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Hub

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif witnesses the signing ceremony while Secretary Power Division Mr Rashid Mahmood Langrial and Undersecretary of Ministry & Infrastructure of UAE Mr Sharif al Olama signing MoU for development of renewable energy projects in Pakistan.

PM extends Pakistan's full support to UAE hosting COP28 summit

Woos UAE investment in alternative energy as both countries sign MoU

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday extended Pakistan's full support to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as the country was set to host COP28 summit in Dubai from November 30 to December 12 this year.

The prime minister, in a meeting with President-designate of COP-28 and UAE's Special Envoy for Climate Change, Minister for Industries and Technologies and Chairman Masdar Dr. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber and his delegation, conveyed best wishes to the leadership of UAE for the success of the event.

Welcoming Dr. Sultan Al Jaber, the prime minister underscored the importance of high level exchanges and felicitated him on his appointment as President-designate COP28.

He expressed full confidence in Dr. Jaber's stewardship of this important global conference.

Appreciating UAE's efforts in combating climate change and developing renewable energy projects, the prime minister thanked the Emirates for its support during last year's devastating floods in Pakistan.

He also thanked the UAE for its vital support to Pakistan which has been critical in reaching staff level agreement with the IMF.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also briefed the delegation about the Special Investment Facilitation Council established by the government aimed at providing facilitating the foreign investors in diverse sectors.

He also shared details of the 10,000 MW solar energy projects for which a road show was already held in Dubai.

Dr. Sultan Al Jaber conveyed the greetings and best wishes of the UAE leadership to the prime minister.

He showed keen interest to enhance partnership with Pakistan in all domains and emphasized UAE's leadership directions to him to further improve collaboration with Pakistan in the renewable energy sector that would help boost energy security for Pakistan.

The visiting dignitary underscored that they viewed Pakistan as an important partner in climate change discourse and appreciated Pakistan's active role in climate change diplomacy.

Joint sitting of Parliament condemns desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden

ISLAMABAD (APP): The joint sitting of the Parliament on Thursday strongly condemned the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden and called upon the international community to take serious action to prevent such incidents in the future.

They were addressing on a motion moved by Federal Minister for Human Rights, Riaz Hussain Pizada on the situation arising out of the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden in the joint sitting of the Parliament, which was chaired by Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaz Ashraf.

Parliamentarians from the government and the opposition sides expressed

deep distress over the incident, stating that Muslims worldwide have been profoundly hurt by this disgraceful act.

They emphasized that no civilized society should permit the provocation and disrespect of religious sentiments under the guise of freedom of expression. They urged the international community to address this tragic incident and take effective measures to prevent similar occurrences.

Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Raja Riaz Ahmad strongly condemned the incident and said that the entire nation was united on this matter. He said that every forum should be used to raise the voice against

this wrong act.

He said that although it was an individual act, but the government of the concerned country should take strict action against that person. He said that every Pakistani would participate in peaceful protests on Friday against the incident.

He praised the decision to convene an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in response to the incident.

Opposition Leader in Senate, Senator Dr Shahzad Waseem said that such act will increase the feeling of abhorrence among various communities of the world and urged to control such incidents.

President for boosting Pak-Qatar economic ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday said Pakistan wanted to expand trade and investment relations with Qatar and translate the brotherly relations into mutually beneficial economic ties.

"Pakistan desires a partnership with Qatar in the energy sector and looks forward to Qatari investments in various sectors of the economy", he said in a meeting with the outgoing Ambassador of Qatar to Pakistan, Sheikh Saoud Bin Abdulrahman Faisal Al-Thani, here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The president appreciated the Government of Qatar for hosting the Pakistani diaspora which served as a strong bridge between the two brotherly countries.

He expressed the hope that Qatar would increase the number of skilled Pakistani workers and would open more visa facilities in Pakistan. He lauded the leadership of Qatar for making efforts against Islamophobia, adding that the Islamic world needed to make collective efforts against the rising tide of Islamophobia in the world.

