reflects genuine public aspirations and priorities.

This duty of parliament is critical, because the annual budget statement is perhaps the government's most important policy document.

It explains the government's strategy of mobilising resources, including taxation, and the allocation of those resources to various sectors, such as defence, internal security, communication, human resource development, telecommunication and social welfare schemes, including safety nets and subsidies for underprivileged sections.

Weakening or diluting the authority of the elected representatives in parliament to influence the budget, after fully comprehending and debating it, runs counter to the universally accepted principle of the parliamentary power of the purse.

In a federal state like Pakistan, this principle applies as much to the provincial assemblies as it does to the national parliament.

In general, the way that the national parliament and provincial assemblies go about passing annual budget statements gives the impression that they are merely fulfilling a formality.

The budget process should provide ample opportunity to the elected representatives in parliament in Islamabad and the provinces to study, analyse, debate and, where necessary, modify the budget introduced by the executive.

It is true that in a parliamentary form of government, the top crust of the executive, such as the cabinet, also consists of elected representatives and they approve the budget statement before it is presented

in parliament.

However, mostly in developing and resource-constrained countries like Pakistan, the influence of the unelected bureaucracy, both local and international, plays a dominant role in deciding the most significant features of the document.

Lately, this influence has reached such a level that the ability to deal with it has become the most important qualification of the country's finance minister.

Article 84 (supplementary and excess grants) of the Constitution had set the basis for a weak role for parliament in the budget process. The article provides that almost any expenditure, authorised by parliament as part of the budget, can be altered by the executive, without limiting its magnitude, during the year — and without even informing, let alone seeking prior approval of, parliament.

Pakistan is probably one of only two countries in the world with such a constitutional provision.

Two significant developments in the past decade have leaned towards improving the budget process in general and the parlia-

mentary influence on the budget in particular though these efforts were much smaller compared to the challenges stacked against real parliamentary effectiveness in the budget process.

The amendment in the National Assembly Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in 2013 provided for the first time an entry point to the standing committees of the assembly to influence the Public Sector Development Programme, which is the most consequential part of the budget statement.

The federal ministries, under the modified rules, were obliged to share each year's PSDP proposals with their counterpart standing committee in the National Assembly and incorporate the committees' recommendations in the PSDP.

The ministries were also required to inform the committees if, for any reason, a committee's recommendations could not be incorporated in the PSDP.

This was a significant milestone in strengthening parliament's role in the budget process for which both the PPP — led by

Nadeem Afzal Chan, chairman, Rules and Privileges Committee, and Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar — and PML-N — led by Anusha Rehman Khan and Minister for Power Khurram Dastgir Khan — cooperated to amend the rules.

A decade after the passage of the landmark amendment it will be useful to study how effectively it has been implemented.

It is important to know how many of the standing committees' recommendations were accepted by the government in shaping its PSDP and whether each standing committee was briefed by the relevant ministry and if the standing committees regularly convened their meetings to deliberate on the PSDP proposals initiated by the ministries.

Sadly, the assembly secretariat neither undertakes such research nor encourages civil society to do so.

The promulgation of the Public Finance Management Act in 2019 also opened the door to the finance ministry to brief the National Assembly

and Senate Standing Committees on Finance on the government's budget strategy paper and receive their input to shape the annual budget statement. It is, however, not very clear how far this consultative process has actually helped the budget process.

Although there are systemic challenges to an effective parliamentary role in the budget process, the input of parliamentarians during the budget process also leaves a lot to be desired.

A Pildat study of the budget sessions in the National Assembly during the past 25 years indicates that on average, less than 45 per cent of assembly members participated in the budget debate and their speech lasted for about 19 minutes each on average.

Almost 70pc of the budget speeches' content had almost no link to the budget and the bulk of 48 hours allocated to the budget debate, every year on average, is consumed in either narrating constituency problems or attacking political opponents. -- Courtesy Dawn

Budget and parliament

Central Asia and the BRI



Dr Murad Ali

One major geographic characteristic of Central Asian countries is their landlockedness. Being a landlocked economy creates challenges in all spheres of policy — foreign policy, security, international trade as well as overall human development. Research illustrates that the average GDP of landlocked countries achieves only 57 per cent of their maritime neighbours. In such geographically constrained and disadvantaged economies, the cost of shipping reaches 10 per cent above that of maritime countries. Hence, the combination of geographic location, trade and economic growth explains the cost of being landlocked. Landlocked countries suffer from about a 30 per cent handicap in comparison with their maritime competitors. According to the UNDP, most non-coastal

countries are at the bottom of the list on the Human Development Index.

Since their independence, leaders of the new states of Central Asia recognized and articulated the limitations of their landlocked geography and sought increased transportation and connectivity as a means to deal with this obstacle. Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan's first president who ruled the country for nearly three decades, stated at that time that lack of access to the sea could be detrimental to the country's economic development as well as its political independence. President Karimov of Uzbekistan expressed similar sentiments, emphasizing the need to seek new solutions to these problems, with an effective transportation system and secure access to the sea for smooth international trade.

The unabated conflict in Afghanistan also impeded the attempts of the Central Asian States to reach the Indian Ocean, geographically the closest warm water ports for the region. While there has been optimism that a peaceful Afghanistan would enable transit trade to the region,

these expectations have yet to be realized. The US-led New Silk Road strategy, announced in 2011, offered to remedy this situation, but it never gained significant momentum. It suffered from a lack of top-level support in the US administration and from the fact that it was originally an exclusively north-south affair, failing to include the Caucasus.

Against this background, significant advances have been made unilaterally by regional states. Leading among these is the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railroad, built by Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. While these were separate affairs, a large-scale vision for transportation infrastructure that would relieve Central Asia's landlocked nature did not arise until Beijing formalized its earlier disparate initiatives into the Silk Road Economic Belt, which subsequently came to be encompassed within President Xi's grand Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Both China and Central Asian countries see the initiative as a win-win proposition, and it has also provided an opportunity to Beijing to further expand and cement its footprints in

Central Asia. The BRI integrates countries of Central Asia with a new and multi-faceted transportation network, as well as connecting Central Asia to far-away countries and markets. Hence, one can discern that China's early BRI diplomatic successes are clustered with former Soviet countries in Central Asia as they are relatively less committed to US-led initiatives.

On account of their geographical location, these countries are vital to effectively connect China's overland to Europe, the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean. As per the BRI's official document released in March 2015 by Beijing, the initiative aims at "jointly building a new Eurasian Land Bridge and developing China-Mongolia-Russia, China-Central Asia-West Asia and China-Indochina Peninsula economic corridors by taking advantage of international transport routes".

In addition to their geography, the region has abundant natural resources. For instance, Kazakhstan has massive oil reserves as well as uranium. Turkmenistan pro-

vides about half of China's imported gas. It is worth mentioning that China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) has emerged as a dominant actor and is one of the leading foreign investors in the Central Asian oil and natural gas sector.

Besides its geo-economic benefits to China, Central Asian countries also recognize the BRI to be a source of much-needed financial injection to upgrade and improve physical infrastructure that could lead to better connectivity and enhanced trade, along with increased stability. Unprecedented investment in infrastructures under the BRI is expected to further promote interconnectivity and improve regional trade cooperation through the creation of a trans-regional transport network.

While China and Central Asian economies have high hopes for the BRI, there are also some issues that warrant considerable attention. For example, in the context of Central Asia as well as elsewhere where Beijing has invested heavily in infrastructure-building, one

of the key challenges for Sino-Central Asia cooperation within the BRI will be the capacity of these countries to repay the huge loans granted by China. While some of the countries have vast natural resources and are well-placed economically, it is feared that Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan could especially suffer from this predicament because they have little energy reserves, raw materials or goods to sell in international markets.

Hence, countries that lack substantial natural resources or are without a reasonable industrial base to diversify and bolster their exports could end up accumulating additional foreign debts and could thus jeopardize their own political and financial sovereignty. There is already a negative public opinion in many countries regarding the growing Chinese influence, particularly concerning the (mis)perceptions of 'debt trap' and 'predatory loans'. The case of Sri Lanka is the most glaring example that critics of Chinese lending policies are quick to cite. -- Courtesy TheNews

Breakdown of democracy



Usama Khilji

Pakistan is experiencing a complete breakdown of democracy with a powerless civilian set-up at the centre, caretaker governments in Punjab and KP serving beyond their constitutional mandate, a divided judiciary that is being openly defied, and an increasingly censored media; all resulting in a helpless populace; especially those sections that held hopes for rule of law in the country.

To put matters in perspective, we only have to look back six years; a megaproject of political engineering took place whereby the political party in government at that time, which enjoyed popularity, was targeted through various tactics.

These included a trumped-up corruption narrative which led to the disqualification of the prime minister of the time, with a new one stepping in for the remaining tenure of the government which was around a year.

For the 2018 elections, Nawaz Sharif was unable to campaign; constituency demarcations were changed; the media was barred from covering his speeches; and various leaders of the PML-N continued to be incarcerated after the elections through which the PTI government came to power.

At this point, the PTI government was pushing the dated one-dimensional targeted narrative of corruption against the PPP and PML-N leadership which meant selective cases being pushed forward essentially as a means of political engi-

neering.

Anybody criticising this selective justice was hounded and silenced, while media that was critical of the regime was silenced and censored. The PTI flaunted being on the same page as the establishment, and social media was abuzz with joint campaigns aimed at silencing any criticism.

However, things changed with the run-up to the vote of no-confidence against the then-prime minister Imran Khan in 2022, which was enabled by breaking the PTI-led coalition when smaller parties that were newly propped up prior to the 2018 election broke away from the coalition, and along with 'dissidents' in the PTI voted against Imran Khan, enabling the Pakistan Democratic Movement coalition — comprising the PML-N, PPP and 11 other parties — to gain power amidst a faltering economy that had caused Khan's popularity as PM to dip. Lo and behold!

There emerged an opportunity for the PTI to cry that a foreign conspiracy with the help of local abettors had led to their government being sent packing.

Again, the prime minister was changed roughly a year before elections were due with outgoing PM Imran Khan now facing trumped-up corruption charges in various cases, with the PDM government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif leading a similar persecution drive against the PTI leadership that the PML-N and PPP leadership had endured when the PTI had gained power in 2018.

Except this time, the persecution culminated in a new level of pressure as seen in the press conferences denouncing the protests that erupted on the day Imran Khan was arrested in violation of court orders from Islamabad High Court by paramilitary forces. Some leaders

were arrested up to five times in 10 days like Dr Shireen Mazari who was let go only after quitting the PTI and politics. 'Press conference' became the new buzzword after 'Vigos' and 'Northern Areas'.

The state of workers of PTI is dismal where they are being arrested by the thousands for mere social media posts; they have limited legal help or access to their families. This is similar to what happened to around five bloggers who were disappeared in 2017 and investigated for their political activity on social media, except at that time it was investigation for links with the PML-N.

A clear violation of Article 10 of the Constitution that guarantees the right to due process and fair trial is taking place, especially as the role of civilian courts is being undermined.

This was obvious when a judge of the IHC said to a PTI leader that "they will not let you go until you hold a press conference" after bails granted by the court were defied by law-enforcement personnel.

The mysterious killing of journalist Arshad Sharif, and the prolonged disappearance from police custody of Imran Riaz Khan who till date remains missing add to the violation of constitutional rights. The optics of arresting and mistreating women political workers also serves to discourage women from political participation.

Mainstream media is still censored, this time with Imran Khan's coverage being out of bounds. A climate of fear hovers over those in the media industry, with jobs and lives on the line as was seen during the PTI's regime as well if anybody dared to raise critical questions. -- Courtesy Dawn

Claiming attacks



Mohammad Ali Babakhel

Terrorism is aimed not only at inflicting damage, but also gaining attention. After every incident, ordinary citizens, the media and investigators look for someone to hold responsible. By claiming responsibility, groups want people to know who they are, what their objectives are, their grievances, and the cost of ignoring them. Claimed attacks also signify that groups do not fear retaliatory raids, which may be an indicator of weaknesses in counterterrorism (CT) efforts.

Claiming responsibility may also be a bid to influence the direction of an investigation and increase feelings of insecurity. Terrorism cannot survive without a persistently fearful environment. Claims are also made to glorify those who have carried out acts of terrorism, which can help attract and motivate new recruits. Responsibility claims may also influence the minds of financiers, sympathisers and facilitators.

It is true that some acts of terrorism remain anonymous. Groups involved in anonymous attacks are usually disinterested in gaining grassroots support for their mission, or their struggle is closed to political compromise. A claim of responsibility puts security agencies under public pressure to carry out kinetic operations against terrorist groups, which may result in killings and arrests of militants. That's why such groups always weigh their

options before making such claims.

The self-styled Islamic State changed the dynamics of taking credit for acts of terrorism. For attacks in Western countries, IS opted for a hasty approach. However, it was more cautious while claiming responsibility for attacks conducted in Saudi Arabia and Türkiye. This variation was largely influenced by the strategic goals pursued by IS towards different countries and regions.

IS often used Amaq, a news outlet, as the first point of dissemination of information. Amaq News became its official news agency, disseminating propaganda in the form of text and video through an encrypted mobile Android app 'Nashir'. The app came to be regarded as the direct voice of IS.

Executing a 'successful' terrorist incident in the modern era is not possible without the internet. The platform is used extensively for coordination, recruitment, training, financing, propaganda, incitement and to claim responsibility. Militants have been using the internet for the dissemination of propaganda through virtual messages, magazines, audio and video files, and video games. Globally, the internet is also used to collect funds and as an alternative training ground for future terrorists. In virtual training camps, issues like how to join terrorist organisations and how to make explosives and suicide jackets are discussed. Almost every terrorism case prosecuted these days involves the use of the internet, as planning acts of terrorism usually involves remote communication among different people.

Mainstream media not only reports terrorism, it also interprets issues related to terrorism. It is attracted by extreme acts not only because it is

its duty to report, but also because acts of terrorism invite attention. Terrorists have been using this to their advantage; when the media covers victims and their sufferings, terrorists get maximum attention.

The impact of claims is primarily dependent on media freedoms in a country. Where the media is state-controlled, terrorist groups have limited scope. In controlled societies, freedom is narrowly inter-preted; hence, it is easier to deal with such issues. Democratic societies believe that the fight against terrorism should not be used as an excuse by states to restrict the freedom of the press. Militant groups there take advantage of the free press. Though coverage of such issues may be detrimental to public and state interests, the media has to perform its functions and mobilise public opinion by informing the public about terrorist acts, threats and responses by the state.

Before the implementation of the National Action Plan, it had been a norm for groups to stake a claim on an attack through the media. However, point 11 of NAP banned the 'glorification' of terrorists and terrorist organisations through print and electronic media.

Though Pakistan has been confronted with the menace of terrorism for the last four decades, there has been no organised effort to evaluate the claims of responsibility made by militant groups. Since terrorism negatively impacts different spheres of life, its implications on public policy need to be reviewed and policymakers should use claims of responsibility as a baseline for CT strategies. It will also enable us to feel society's pulse regarding the acceptance of violence as a societal norm. -- Courtesy Dawn

CM Naqvi expresses annoyance over closure of some hospital departments

Independent Report
RAWALPINDI: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi on Saturday visited Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Murree and the control room established at Jinnah Hall to inspect facilities.

During his visit, the CM reviewed the treatment facilities provided in the hospital for patients and made a detailed inspection of the emergency, OPD, maternity ward, pharmacy and other departments.

He interacted with the patients admitted to the hospital and inquired about the medical facilities provided to them.

Naqvi also inspected the hospital's expansion project and directed to complete the remaining work at the earliest.

The CM expressed annoyance over the closure of some hospital departments and ordered

them to functional the closed departments immediately.

He also took notice of the shortage of nurses in the hospital and directed to fill the deficiency of nurses instantly.

Naqvi also directed the health officials to start the recruitment process for the vacant posts of nurses in the hospital.

He said that out of 29 sanctioned posts of nurses only six were working while no hospital could work round the clock with six nurses.

Naqvi asked the Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Health Punjab Dr Jamal Nasir to improve the healthcare facilities in the Murree Hospital and instructed him to stay in Murree till the progress of the hospital's affairs.

The CM said that Dialysis machines would be made functional in the

hospital while state-of-the-art medical facilities would be provided to the resident and tourists of the hill station.

Later, he also visited the control room set up at Jinnah Hall and reprimanded the control room staff for non-functional cameras for monitoring and ordered them to make the cameras functional and submit a report within 24 hours.

Mohsin Naqvi said that the facilities for the tourists would be improved and said that there was a need to increase the parking facility for visitors in Murree.

He ordered effective measures to deal with overcharging and instructed Commissioner Rawalpindi to improve health care and other facilities for travellers in Murree.

Provincial Information Minister Amir Mir also accompanied the CM during the visit.



PESHAWAR: 80-Member Tribal Jirga of District Mohmand meeting with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali.

Governor advises Naeem to greet Murtaza on winning mayoral poll

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori has advised the Karachi's Emir of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Hafiz Naeem Rehman to telephone the newly elected Mayor of Karachi Murtaza Wahab and congratulate him on winning the mayoral elections.

Talking to media persons after inaugurating 15th Food Technology Asia-2023 International Exhibition on Saturday, he

said that they all had to work together to resolve the issues of the city whether who becomes the mayor of the city.

He hoped that JI could play its role as an active opposition in the City Council of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) with its 160 votes.

He also hoped that the elected Mayor of Karachi Murtaza Wahab would make all-out efforts for the resolutions to the problems of the city.

Envoys of Czech Republic, EU explore cultural heritage in city

PESHAWAR (APP): The Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Pakistan, Tomas Smetanka and Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Pakistan, Dr. Riina Kionka arrived on a memorable visit to Peshawar on Saturday.

The purpose of their visit was to attend the EU film festival, which was scheduled to take place in the city. During their stay in Peshawar, they had the opportunity to visit various historical and cultural landmarks, including Masjid Mahabat Khan, Sethi House and famous antiques' market at Asamai Gate.

Hosted by the Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic for

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar, Ambassador Tomas Smetanka and Ambassador Dr. Riina Kionka expressed their delight in exploring the rich history and heritage of Peshawar.

Their visit to Masjid Mahabat Khan included a meeting with Maulana Tayyab Qureshi, the caretaker of the mosque, where they were presented with a bouquet of flowers and enjoyed the hospitality of the locals with a refreshing cup of green tea, a tradition of the people of Peshawar.

The delegates were fascinated by the antique jewelry showcased during their visit to Sarafa Bazar. Additionally, they had the privilege of meeting Mr. Wajeh Sethi, the current

owner of Sethi House, one of the esteemed historical sites in Peshawar. The visit provided an opportunity for cultural exchange and appreciation of the region's architectural wonders.