He also highlighted the gross human rights violations in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) as well as the persecution of minorities, especially Muslims, in India. He underlined that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute and the atrocities being committed by the Indian Security Forces in IIOJK continued to threaten regional peace and security.

CM expresses satisfaction over peaceful holding of last phase of LG elections

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Abdul Qudus Bizenjo has expressed satisfaction over the holding of last phase of elections of chairman and vice chairman of district councils in 35 districts of the province in peaceful manner.

In a statement issued here on Thursday, the Chief Minister extended congratulations to the newly elected district councils chairman and vice chairman of the district councils.

He also appreciated performance of the administration, levies and police for making excellent arrangements and providing best security for the elections of district councils.

Mir Abdul Qudus Bizenjo said that there is a key role of effective local bodies governments in transferring the powers to the lower level and the local bodies elections reflect the continuity of the democratic behaviours. He also said that the very objective of the local bodies elections is to empower the people at local level.



QUETTA: VC Bolan University of Medical & Health Sciences Prof. Dr. Shabbir Ahmed Lehri meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Pakistan desirous of improving ties with US: PM Shahbaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday said Pakistan desired to improve its bilateral relations with the United States in diverse fields.

Addressing a ceremony for the celebration of the 247th Independence Day of the United States of America, he said Pakistan and the US had made serious efforts to mend their ties putting aside any misgivings and misunderstandings, and now the relations were back to normal.

He assured of his personal efforts as head of the government and as a Pakistani to cultivate better and stronger relations with the United States on the basis of mutual trust and respect.

"Over the last 75 years, our relations have ups and downs but on the whole we have been very good friends."

He said the United States was the largest trading partner of Pakistan and also a steadfast partner in the war against terrorism.

In the fight against terrorism, Pakistan lost 80,000 people from all walks of life and this unparalleled sacrifice explained Pakistan's commitment and US had been a great supporter and partner in this fight, he remarked.

He said about five years ago when Pakistan was facing serious power outages, the then government established 5000 megawatts of LNG-based power plants and the entire equipment was brought from the United States.

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CJ BHC pays surprise visit of central Jail Mach; inspects facilities for prisoners

QUETTA: The Chief Justice, Balochistan High Court (BHC), Mr. Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan paid surprise visit to the central Jail Mach on Thursday.

Also accompanied with him was the Judge, BHC, Mr. Justice Zaheeruddin Kakar. Upon reaching Mach jail, the administration arranged visit of the Jail barracks and other sections. The Chief Justice was also briefed about the overall situation of the jail.

He also met the prisoners in the Jail and got himself acquainted about the issues being faced by them.

Mr. Justice Afghan issued on the spot directives to the Jail administration to resolve the immediate na-

ture of issues.

Meanwhile, he also inspected the quality of meal being served to the prisoners. He, however, expressed satisfaction over the arrangements made for cleanliness in the Jail.

He was informed that no doctor is posted in the ward of Jail, therefore, the civil hospital is to be approached for treatment of the prisoners.

He directed to contract the Health department for posting a doctor in the Jail on permanent basis. He also



inspected the library established in the Mach jail.

He said that Prisoners are also part of our society as such there is a dire need to make them useful citizens.

Last phase of LG polls completes with election of chairman & vice chairman of 35 district councils

QUETTA: The last phase of Local Government (LG) elections was completed with oath taking of members of the district councils and election of their chairman and vice chairman in 35 districts of Balochistan on Thursday. Over 1200 elected members of the district councils including chairman of rural union councils and those elected on reserved seats used their right of franchise for election of the chairman and vice chairman of district councils.

The process of oath taking of the district council members and polling for election of their chairman and vice chairman was started at around 08:00 PM and remained continued till 04:00 PM without any break.

Earlier, the returning officers of concerned districts administered oath to the

members of district councils.