The culinary experience was equally delightful, as the crew of the Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Peshawar graciously treated the distinguished guests to "Sobat" (Penda), a traditional dish of the Marwat Tribes.

This culinary experience was made possible through the initiatives of Barrister Assad Saifullah Khan, the Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi talking to parents and inquiring about the treatment of child during his visit to Tehsil Headquarter Hospital Marri.

KP Govt directs officials of Finance Deptt to deposit dues in June

PESHAWAR (APP): The Caretaker Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Saturday directed the officials of the Finance Department to collect the dues by the last week of June and deposit it in the government treasury on time otherwise it has decided to take disciplinary action against the officials who show incompetence.

Supervising Special Assistant for Revenue Pir Haroon Shah in a statement issued by his office on Saturday instructed the Senior Member Board Revenue that this is the last month of the financial year while the revenue target for this year is 945.00 billion.

About 70% of the revenue has been collected while 30% is yet to be collected, for which all the concerned officers are

working hard to make it possible. He issued further instructions and said that strict disciplinary action should be taken against all such officers and concerned authorities who are using delaying tactics in revenue collection because now the target of collecting more than three billion rupees remains. Special Assistant for Revenue, Pir Haroon Shah, while giving further remarks, said that all resources should be used to recover the arrears so that the current target can be achieved this year.

Any kind of negligence in this regard will not be tolerated. He said that we believe that due to the increase in taxes and other challenges this year, the finance department is falling short of achieving the current target of taxes.

AG Punjab Shan Gul resigns

LAHORE (Online): Advocate General Punjab Muhammad Shan Gul tendered his resignation on Saturday highlighting his inability to perform the functions of his office due to domestic commitments which he could no longer postpone.

The letter was written to Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman and the chief minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi contending that "it was in the early make of my return to private practice after only recently having not been confirmed as a permanent judge of the Lahore High Court, that I had found myself approached by Mr. Mohsin Naqvi the chief minister Punjab, Mr. Zahid Akhtar Zaman the chief secretary and Mr. Ahmed Raza Sarwar the additional chief secretary in relation to my availability to serve as the advocate general of the province.

CM grieved over loss of lives

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has expressed his deep sense of sorrow and grief over the loss of human lives in a traffic accident on Motorway near Chakwal.

He expressed his heartfelt sympathy and condolence with the heirs of the deceased and directed the administration to provide best treatment facilities to the injured. He remarked that the provincial government equally share the grief of the heirs. The caretaker CM sought a report about the sorrowful incident from Commissioner Rawalpindi Division and Regional Police Officer Rawalpindi while directing to take strict legal action against the responsible.

KP Minister directs jails authorities to ensure quality food to prisoners

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Special Assistant on Prisons Hidayatullah Khan Afridi Saturday issued instructions to the authorities of Haripur and Mansehra jails to ensure the provision of quality food and all other facilities to the prisoners in the jails.

Special attention should be paid to cleanliness and all medical facilities should be provided in prisons for the treatment of sick prisoners and relatives and visitors should be treated well. The Superintendent Special Assistant issued these instructions on the occasion of separate visits to District Haripur and Mansehra Jails. Superintendents Jails

visited the various parts of the jails and gave a detailed briefing on the administrative affairs of the jails to the Superintendent Special Assistant. Supervising Special Assistant Hidayatullah Afridi inspected the kitchens of both the jails and checked the quality of food served to the prisoners and also inquired about the menu of food served to the prisoners in the jails on a daily basis. On this occasion, Supervising Special Assistant Hidayatullah Afridi said that we are trying our best to carry out the responsibilities of the caretaker government as long as we are assigned and to create facilities in all departments.

Eleven illegal arm holders arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 11 illegal arm holders and recovered arms, ammunition and dagger from their possession during crackdown here on Saturday.

According to police spokesman, Civil Lines Police recovered 01 pistol of 30 bore from Zain ul Abedin and 01 pistol of 30 bore recovered from Sikander. Similarly, Airport police held Shahzad and recovered dagger from his possession.



HYDERABAD: Displaced people from Cyclone Biporjoy restore their makeshifts and clean their Boats for Fishing in Sea at Zero Point near Golarchi.

Minister says: KP caretaker govt to present budget for 4-month on Jun 20

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Information and Public Relations, Hajj, Awqaf, Religious and Minority Affairs Barrister Firoz Jamal Shah Kakakhil Saturday confirmed that the caretaker government would present the budget for 4 months on June 20.

Relief checks have been provided to the families of the citizens who died due to rain in the southern districts in the last few days while the survey is going on to estimate the damages, the Minister added. A wall of shame should be built for the PTI leadership involved in the May 9 incidents. State of the art hospital project is being restarted by the federal government in Hayatabad.

Talking to media men, the Minister said: "We condemn propaganda against sensitive organizations on social media," the Minister said. The PTI leadership should show its detachment from anti-state elements, he added.

He said that activities are being done on social media against national security and sensitive institutions. Social media activist Adil Raja is an anti-state and Indian agent who is propagandizing against sensitive organizations and spreading wrong things on social media by taking money from Indian businessmen and sitting abroad.

The caretaker provincial minister said that this is the direct hand of the social media activist chairman Theerak-e-Insaf. If the leadership of Theerak-e-Insaf is not related to it, then it should express its indifference to the media.

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GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Khalid Khurshid Khan awarding shield and certificate among the new recruits of GB Police during the police passing out parade at Police Training Center.

Police continue action against criminals: CCPO

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore police have apprehended a significant number of individuals involved in criminal activities, with a total of 9,031 proclaimed offenders, 19,384 court offenders, and 9,300 habitual criminals being taken into custody since the beginning of the year.

In a statement released on Saturday, Bilal Siddique Kamyana, Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Lahore, highlighted the notable achievements within various divisions.

In the Cantt Division, 1,989 proclaimed

offenders, 3,385 court offenders, and 2,169 habitual criminals have been apprehended.

Similarly, in the Civil Lines Division, 825 proclaimed offenders, 1,534 court offenders, and 1,026 habitual criminals have been successfully arrested. Likewise, within the City Division, an impressive number of individuals involved in criminal activities have been successfully apprehended, with a total of 1,837 proclaimed offenders, 4,519 court offenders, and 2,186 habitual criminals being taken into custody.

ANF recovers 206 kg drugs in five operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in their ongoing operations conducted in different areas of the country managed to recover 206 kg drugs and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Saturday. He informed that in an operation, 850 grams Ice drug was recovered from a parcel booked for New Zealand at a private courier service near old Islamabad Airport. Ice drug was concealed in gift packs, balloons, hair clips and hats, he added. One kg hashish was recovered from the possession of a motorcycle rider.



KARACHI: Pakistan Navy medical team provide treatment to CYCLONE affected locals.

NCHD, UNICEF jointly organize day-long awareness workshop on COVID-19

HARIPUR (APP): National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) in collaboration with UNICEF Saturday organized a one-day awareness workshop on COVID-19 free booster dose vaccination campaign at Haripur Press Club.

Apart from the media representatives, a large number of people from different walks of life were also present.

During the awareness session, the speakers informed that the booster dose is intended for individuals above 18 years of age and enhances the immune response. They mentioned that during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, people were hesitant and fearful of

getting the COVID-19 vaccine, fearing that it might lead to further illnesses.

There were also various rumors circulating that vaccination could cause death, infertility, and other issues. However, during this time, print, social, and electronic media played an important role in raising awareness and encouraging people towards vaccination.

They further emphasized that for the COVID-19 free booster dose vaccination campaign, they are actively engaging educational institutions, media, and the support of civil society in raising awareness. Parents and individuals within society should also play their role.



LAHORE: Residents of Sarai Sidhu are holding protest demonstration against high handedness of police department, at Lahore press club.

New Delhi losing battle of hearts and minds in IIOJK: Experts

LAHORE (APP): Experts believe that Narendra Modi's fascist regime was losing the battle of hearts and minds in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). They urged the international community to help implement the UNSC resolutions in IIOJK, by holding a free and impartial plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations to let the Kashmiris decide their own future.

Cruelty knows no bounds, and after the men were gunned down, their bodies were not returned to their families, they condemned. Violating all fundamental rights, India had imposed a military siege on some 10 million Kashmiris in IIOJK, by converting the territory into the biggest jail on earth,

where over 1,000,000 Indian forces had been deployed with no regard for human rights, they lamented.

Since 1947, Article 370 had given Jammu and Kashmir a semi-autonomous constitutional status. But the Modi-led regime abrogated the special status of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) on August 5, 2019 by repealing articles 370 and 35-A of the Indian constitution.

Former senator from Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Sehar Kamran (TI), told APP that the latest controversy had been reported by the international media that the extrajudicial killings of a number of innocent Kashmiris had become a routine in Kulgam area of the occupied territory. The

Indian occupational forces' state terrorism, war crimes, and human rights violations had made life a nightmare for over one million oppressed Kashmiris, especially women, senior citizens, and children in IIOJK, she regretted.

Moreover, the Indian forces were using molestation, rape and sexual violence against women and children as a weapon of war, besides giving collective punishment, in a bid to suppress the legitimate freedom movement in the occupied valley," she informed. Kashmiris have been telling the world for decades that India intended to settle paramilitary families in the held Kashmir and establish military settlements there. Narendra Modi

government was all out to set up semi-military permanent colonies in help Kashmir, Ms. Kamran said while replying to a query.

Instead of implementing the UNSC resolutions, India was trying to muzzle the voice of Kashmiri people through the use of force and by perpetuating an illegal occupation, which had increased brutality and oppression after August 5, 2019, she added. Kashmir has been a burning issue since the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947. Pakistan and India have fought three wars over Kashmir in 1948, 1965, and 1999, but have been unable to settle the dispute, she recalled.

Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik's wife Mushaal Hussein Mullick told APP that the RSS-inspired

Hindutva ideology was being pursued by the BJP-led Modi government, which was a major threat to "foreign investment" in India. Amid the Indian government's move to seek a death sentence for incarcerated Kashmiri leader Yasin Malik, Mushaal Mullick said that the entire world would react if any harm came to her husband.

She said the Indian government was trying to commit a "judicial murder" of her husband and warned that such a move will trigger a reaction from across the world. Mushaal Mullick said that fascist Modi and the Indian Army were turning Kashmiris into a minority in the valley by issuing domiciles to Indian citizens. In Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Pak would not default on its financial obligations, dispelling all rumors and concerns: Tola

KARACHI (INP): Minister of State for Revenue, Ashfaq Tola, confidently stated that Pakistan would not default on its financial obligations, dispelling all rumors and concerns.

Speaking at the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), Tola addressed the gathering that included prominent figures such as KATI President Faraz-ur-Rehman, Deputy Patron-in-Chief Zubair Chhaya, Senior Vice President Nighat Awan, and Vice President Muslim Mohammadi, among others.

Tola emphasized that out of the allocated budget of 9,200 billion rupees, a significant portion of 9 trillion rupees could be collected without difficulty. He assured the audience that the government had taken measures to provide historic relief to small businesses through the

budget, while acknowledging that the auto and electronics sectors were facing the most significant challenges.

Tola further clarified that the government had not introduced any tax amnesty scheme in the budget and that any ambiguity related to such a scheme would be resolved before the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The Minister of State lamented the dominance of the cash trade system in Pakistan, highlighting that only 3% of the population was currently contributing 90% of the tax revenue. He stressed that the budget had been meticulously designed, considering the needs and circumstances of various sectors. Tola also criticized the previous government for the negative impact caused by the suspension of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) program.

KATI President Faraz-ur-Rehman, while

addressing the gathering, emphasized the necessity of expanding the tax net to stimulate economic growth. He called for the government's intervention in controlling the value of the national currency and pointed out the ongoing challenges faced by the business community, including delayed customs clearance and persistent shortages of raw materials.

Zubair Chhaya, Deputy Patron-in-Chief of KATI, expressed concerns about the increase in withholding tax and the complex tax regime, which instilled fear among taxpayers. He called for clarity regarding the distinction between filers and non-filers, asserting that tax savings for filers often ended up being spent on responding to tax-related notices.

In addition, Tariq Yusuf, President of the Karachi Chamber, criticized the government's traditional budget.



Farmers of Pishin being given training during a seminar organized by Community Development Research Organization

PARC organizes training workshop for rice growers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Agricultural Engineering Institute (AEI) of Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) has organized a seminar and training program for rice growers at Daska, Sialkot for enhancing rice yields through education and training on the advantages of utilizing specialized machinery for rice cultivation and harvesting. The seminar was also aimed to highlight the drawbacks of traditional methods, said a press release issued here on Saturday.

Prominent participants were comprised of Dr Asif Ali Mirani, DG, AED, PARC, Dr Hafiz Sultan Mehmood, Director, AEI, NARC along with experts, researchers, engineers, program leaders and representatives from agricultural organizations.

Dr Ghulam Muhammad Ali, Chairman PARC emphasized the significance of rice as

Pakistan's second major cash crop, following wheat and highlighted the need of using modern farming equipment and high-yielding varieties to enhance productivity and combat the impacts of climate change on the agricultural sector.

Rice cultivation primarily takes place in fertile regions of Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan, providing a livelihood for a significant number of farmers, he said adding that as compared to wheat, rice mechanization in Pakistan was relatively low, leading to delays in sowing and reduced yields due to manual labor. Moreover, labor shortages caused by urbanization and industrialization pose a significant challenge for farmers, he added.

Dr Ali suggested that adopting mechanization and utilizing head-feeding combine harvesters could provide viable solutions to tackle these issues.



PESHAWAR: Large numbers of vehicles are in queue to refill CNG tanks as the some regions of province are facing shortage of gas due to low pressure, at a CNG refilling station located on GT road in Peshawar.

FPCCI, CRBC agree to jointly work for economic stability

PESHAWAR (APP): The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) and China Road & Bridge Corporation (CRBC) have agreed on working together on various projects of economic stability in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to create employment opportunities through mutual cooperation in Rashakai Special Economic Zone.

In this connection, an important meeting was held here in FPCCI Regional Office on Saturday. Those who attended the meeting were included Regional Coordinator, FPCCI, Sartaj Ahmad Khan, Secretary Peshawar Chamber of Small Trade & Industry, Akbar Sethi and Regional Secretary FPCCI, Engineer

Khalid Haider, Mr Dawood of the Chinese origin represented CRBC.

During the meeting, various issues relating to strengthening of Pak-China Friendship and particularly taking benefit of the best experiences of the business communities of both countries, especially Rashakai Special Economic Zone came under discussion.

Talking on the occasion, Coordinator FPCCI, Sartaj Ahmad Khan assured the CRBC representative of complete cooperation and said that he his grateful to the People's Republic of China and Chinese business community for initiating various projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Rashakai Special Economic Zone.

FWCCI welcomes new British HC in Pakistan

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FWCCI) President Rubina Amjad has welcomed the appointment of Jane Marriott as the first female British High Commissioner (HC) to Pakistan.

In a letter written to the newly appointed high commissioner on Saturday, she congratulated Ms. Jane Marriott, saying that it was a matter of great pleasure for the Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry. She said Britain and Pakistan were enjoying cordial diplomatic and economic relations while appointment of Jane Marriott as the high commissioner to Pakistan would further cement the liaison. She said that Britain was one of the largest trading partners of Pakistan and it had always supported Pakistan.

DC for setting up extra cattle markets in each Tehsil

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Salman Khan Lodhi has directed the officers concerned to set up one extra cattle markets at each tehsil of the district in order to facilitate vendors and local people for purchasing sacrificial animal.

Presiding over a meeting to review arrangements for cattle markets here on Saturday, the DC said that as per directives of the provincial government, the cattle markets were being established on "no profit no loss" rules. He said that fee would be announced for sale and purchase of cattle to meet the expenses adding that notification for this purpose would be issued soon.



Federal Minister for Interior, Rana Sana Ullah Khan addressing the Traders and Businessmen During a gathering in Karkhana Bazaar Faisalabad.

MNAs suggest radical reforms in key sectors to achieve sustainable economic growth

ISLAMABAD (APP): Lawmakers in the National Assembly on Saturday continued debate on the federal budget for fiscal year 2023-24, suggesting measures to improve key sectors including communication, water reservoirs, agriculture and energy on modern lines to achieve the required goals of macroeconomic stability and growth trajectory.

Participating in the debate for budget 2023-24, Riaz-ul-Haq of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) said the allocated funds for NHA (National Highway Authority) and water resources including new

reservoirs in the next fiscal year were insufficient.

He said the construction of major dams would take around 10 to 15 years to complete with the existing ratio of funds allocation, highlighting the water scarcity being faced in the country.

The lawmaker also highlighted the ever-increasing energy needs terming it a "crucial issue" for Pakistan, and recalled that during the last tenure of PML-N around 12,000 megawatts of electricity were added to the power system under the leadership of Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. However, in the past

four years, he regretted that there had been no progress in this sector, which resulted in load shedding being witnessed in the country.

He emphasized the need to develop a comprehensive plan to eliminate circular debt in the energy sector.

He proposed reforms and accountability for the institutions like the Pakistan International Airlines, Pakistan Steel Mills and Khushhali Bank.

He mentioned that while the textile sector had been given significant incentives, similar incentives should be given to the energy.

Steps being taken to resolve issues of city's all markets: Tessori

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori on Saturday said that measures were being made to resolve the problems of all markets of the city.

He stated this while meeting a number of trade organization delegations, which called on him at the Governor House.

Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) - Pakistan's senior leader Dr. Farooq Sattar was also present on the occasion.

The Governor said that the carpeting of roads

and repair work of footpaths were being paid special attention and police patrolling would also be beefed up in the surroundings of the markets.

Kamran Tessori said that traders were the backbone of economy. He said that the traders were playing vital role in the economic development of the province and the country.

The delegations thanked the Sindh Governor for hearing their problems in detail.

China's online ride-hailing companies rise to 313

BEIJING (Xinhua/APP): China's online ride-hailing companies reached 313 by the end of May, four more than the number registered in the previous month, data from the Ministry of Transport shows.

By the end of last month, the authorized ride-hailing vehicle certificates and driver licenses in the country hit 2.36 million and 5.58 million, up 2.5 percent and 3.3 percent month on month, respectively, according to the ministry. In May, 735 million ride-hailing trips were made.



KARACHI: A view of sacrificial animals at Karachi Cattle Market ahead of Eid-Al-Adha preparations as it is the Asia's biggest cattle market set up at Karachi's Superhighway.

China EximBank lends 730 bln yuan to support foreign trade in Jan-May

BEIJING (Xinhua/APP): The Export-Import Bank of China (China EximBank) has issued over 730 billion yuan (102.4 billion U.S. dollars) of loans to support the country's foreign trade during the first five months of this year.

The value represents a 15.8 percent increase from the same period last year, the bank said.

At the end of May, the bank's outstanding loans to foreign trade firms came in at nearly 3 trillion yuan, up 16.36 percent year on year and 130

billion yuan more than the beginning of 2023.

The bank has stepped up financial support for foreign trade companies and related industrial and supply chains in the past two years, in particular for small and micro trade firms. Its Belt and Road outstanding loans also topped 2.2 trillion yuan at the end of last month.

The China EximBank is a state-funded and state-owned policy bank supporting China's foreign trade, investment, and international economic cooperation.

China's used car sales soar 25.95% in May

BEIJING, June 17 (Xinhua/APP): China's used vehicle sales surged 25.95 percent year on year in May, data from the China Automobile Dealers Association showed. About 1.5 million used vehicles changed hands in the country last month, with a total transaction value of 93.24 billion yuan (about 13.08 billion U.S. dollars), according to the association. During the January-May period, around 7.24 million second-hand vehicles were traded in China, up 17.29 percent from the same period last year. The total transaction value of these traded stood at 454.38 billion yuan, the data revealed.

Dasgir inaugurates 132-kV transmission line in Gujranwala

GUJRANWALA (APP): Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division) Khurram Dasgir Khan inaugurated a 132-kV transmission line from Kot Agha to Saranwali on Saturday, which has been completed with Rs 45 million.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, he said that the transmission line was a source of comfort for the electricity consumers of the area, adding that Kot Agha to Saranwali line would help provide electricity with full voltage and bringing down load-shedding hours.

The energy minister said that installation of the transmission line was completed in a short period

of only six months, adding that the project was a proof of technical skills of Gujranwala Electric Power Company (GEPCO) engineers and workers, for which they deserve appreciation. He mentioned that work was in progress on several development projects including improvement and stabilization of electricity distribution system across the country.

Member National Assembly Syeda Nooshen Ittikhar, Chairman Board of Directors GEPCO Muhammad Shoaib Butt, Chief Executive Engineer Muhammad Ayub, Chief Engineer Zamatiyaz Ahmed Cheema, and others were present.



LAHORE: A person is plucking the Lychee from trees at garden near Saggian Bridge.

Need of agriculture sector uplift urged for attaining growth

ISLAMABAD (APP): President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari on Saturday said that agricultural sector can play a very key role in increasing exports, reducing imports and achieving sustainable economic growth in the country.

He expressed these views, while talking to the members of the Agro Committee of the Chamber, which met him under the chairmanship of the Convenor Committee Chaudhry Sohail, said a press release.

In the last one year, the trade deficit has reduced from \$17 billion to \$3 billion because of measures taken by the

government, he said adding that in order to completely eliminate the deficit, attention should be paid to increase the export of fruits, vegetables and other agricultural commodities.

He said that the promotion of research is necessary to increase the efficiency of the agricultural sector and urged the government to mobilize embassies to promote Pakistani products to new markets of the world.

Being an agrarian economy, agriculture is the lifeline for Pakistani economy, he said adding that Pakistan achieved a record production of 27.5 million tons of wheat this year despite the devastating floods.

China facilitates purchase of electric cars in rural areas

BEIJING (Xinhua/APP): Chinese authorities on Friday launched this year's promotional campaign for new-energy vehicles (NEVs) in rural areas in three locations—east China's Wuxi, south China's Qionghai, and central China's Jingmen. The activity will last from June to December, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), one of five government departments that launched the activity. A total of 69 NEV models will be featured, said the MIIT. It called on NEV manufacturers and

distributors to finalize sales policies and improve customer service systems.

Operators of charging facilities should also offer discounts on charging services, while e-commerce platforms should sell the cars online, the ministry added. China has released a guideline to help people living in rural areas to purchase and use NEVs, with a focus on boosting the construction of charging infrastructure. The country's NEV sales expanded 60.2 percent year on year to 717,000 units in May, and its NEV output totaled 713,000 units last month, up 53 percent year on year.



PESHAWAR: Fruit vendors busy in selling of watermelons as demand of fruits increased in city during hot summer season at a Fruit Market located nearby GT road in Peshawar.

Pakistani industrial ecology to provide endless opportunities: SCO Expo

BEIJING (APP): Today's Pakistan is in line with "good timing, geographical convenience and great human relations" from the traditional Chinese perspective", noted Wang Jianxun, Senior Advisor of Pakistan National Science and Technology Park.

Addressing as a key speaker at the SCO International Investment and Trade Expo co-hosted by China Study Center, National University of Science and Technology, Pakistan (NUST) held in Qingdao, a scenic coastal city in Shandong Province,

Wang emphasized the environment of "blue ocean" in Pakistan, with the theme of Opportunities and Challenges of Pakistan's Industrial Ecological Chain under the New World Situation.

When technological productivity lacks sufficient capacity to meet national demand, the trade deficit has been increasingly emerging. Pakistan's current trade deficit has soared to a record high of USD 48.66 billion from USD 30.96 billion a year ago.



VEHARI: Provincial Minister for Industry, Commerce, and Energy SM Tanveer listening the problems of the Industrialists and Traders.

Sudan officials say airstrike kills 17 people, including 5 children, in capital Khartoum

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: An airstrike in Sudan's capital Khartoum on Saturday killed at least 17 people, including five children, health officials said, as fighting continued between rival generals seeking to control the country.

The attack was one of the deadliest of the clashes in urban areas of Khartoum and elsewhere in Sudan between the military and a powerful paramilitary group known as the Rapid Support Forces.

There was no immediate comment Saturday from either side of the conflict on the strike, and it was not clear whether the attack was by warplanes or a drone. The military's aircraft have repeatedly targeted RSF troops and the RSF has reportedly used drones and anti-aircraft weapons against the military. The fighting broke out in mid-April, capping months of increasing ten-

sions between the leaders of the military and the RSF. Saturday's strike hit the Yarmouk neighborhood in southern Khartoum, where clashes have centered in recent weeks, according to Sudan's Ministry of Health. The area houses a military facility controlled by the army. At least 25 houses were destroyed, the ministry wrote in a Facebook post.

The dead included five children and an unknown number of women and elderly people, and some wounded people were hospitalized, the ministry said.

A local group that calls itself The Emergency Room and helps organize humanitarian aid in the area, said at least 11 people were wounded in the strike. It posted images it said were of houses damaged in the attack and people searching through rubble. Other images claimed to show a wounded girl and man.

The conflict has plunged the African country into chaos and turned Khartoum and other urban areas into battlefields. The paramilitary force has occupied people's houses and other civilian properties since the onset of the conflict, according to residents and activists.

The clashes have killed hundreds of civilians and wounded thousands of others. More than 2.2 million people have fled their homes to safer areas inside Sudan or crossed into neighboring countries.

Activists and residents have reported widespread looting in the capital. Diplomatic missions, including residences belong to the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum, have been stormed and looted, allegedly by armed men wearing RSF uniforms. Almost all diplomatic missions in Sudan were evacuated in the first weeks of the war.



Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian meets with Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud in Tehran, Iran.

Saudi foreign minister arrives in Tehran amid rapprochement

Monitoring Desk
TEHRAN: Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan arrived in Iran on Saturday amid a rapprochement between the two Middle East arch-foes, Iranian state TV said.

Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed in March, in a deal brokered by China, to end a diplomatic rift and re-establish relations following years of hostility that had endangered regional stability including in Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon.

Iran officially reopened its embassy in Saudi Arabia on June 7.

The kingdom broke ties with Iran in 2016 after protesters attacked the Saudi embassy in Tehran in retaliation for Riyadh's

execution of a prominent Shia cleric. Bin Farhan is due to meet with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amirabdollahian. Iran has recently been trying to mend its strained ties with several Gulf Arab states.

Saudi Arabia's rapprochement with Iran has left Israel largely alone as it has sought to isolate Iran diplomatically.

The United Arab Emirates, which was the first Gulf Arab country to sign a normalisation agreement with Israel in 2020, resumed formal relations with Iran last year.

Bahrain and Morocco later joined the UAE in establishing ties with Israel.

Daesh-aligned militants kill 25 including schoolchildren in Uganda

Monitoring Desk
KAMPALA: Militants linked with Daesh attacked a school in Mpondwe, western Uganda, killing at least 25 people including children, the national police spokesman said Saturday.

The attack was led by eastern Congo-based Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) militia, that has sworn allegiance to the militant group.

"A dormitory was burnt and food store looted. So far 25 bodies have been recovered from the school and transferred to Bwera Hospital", a tweet by the Ugandan police cited spokesman Fred Enaga as saying.

Enaga said boys and girls were among the dead. "Also recovered are

eight victims, who remain in critical condition at Bwera hospital," he added.

The school is less than two kilometres (1.2 miles) in a town close to the DR Congo border. District Commissioner Joe Walusimbi told AFP that a number of students were still unaccounted for.

Enaga said the army and police units were in "hot pursuit" of the attackers who fled in the direction of Virunga National Park over the border in DR Congo. A vast expanse on the border with Uganda and Rwanda, Virunga is the oldest nature reserve in Africa and is renowned worldwide as a sanctuary for rare species, including mountain gorillas.

Militias — of which dozens are active in eastern DR Congo — also use the park as a hideout. Originally insurgents in Uganda, the ADF gained a foothold in eastern DR Congo in the 1990s and have since been accused of killing thousands of civilians. Since 2019, some ADF attacks in eastern DR Congo have been claimed by Daesh, which describes the fighters as a local offshoot, the militant group's Central Africa Province.

It is not the first attack on a school in Uganda attributed to the militia.

In June 1998, 80 students were burnt to death in their dormitories in an ADF attack on Kichwamba Technical Institute near the border of DR Congo.