While the process of oath taking and election got started as per schedule and that somehow at the given time, but it started hours late in some districts. Later, the newly elected chairman and district chairman took oath of their respective offices.

Tough security measures were adopted on occasion of the oath taking and election of the chairman and vice chairman of district councils in all 35 districts.

Section 144 was also imposed to ensure peace in the districts with additional deployment of police, levies and other law enforcers in the sensitive districts.

It may be mentioned here that control rooms were set up in Election commission of Pakistan secretariat Islamabad and Provincial Election Commissioner office Quetta.

Court summons Imran Khan in Toshakhana case

ISLAMABAD (APP): The District & Sessions Court Islamabad on Thursday summoned the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman on July 10, in the Toshakhana criminal case and also sought arguments on the maintainability of the complaint lodged by the District Election Commissioner.

Additional District and Session Judge Hamayun Dilawar heard the matter regarding the admissibility of the case in light of the direction of Islamabad High Court.

Imran Khan's lawyer Barrister Gohar Ali adopted the stance that the case was fixed for hearing on July 8. His client could not appear before the court today as he had to appear before the Lahore High Court (LHC), he said and prayed the court to grant any next date after July 10 for further proceedings.

The judge remarked that the IHC had ordered the trial court to decide the maintainability of the case within seven days.

Discipline can't be maintained in society without rule of law, says Governor

QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has stated that it is necessary to maintain discipline for ensuring rule of law in the society as discipline can't be upheld without rule of law.

He said that the formation of civilized society is conditional with equal enforcement of law in the society. The dignity of public friendly law is that both powerful and weak are equal.

This and similar other views were expressed by the Governor Balochistan while speaking to different delegations who called on him here at the Governor House on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Governor said that supremacy of law and justice can ensure new destinations and course of the cruelly and exploitation-free society.

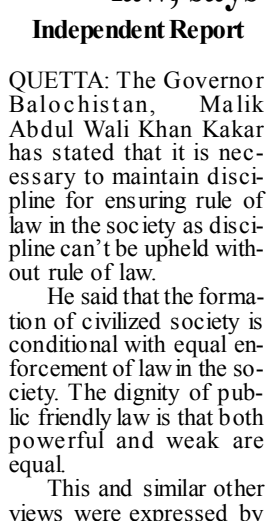
In this regard, heavy responsibility rests with all law enforcement agencies especially district administration to take measures for elimination of

society evils and protection of life and property of the masses besides improving the overall law and order situation all over the province.

Malik Abdul Wali Kakar made it clear that we have to make the marginalized and poor segments of the society that the law is their protector. Rather, the practical steps would have to be taken to keep the influential people in the ambit of law.

The Governor on the occasion exhorted on the progressive and enlightened people to play their wholehearted role for promotion of democratic behavior, create respect for difference of opinion and highlight the human dignity. He also urged the government to ensure elimination of crimes, take action against narcotics sellers and safety of the people on the national highways besides becoming voice of the voiceless people.

He expressed the hope that all the government high ups and institutions would continue to play their role for development and prosperity of the country and nation.

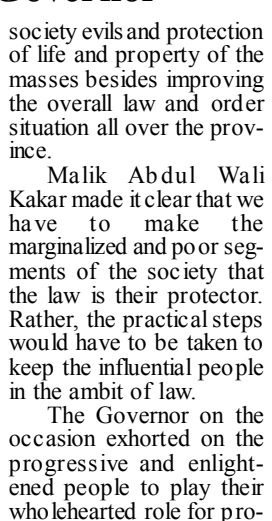


Landslide kills eight children in Shangla

PESHAWAR (APP): Eight children died and one was injured after fell on them while playing at Shangla district. Police said the tragic incident occurred at Koz Kallay village at tehsil Martung where children busy in the game came under a huge landslide.

Police and rescue workers rushed to the spot and retrieved eight bodies and one injured from the rubble.

The dead identified are Ayaz, Zafran, Azmatullah, Haras, Rehmat, Raza, Sajwal and others.