South African President said this war must be settled and there should be peace through negotiations.

South African leader urges Russia and Ukraine to de-escalate

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa on Friday called on Ukraine and Russia to de-escalate their conflict, as he arrived in the war-torn country on a mission to broker peace.

"This war must be settled and there should be peace through negotiations," he told reporters after talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Ramaphosa was among a group of African leaders and officials from seven countries visiting Kyiv as part of a mission aimed at brokering peace between Russia and Ukraine.

The leaders first visited the town of Bucha near Kyiv, the scene of an alleged massacre while occupied by Russia.

Air raid sirens sounded across Ukraine after they arrived on Friday morning and the air force said it had downed 12 Russian missiles.

Ramaphosa's spokesman told journalists in Kyiv that the president went down to a shelter during the air raid.

"Today as we were here, we heard of missile strikes and those types of hostilities are not good for fostering peace," Ramaphosa told journalists.

"We argue that there must be de-escalation on both sides."

The African delegation also included Senegal's Macky Sall and Zambia's Hakainde Hichilema as well as Comoros' Azali Assoumani, who heads the African Union.

Australian PM pledges \$1.4 bln for affordable homes

Monitoring Desk
SYDNEY: Australia's centre-left Labor government said on Saturday it would commit A\$2 billion (\$1.4 billion) to deliver thousands of new affordable homes nationwide, as the country grapples with soaring living costs.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the funds - to be used by 30 June 2025 - would be delivered to state and territory governments within two weeks, with the aim of boosting public housing supply for Australians on waiting lists.

"The Labor government that I lead believes that every Australian deserves the security of a roof over their head," Albanese said in Melbourne. "One hundred percent will be public housing, this is money for public housing." The government in May said it would include A\$14.6 billion over four years in the federal budget for cost-of-living relief for families and businesses.

Blinken supports efforts toward "mature" China-South Korea ties - S.Korea ministry

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he supports South Korea's efforts to develop a "healthy and mature" cooperative relationship with China, South Korea's foreign ministry said on Saturday.

Blinken, who arrives in Beijing on Sunday for the highest-level visit by an official of President Joe Biden's administration, discussed bilateral relations, relations between China and South Korea, and North Korea in a call with South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin on Saturday, the ministry said in a statement. Blinken and Park strongly condemned what they consider North Korea's repeated provocations, the ministry said, and agreed the U.S., South Korea and Japan should continue to urge China to play a constructive role in the U.N. Security Council on denuclearisation. The statement did not elaborate.

U.S. officials say they do not expect Blinken's trip to China, the first by a secretary of state in five years, to yield a breakthrough in how Washington and Beijing deal with each other.

Japan's emperor arrives in Indonesia for first state visit

Monitoring Desk
JAKARTA: Japan's Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako arrived in the Indonesian capital Jakarta on Saturday for their first state visit since ascending the Chrysanthemum Throne in 2019. The June 17-23 trip to Southeast Asia's biggest economy includes a meeting with Indonesian President Joko Widodo at a palace south of Jakarta and a visit to a military cemetery honouring Indonesian and Japanese soldiers. Japan ruled Indonesia for more than three years during and after World War II.



Japan's emperor arrives in Indonesia for first state visit

Supermajorities in state capitols push controversial policies to the edge

Monitoring Desk
JEFFERSON CITY: Lawmakers in state capitols this year have been flexing their superpowers.

In North Carolina, a new supermajority of Republicans enacted abortion restrictions. In Vermont, a new supermajority of Democrats imposed a climate-sensitive home heating law. And in Montana, a GOP supermajority booted a transgender lawmaker from the House floor.

In each case, the views of their political opponents ultimately were irrelevant.

By at least one measure, political power is at its highest mark in decades. That's because Republicans or Democrats hold majorities so large in 28 states that they could override gubernatorial vetoes without any help from the minority party.

"Supermajorities give one party a lot of power to do what they want to do," said Steven Rogers, a political scientist at Saint Louis University who focuses on elections and state legislatures.

There is no single standard for a supermajority, though the term generally is equated with whatever threshold is needed to override a gubernatorial veto. In many states, that's a two-thirds majority. In some, that's a three-fifths majority. In six states — Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee and West Virginia — it takes only a simple majority to override a veto. But those states all have Republican majorities around 70% or greater — easily exceeding any definition of a supermajority.

The number of states with supermajorities is at its highest level since at least 1982, with 19 Republican supermajorities and nine Democratic ones, according to research by Rogers.

This year began with supermajorities in 26 legislatures, including new Republican ones in Florida and Montana and a new Democratic one in Vermont.

Cyclone eases over Indian coast

Monitoring Desk
MANDVI: Cyclone Biparjoo tore down power poles and uprooted trees Friday after pummeling the Indian coastline, but the storm was weaker than feared and there were two confirmed deaths.

Two men in Bhavnagar district died on Thursday evening after drowning in flood waters, the Gujarat state government said.

Another 23 people had been injured in the storm, relief director C.C. Patel told AFP. Driving rain and howling winds continued to lash the state's coast on Friday despite the worst of the danger receding.

"There was no light, it was pitch dark. The buffaloes were waiting," farmer Usman Karmi, 48, told AFP.

"I've never seen a storm like this in my life, it was very frightening," State relief commissioner Alok Pandey told reporters that nearly 500 homes had been partially damaged after Biparjoo made landfall.

North Korea starts key party meeting to discuss defence strategy - KCNA

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: North Korea convened a key party meeting to decide its diplomatic and defence strategy "to cope with the changed international situation", with leader Kim Jong Un attending, state media KCNA said on Saturday.

The enlarged plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) opened on Friday and plans to also review the country's economic projects during the first half of this year, KCNA said without further elaborating.

The meeting will likely be held for multiple days.

North Korea fired two short-range missiles off its east coast on Thursday, less than an hour after Pyongyang warned of an "inevitable" response to military drills staged earlier in the day by South Korea and U.S. troops. North Korea has said the drills were escalating military tensions.

Last month, Pyongyang unsuccessfully tried to launch a spy satellite, in its first satellite launch since 2016.

US probe finds racism rife among police where Floyd was killed

Monitoring Desk
MINNEAPOLIS: Police in Minneapolis, Minnesota, routinely resort to violent and racist practices, the US Justice Department said on Friday in findings of a review three years after George Floyd was murdered by city police officers.

The Minneapolis police department (MPD) "uses excessive force, including unjustified deadly force" and "unlawfully discriminates against Black and Native American people when enforcing the law," the department concluded.

Canada court upholds pact on returning asylum seekers to US

Monitoring Desk
MONTREAL: Canada's Supreme Court on Friday upheld an immigration agreement that allows authorities to bar asylum seekers from entering the country from the United States.

The Safe Third Country Agreement, which came into effect in 2004, says that asylum seekers must make their application in the first safe country in which they arrived once they left their country of origin. The judges unanimously ruled that the accord did "not infringe refugee claimants' rights to liberty and security."

In July 2020, a Federal Court judge invalidated the agreement, ruling that it violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms because those returned to the US faced poor detention conditions. Advocacy groups challenged the constitutionality of the agreement on behalf of claimants, including an Ethiopian woman who was held in solitary confinement for a week in a US detention center after being removed by Canadian authorities. Even if asylum seekers "face real and not speculative risks of refoulement from the United States, the Canadian legislative scheme provides safety valves that guard against such risks."

US probe finds racism rife among police where Floyd was killed

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US agencies hit in global hacking spree

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The US Department of Energy and several other federal agencies were hit in a global hacking campaign that exploited a vulnerability in widely used file-transfer software, officials said on Thursday.

Data was "compromised" at two entities within the energy department when hackers gained access through a security flaw in MOVEit Transfer, the department said in a statement. A DOE official said those entities were the DOE contractor Oak Ridge Associated Universities, and the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant — the New Mexico-based facility for disposal of defence-related nuclear waste.

African leaders visit Russia to discuss their peace plan with Putin, after Ukraine trip

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday met with a group of leaders of African countries who traveled to Russia on a self-styled "peace mission" the day after they went to Ukraine.

Seven African leaders — the presidents of Comoros, Senegal, South Africa and Zambia, as well as Egypt's prime minister and top envoys from the Republic of Congo and Uganda — visited Ukraine on Friday to try to help end the nearly 16-month-old war.

The African leaders then traveled to St. Petersburg on Saturday to meet with Putin who is attending a business forum in Russia's second-largest city.

Putin and the African leaders weren't expected to comment after the meeting, but Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will hold a briefing.

Speaking at the forum on Friday, Putin declared that the first Russian tactical nuclear weapons have been deployed to Belarus, describing the move as a deterrent against Western efforts to defeat Russia in Ukraine. He previously said that the deployment would begin in July.

Asked if he could order the use of battlefield nuclear weapons in Ukraine, Putin said that there was no need for that but noted that Moscow could use its nuclear arsenal in case of a "threat to the Russian statehood."

"In that case, we will certainly use all the means that the Russian state has. There should be no doubt about that," he said.

The mission to Ukraine, the first of its kind by African leaders, comes in the wake of other peace initiatives — such as one by China — and carries particular importance for Africa, which relies on food and fertilizer deliveries from Russia and Ukraine. The war has impeded exports from one of the world's most important breadbaskets.

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NATO to tighten Ukraine ties, but no membership invite at summit

Monitoring Desk
BRUSSELS: NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said Friday the alliance will tighten political ties with Ukraine at a summit next month, but there will be no talk of a membership invite for Kyiv.