Jehangir Tareen's brother 'commits suicide'

LAHORE (APP): Alamgir Khan Tareen, a brother of Isteekam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) Patron-in-Chief Jahangir Khan Tareen, allegedly committed suicide by shooting himself in his head with a pistol at his residence in Gulberg area, here on Thursday. Alamgir Tareen was the owner and managing director of the Multan Sultans PSL franchise.

Police said the 62-year-old lived alone. They said the crime scene had been sealed and the pistol he used for allegedly committing suicide recovered. The process of collecting fingerprints and other evidence was under way, they added. The reason behind the suicide could not be ascertained in the initial investigation.

Army major martyred in gunfire with terrorists in Khyber: ISPR

RAWALPINDI (Online): On night 05/06 July 23, Security Forces conducted an Intelligence based operation on reported presence of terrorists, in general area Shakhas, Khyber District.

While establishment of blocking positions to cut the escape routes of terrorists was underway, a party of terrorists was spotted by Major Abdullah who was leading the operation from the front.

As a result of heavy exchange of fire, the brave son of the nation Major Mian Abdullah Shah (age 33 years, resident of Kohat) having fought gallantly, embraced Shahadat.

Three terrorists and their facilitators were apprehended. Sanitization of the area is being carried out to eliminate the terrorists present in the area.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addressing a ceremony of the celebration of the 247th Independence Day of the United States of America

PML-N Quaid's acquittal exposes last PTI regime's political vendetta: Marriyum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Thursday that acquittal of thrice-elected prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Quaid Nawaz Sharif in the plot allotment reference by an accountability court in Lahore clearly showed a political vendetta of the last PTI regime.

Addressing a press conference, she said the plots allotment case related to the tenure when Nawaz Sharif was the chief minister of Punjab.

She said the owner of a leading media house was arrested in a fake case just to pressurize the media to toe the line of the then rulers.

Similarly, journalists were arrested and targeted only to curb dissent views, and on that account the then prime minister was given the title of a 'predator' at international level.

She said today's verdict of the accountability court was an eye-opener for those who had blindly followed the fake narrative of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

She said in the so-called illegal plots allotment reference it was alleged that Nawaz Sharif as Punjab chief minister had specifically favoured Mir Shakeelur Rehman to manage favourable media coverage.

She said under the 'NAB-Niaz nexus', the National Accountability Bureau was given the task to target political opponents of the PTI chief.

The minister said today, the accountability court had affirmed that Nawaz Sharif was targeted to have political revenge. The court also noted that no evidence of corruption was found against the PML-N Quaid, which led to his honourable acquittal.



QUETTA: Principal Secretary of Chief Minister Balochistan Imran Gichki giving away appointment orders on deceased quota

Friday July 07, 2023

SCO anticlimax

The SCO has the potential to become one of the world's most prosperous and powerful economic and geopolitical blocs, considering its vast geographic scope and the large population of its member states. However, to achieve these goals, irritants between member states must be resolved in a satisfactory manner. Clearly, as the virtual SCO Council of Heads of State summit, hosted by India on Tuesday showed, there are many miles to go before the bloc can achieve its full potential. Bilateral disputes overshadowed the promise of multilateral cooperation, with the host nation using the platform to take a swipe at geopolitical adversaries within the SCO.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's thinly veiled critique of both Pakistan and China during his address was a reminder of the internal challenges that confront the bloc.

There was, of course, little hope that the SCO summit could have provided a platform for Pakistan-India dialogue on the sidelines. Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's frosty reception in Goa earlier in the year under the aegis of the SCO foreign ministers' moot was a sign that the welcome for Shehbaz Sharif was unlikely to be any warmer. Perhaps that is one reason why India chose to go virtual and avoid any personal interaction between Mr Sharif and Mr Modi, though there is also widespread conjecture that India opted to hold the summit online to avoid hosting Vladimir Putin.

Mr Modi sang a familiar tune, calling for an end to 'cross-border terrorism', while also targeting CPEC by saying that connectivity schemes should "respect sovereignty", in an oblique reference to the megaproject's passage through Gilgit-Baltistan.

PM Sharif paid Mr Modi back in the same coin, cautioning against the dangers of "violent ultra-nationalism" and criticising the use of terrorism for diplomatic point-scoring.

It is a rule of thumb that multilateral fora should not be used to settle bilateral scores. If anything, these bodies should provide a conducive atmosphere that can help resolve stubborn regional disputes.

Unfortunately, India's current leadership has shown that both bilaterally and at multilateral platforms, it is not serious about engaging Pakistan in a dialogue for peace. Instead, the BJP regime is more interested in isolating this country by using familiar, tired tropes.

If this attitude persists, little will change where hostility in the subcontinent is concerned, and perhaps another generation will be condemned to live in perpetual confrontation. Terrorism, climate change, poverty and disease are all common problems that can be confronted bilaterally and through the SCO, if India chooses to shun its rigidity.

Where the SCO itself is concerned, it can be turned into a Eurasian behemoth driving growth in the entire region and the wider world. However, unless the irritants between its member states are resolved, it will remain but a talk shop, much like Saarc has become.

**Faisal Siddiqi**

The political violence witnessed from May 9 to May 11, 2023, is a subject of much controversy. For the establishment, it was an attack on the state. For PDM and its aligned parties, it was proof that the PTI is not a democratic political party. For the PTI, it was a conspiracy to dismantle it.

Therefore, on the one hand, the ruling coalition government and the state institutions have either justified, or kept silent, about the grave violations of fundamental rights, defiance of superior courts orders, subversion of democratic constitutionalism and repression of a free media in their quest to dismantle the PTI, on the pretext of safeguarding the state.

On the other hand, despite its authoritarian politics and past collusion with

the establishment, the PTI has, paradoxically, now become the torch-bearer of fundamental rights, anti-establishment democratic constitutionalism and press freedom.

Who is right in this battle between state survival and democratic constitutionalism?

Leviathan strikes back: Faced with the English Civil War in the 17th century, Thomas Hobbes, through his classical text Leviathan, responded with a simple theory of governance — only a strong state can save us from anarchy and violence. In other words, before any democracy or constitutionalism or fundamental rights, there must be order based on obedience to state authority derived from its monopoly over violence.

How should the Pakistani state have reacted to the events which culminated in the political violence of May 9, which involved abuse against, and efforts to question, the legitimacy of the military and intelligence leadership, along with a campaign to create divisions within the armed forces, violence against the coercive arms of the state, ie, police and armed forces, and label-

ing of the prevailing political system and political parties opposed to the PTI as foreign agents?

Hobbes would have approved of the state's reaction to the May 9 political violence because, if there is anything worse than a military coup against a constitutional order, it is a coup within the armed forces.

Regardless of our complete unacceptability of the military coups by Ayub, Yahya, Zia and Musharraf and the continuing political dominance of the establishment, the saving grace in this country is the unity of command of the armed forces. The alternative to this unity of command is nightmarishly scary, ie, present-day Sudan, Libya and Yemen and all the African military civil wars of the last and this century.

But all successful modern states have also shown that Hobbes's philosophy of order has to be combined with John Mill's theory of rights. In other words, coercion has to be balanced and legitimised by consent based on rights and welfare.

Coercion and consent: As the Marxist intellectual Antonio Gramsci has ex-

plained, no ruling elite, including authoritarian regimes, can rule only on the basis of fear based on coercion, and legitimacy based on patriotism.

For example, all three previous military dictatorships of Ayub, Zia and Musharraf lasted for years because their rule was also based on implied consent of the masses, which was derived from relative economic growth (based on foreign aid) and a semi-successful propaganda ideology — ie, development for Ayub, Islam for Zia and enlightened moderation for Musharraf.