"We're not going to discuss an invitation at the Vilnius Summit, but how we can move Ukraine closer to NATO," Stoltenberg said. "I'm confident that we will find a good solution and consensus."

In a symbolic step alliance leaders are aiming to hold a first session of a NATO-Ukraine Council with President Volodymyr Zelensky in the Lithuanian capital, Stoltenberg said.

The move represents an upgrade in political ties and will give Kyiv a more equal seat at the table "to consult and decide on security issues", Stoltenberg said. But it is seen as little compensation for any failure to make headway on Ukraine's push to join the US-led military alliance's protective umbrella.

NATO countries are still wrangling over what to do about Kyiv's calls for a clear sign it will be accepted once Russia's war ends.

NATO nations in eastern Europe have pushed for a better roadmap for Ukraine to obtain membership.

But key allies like the United States and Germany are reluctant to go much beyond a vague pledge in 2014 that Ukraine will join one day.

German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius suggested Friday it was possible some requirements for membership could be eased if Ukraine was eventually ready to join.

Diplomats say that as an interim measure before it joins, allies are debating giving Ukraine security assurances of guaranteed weapon supplies to help it defend itself.

Ukraine's push to join the US-led military alliance's protective umbrella.

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US imposes visa restrictions on Uganda officials after anti-LGBTQ law

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The United States has imposed visa restrictions on Uganda officials after the African nation passed an anti-LGBTQ law that was condemned by many countries and the United Nations, the U.S. State Department said on Friday.

The law, considered one of the harshest in the world, was enacted in May and carries the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuality," an offence that includes transmitting HIV through gay sex. It drew immediate rebukes from Western governments and put in jeopardy some of the billions of dollars in foreign aid the country receives each year.

U.S. President Joe Biden had threatened cuts and other sanctions, while Secretary of State Antony Blinken said last month the government would consider visa restrictions against Ugandan officials.

The State Department statement on Friday did not mention any names or even the number of officials that would be hit with the visa restriction but said the U.S. would hold accountable those who are responsible for abusing human rights in Uganda, "including those of LGBTQI+ persons."

The State Department also updated its Uganda travel guidance for U.S. citizens to highlight the risk that LGBTQI+ persons could be prosecuted and subjected to life imprisonment or the death penalty based on provisions in the law, it said.

"The United States strongly supports the Ugandan people and remains committed to advancing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Uganda and globally," the State Department said.

The law also imposes a life sentence for same-sex intercourse and a 20-year sentence for promotion of homosexuality.

Firms including media and non-governmental organizations that knowingly promote LGBTQ activity will also incur harsh fines, the law says.

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Spanish charity rescues 117 migrants sailing from Libya.

Arsonists of May 9 to be trialed under Military Act: Interior Minister

FAISALABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Rana Sana Ullah Khan has said that arsonists of May 9 mayhem would be trialed under Military Act as they committed offence in the military areas.

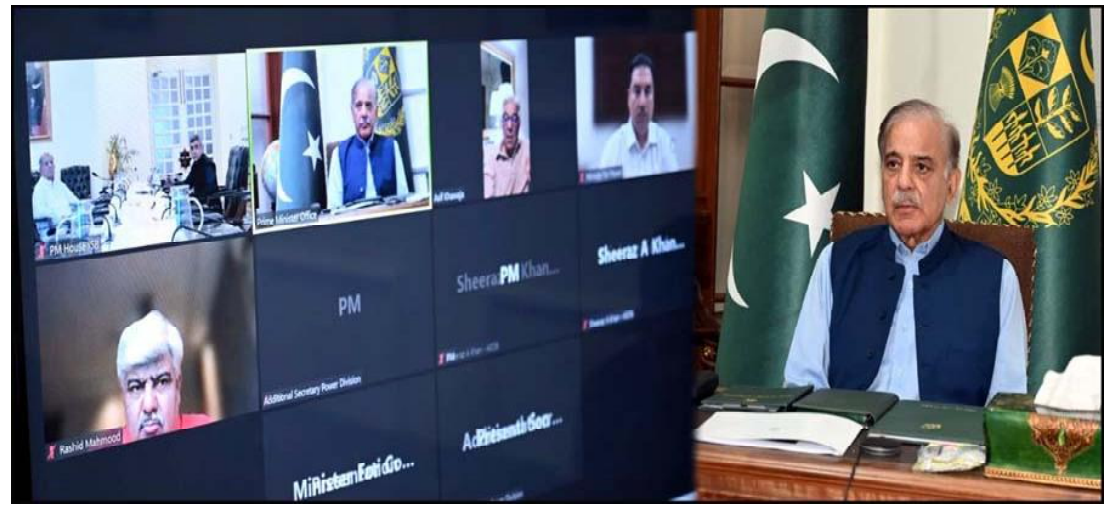
Addressing a meeting of Yarn Merchants Association at Karkhana Bazaar here on Saturday, he said that under a calculated move, the activists of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) attacked sensitive military

installations and vandalized corps commander house on 9th May 2023.

He said that PTI leadership created hate against Pak Army in the mind of young generation due to which they attacked the military installations besides vandalizing monuments of army martyrs. He added that PTI hatched this conspiracy only to bow down the government and for this purpose, PTI leadership also used to intimidate

the state institutions constantly but the brave Pakistani nation foiled all nefarious designs of anti-state elements.

The minister said that he had repeatedly apprised to the nation that if Imran Khan was not bridled in-time, he might bring a mishap for this country, adding that Imran Khan promoted culture of hate and hatred in the country due to which 9th May mayhem occurred.



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting in Lahore



QUETTA: Balochistan Finance Minister, Engineer Zmarak Khan Achakzai along with others express solidarity with members of Government Teachers Association Balochistan during their protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands, held in Quetta.

BRI provides tangible benefits to Pakistan through CPEC: Moin

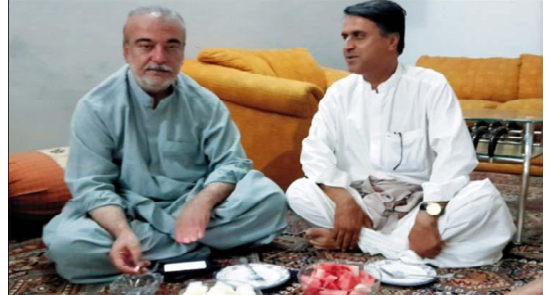
BEIJING (APP): Pakistan Ambassador to China Moin ul Haque said that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are providing tangible benefits to Pakistan through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is the flagship project of the BRI.

Addressing as a key speaker at the 13th China Overseas Investment Fair, the Ambassador mentioned that BRI holds great significance for Belt and Road Initiative's partner countries. This year, Pakistan is also celebrating 10th anniversary of CPEC, China Economic Net (CEN) reported.

"Over the past decade, 888 km of the road network has been laid, and over 8000 additional MWs of energy have been added to Pakistan's national grid

with the commissioning of 13 new energy projects. A new 878-KM transmission line has been built to evacuate 4000MW electricity. An 820 km long cross-border optical fibre cable has been laid, and over 200,000 new jobs have been created. Various estimates have pointed out to an increase in 1-2% of the GDP of Pakistan", he added.

Ambassador Moin ul Haque said that BRI has been successful in bringing down the walls of suspicions and doubts among the members of the international community and instead connected them with bridges of trade, commerce and cultural cooperation on the principles of win-win cooperation and mutual benefit. It thus transcends the artificial divides of race, religion and nationality.



KHARAN: State Minister for Defence Production Mir Ehsanullah Reki talking with senior journalists Muhammad Essa Muhammadhassni

Joint efforts under way to strengthen state: Tasneem

SARGODHA (APP): Minister of State for Industries and Production Tasneem Ahmed Qureshi has said the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) coalition government is working with the vision to save the state, instead of politics. Taking to APP here on Saturday, he said it was vision of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) founder leader to organise labour and deprived classes of society to strengthen the country.

Sherpao terms May 9 blackest day in country's history

PESHAWAR (APP): Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Saturday termed May 9 the blackest day in the country's history and demanded strict punishment for those who took the law into their hands.

Speaking at a meeting of party office-bearers at Zaim Union Council in Charsadda district, he said that military installations were attacked and government buildings and state properties were vandalized



QUETTA: Agriculture workers Union hold protest rally in favor of their demands.

Alvi approves appointment of Rector of HITMS

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has accorded his approval to the appointment of Saeeduddin Shaikh as Rector Hyderabad Institute for Technology and Management Sciences.

The appointment was granted under section 13 of the Hyderabad Institute for Technology and Management Sciences Act, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Saturday.

The president approved the appointment after holding interviews with three candidates recommended for the post of rector by the search committee.

DSP jail killed, 6 injured in accident

RENALA KHURD (APP): A jail deputy superintendent of police (DSP) was killed and six passengers were injured in a collision between a van and a tractor-trolley near village Sukhpur, here on Saturday. Police sources said that accident took place as the van carrying passengers and tractor-trolley both were over-speeding. The DSP was identified as Asim Hameed.

Rescue-1122 personnel shifted the body and the injured to the area hospital.

AJK PM grieved over Greece boat disaster

MIRPUR (AJK) (APP): Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq on Saturday expressed his profound grief and sorrow over the loss of precious human lives in boat disaster in Greece, in which dozens of Pakistanis including those hailing from

Azad Jammu Kashmir, had reportedly died. He expressed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed souls in eternal peace and grant fortitude and patience to the bereaved to bear this irreparable loss.

He directed the Chief Secretary to appoint a special focal person who would coordinate with the Ministry of External Affairs on the matter.

Court adjourns hearing of Pervez Elahi bail plea till June 19

LAHORE (Online): Anti corruption court has adjourned till June 19 hearing of bail plea of former Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Chaudhry Pervez Elahi in corruption in appointments in Punjab Assembly (PA) case. The case could not move ahead in anti corruption court being the special judge anti corruption Ali Raza on leave. Pervez Elahi took the plea in bail petition that he has no concern with the illegal appointments case.

Accountability must be held without discrimination: Irfan

LAHORE (APP): Advisor to the Prime Minister on Accountability Irfan Qadir has said that accountability should be held without any discrimination and no one is exempted from accountability.

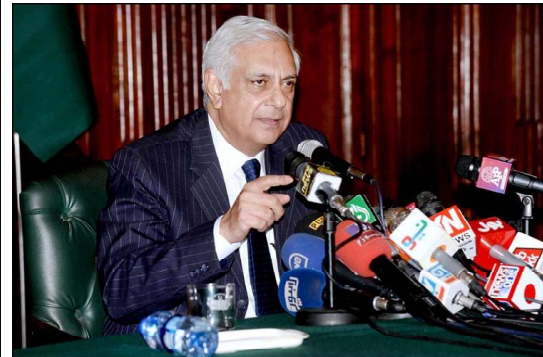
He expressed these views while addressing a press conference at the Governor's House, here on Saturday. He said the government and parliament were standing with the judiciary and there was no ambiguity in the Constitution regarding accountability. He added that no one was above the Constitution and law, and everyone would be held accountable.

He said until all the institutions were brought under accountability with uniformity, supremacy of law could not be established in the country, adding that if any institution did not support, then it would be shared with the

nation. He said their effort was aimed at ensuring that the rule of legal system remains stable in the country until the end of the current government's tenure.

"We have seen for some time that the Supreme Court has become very active for supremacy of the law and the constitution," he said. He appealed that judges should not get involved in political affairs of the country, but should take steps to ensure justice to people. Irfan Qadir said there was a system of self-accountability in judiciary, adding that no one was free for corruption and the case of alleged corruption of a judge of the Islamabad High Court had come to the light, and the alleged audio leaks in this regard had also surfaced.

He said that politicians and bureaucrats should also be held accountable.



LAHORE: Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on accountability, Irfan Qadir addressing a press conference at Governor House.

AJK President reminds UNO to play due role for early settlement of Kashmir issue

MIRPUR (AJK) (APP): President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry on Saturday said that the United Nations should play its due role in resolving the long-standing Kashmir issue peacefully in accordance with the UNSC resolutions. He expressed these while talking to a well-known writer and poet, Mrs. Huma Tahir who called on him at Jammu Kashmir house in the federal metropolis.

Terminating implementation of the UN resolutions as the most feasible solution to the lingering dispute, the president said that the

resolutions calling for a referendum in Kashmir were still effective and applicable. Expressing his deep concern over the continued bloodshed and violence in the Indian-occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir, he said that the situation in the restive region has further worsened since the Modi government stripped the region of its special status in 2019. "Since August 5, 2019, India has started large-scale demographic changes in Occupied Kashmir", the president said. Barrister Chaudhry said that writers and poets can also play a better role in highlighting the issue.



QUETTA: Chief of Tehreek-e-Nojawan-e-Pakistan Muhammad Abdullah Hameedul Gul and others addressing a Press conference

Indonesia, Pakistan poised to commence direct flights

ISLAMABAD (Online): In a special interview during the inauguration of the Bali Beyond Travel Fair in Indonesia, the country's Deputy Minister for Marketing Tourism and Creative Economy Ni Made Eau Marthini hinted at the imminent launch of direct flights between Pakistan and the southeast Asian country.

Expressing optimism, the deputy minister conveyed the hope for the initiation of direct air travel connecting the two nations in the near future. Furthermore, she emphasised her commitment to collaborating with her Pakistani counterpart to facilitate this significant development. Reports have surfaced suggesting that the initial flights could potentially commence as early as December.

Highlighting the importance of fostering investment and trade opportunities between the two countries, the deputy minister underscored the need to enhance their economic ties. Reflecting on the his-

torical relationship between Pakistan and Indonesia, Marthini, emphasised the enduring strength of their bond, which dates back to their respective independence.

During the interview, the deputy minister stated that although trade exists between the two nations, there is a pressing need to amplify its volume. She expressed the desire to enhance trade with Pakistan reciprocally, stating that tourism holds immense potential in achieving this goal. By encouraging visits from Pakistan to Indonesia and vice versa, the deputy minister believes their bilateral relations will deepen significantly.

Marthini further emphasized the significance of the tourism sector and the importance of fostering people-to-people connections. Highlighting the vision of building a bridge between the two nations, she assured that concerted efforts are underway and promising outcomes can be expected in the near future.

Dar reaffirms resolve to make International payments on time

Claims Shell petroleum is not quitting from Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Saturday reaffirmed the firm resolve of the government to ensure international payments on time in order to fulfill all the commitments.

Addressing a press conference, he said that all the arrangements for due payment during the months of May and June were in place, which would also have no impact on foreign exchange reserves held with local commercial banks and State Bank of Pakistan.

The minister said that by the end of the current month (June), payments of

two Chinese banks including \$1 billion of China Development Bank and \$300 million of Bank of China were due.

He said the adoption of formal payment process usually takes time and sometimes, it takes months, adding that to simplify the formal procedures, the Ministry of Finance initiated negotiations with both the banks and ask them to make payments before last week.

Ishaq Dar further informed that the government has paid \$1 billion to China Development Bank and \$300 million to Bank of China without any extra charges.

The payment to

China Development Bank was made on June 12, 2023 and under the understanding between both countries, the Chinese banks will payback this amount to Pakistan on Friday, he added.

The minister said that another payment amounting to \$300 million was also made on Friday, adding that this payment would also be received to Pakistan within next three to four days, he added.

The finance minister further said that all the arrangements for the payment of \$1 billion, which was state-to-state payments between both countries, were also finalized and matters were in order.

Court grants 2-day physical remand of Shehyar Afridi

ISLAMABAD (Online): Session Court Islamabad granted two-day physical remand of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Shehyar Afridi to police over May 09 incident case.

He was arrested under 3-MPO (section 3-Maintenance of Public Order) Ordinance from his Islamabad residence.

The law introduced in 1960 by then martial law administration Ayub Khan, that enable government to arrest any person and is a tool of almost every democratic government to suppress their opposition.

Afridi was arrested shortly after his release from Rawalpindi prison under the same MPO law, in which city police officer accused him of 'instigating/ planning to organise unlawful assembly, commit violence, deliver unlawful speeches to cause damages to human life and public/private properties.'

Toshakhana case: NAB summons PTI chairman on June 21

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has summoned Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman once again on June 21 for an inquiry into the Toshakhana case.

The anti-graft watchdog has summoned the PTI chief in connection with an ongoing inquiry regarding misuse of authority, criminal breach of trust, and illegal gain in selling gifted state assets. The NAB has asked the former prime minister to appear before Combined Investigation Team (CIT) at 11:00 on June 21 for the recording of his statement.

In the fresh summons, the ex-PM has been asked to bring relevant records, including details and records of received state gifts, and records of sold state gifts and physically produce the state gifts retained. It was alleged that he had subsequently abused his position by retaining the gifted assets worth millions of rupees. The reference, which alleges that former PM failed to share details of the gifts he retained from the Toshakhana (during his time as the prime minister) was filed by lawmakers from the ruling coalition last year. The Toshakhana issue became a major sticking point in national politics.

PM reviews policy on alternative energy sources

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Saturday reviewed the process of formulation of policy regarding alternative sources of energy especially, solar energy.

During a meeting chaired by him here, the prime minister said the government had ensured in the budget implementation of the measures about alternative sources of energy including solar energy.

He said the process of converting public buildings on solar energy should be expedited. The solar energy will not only reduce the cost of production but will also

save precious foreign exchange, he said adding that the policy on solar energy should be finalized as soon as possible.

The prime minister noted that Pakistan had immense capacity to produce solar energy.

Federal ministers Khawaja Asif, Engineer Khurram Dastgir, Syed Naveed Qamar, Riaz Hussain Pirzada, Advisor to PM Ahad Cheema, Special Assistant Jehanzeb Khan, Chairman National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (PEPRA) and officials concerned attended the meeting.



Cyclone "BIPARJOY" Pakistan Navy rescue teams evacuate local populace from creeks area.

VCs urged govt to enhance recurring budget for varsities

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Vice Chancellors of public sector universities have urged the Federal and Provincial governments to enhance the recurring budget for universities. They have shown serious concern over almost zero increase in the recurring budget for higher education sector as compared to the last year.

The Vice Chancellors and Rectors of public universities, who joined an online meeting from across the country on Saturday, emphasized that the financial problems of universities have made it difficult for them to not only manage the day-to-day affairs but has also severely damaged the efforts to ensure quality of education and research. University heads from Balochistan explained how the financial crunch during the last financial year forced them to close the universities as they did not have enough money to pay salaries to their employees. Vice Chancellors from universities in Sindh appreciated the provincial government for raise in budget as compared to the last year, however, they added that much more resources are required to run the universities as the ever-increasing inflation has made it difficult to manage even the basic expenditure. University heads from all regions agreed that they will reach out to the respective provincial governments as well as the federal government for addressing the serious nature of ongoing financial woes.



QUETTA: A view of accumulated sewerage water on double road.