Pakistan is a huge country of over 240 million people, mostly young men and women, who have an insatiable urge to be prosperous, but in the current times, this unfulfilled urge is fuelled by sociopolitical narratives through social media, resulting in anger and rage.

Although there is nothing unusual about the Pakistani state's authoritarian response to May 9 violence, its objective to dismantle a popular political party and subvert judicial decisions are completely disproportionate, wrong and counterproductive for the following

reasons. Firstly, the 2007 judicial-lawyers movement, the PTM movement, the present Baloch insurgency and the May 9 political violence have much in common — they are middle class, urban, women have a role, and there is rage without pragmatic solutions. This anger and rage cannot be crushed through coercion and seduced through patriotism.

Secondly, political mobilisation in Punjab, and Lahore in particular, has always succeeded (eg, 1968-9, 1977 and 2007-2009), and repressive tactics tested in Sindh, Balochistan and KP will not necessarily work in Punjab.

Thirdly, legitimacy based on coercion and patriotism in a period of stagflation will not succeed. Propaganda and coercion don't gel well with empty stomachs.

Fourthly, nobody relies on television for their political views and information. Propaganda on TV achieves little legitimacy.

Fifthly, can this state open up another front against a popular political party, when already it is faced with two insurgen-

cies, ie, TTP and Baloch insurgents, and a hostile geopolitical neighbourhood? In short, a strategy based on coercion and patriotism to control politics and judiciary will not work. The sword (coercive power) must tolerate and coexist with the people (politics) and the pen (judiciary).

Indonesian path: In order to avoid chaos and global humiliation, the only rational path open for this establishment-dominated state is the Indonesian path to democratic constitutionalism. Indonesia and Pakistan have remarkable similarities: Indonesia also achieved independence in the 1940s; it was a military dictatorship from 1967 to 1998; its military establishment had institutional economic interest and was deeply involved in Indonesia's sociopolitical development; it is a geographically and ethnically diverse country, and the world's most populous Muslim country; it has experienced tensions between Islam and modernity; and lastly, there are secessionist movements in Indonesia. — Courtesy Dawn

Who will lead Pakistan?**Dr Shahnaz Khan**

Pakistan is caught in the vortex of multiple crises: economic, political, governance and institutional. The political discourse has become increasingly divisive and intolerant and the trust deficit between people and state institutions has reached new lows. The threat of terrorism is getting worse. And there are major geopolitical shifts, with China and the US competing for influence and resources, putting Pakistan in a difficult position. However, the most acute, most important and most challenging issue is the crisis of political leadership.

They say politics is the art of making possible what is necessary. In Pakistan, politics is the art of acquiring the seat of power by any means possible and holding on to it for as long as possible.

Political leadership does not mean winning elections, holding large jalsas, having street power or the art of wheeling and dealing. It does not even mean being informed or having technical and management skills.

Leadership requires empathy more than anything else. It requires a vision with the ability to see into the future, finding and implementing solutions to complex problems. It means developing future leaders by empowering, encouraging and opening the doors for all who want to enter the political arena. It means to be at the forefront when it is time to sacrifice and at the end of line when it is time for personal material gains.

Do we see anyone meeting these criteria among the current ruling class? Even though Pakistan has been blessed with an abundance of natural resources, it has never had strong political leadership. The question is, why is that so? The answer lies in what the late Kofi Annan said, "Politics is too important to be left only to politicians. Democracy depends on lively participation of organized civil society in political life."

In Pakistan platforms like trade unions and student

unions which were once used for organized participation in politics — and as training grounds for people at the grassroots level to understand and educate themselves about the issues and then enter mainstream politics — were intentionally and systematically dismantled very early. Of course, dictators had a role in this but even during civilian rule, the trend was not reversed. In fact all political parties/leaders happily continued the policies of dictators in this matter.

These platforms were replaced by NGOs and charity/welfare organizations which were politically impotent and promoted the narrative that 'doing good' can only be done through charity and that this is the solution to the country's problems.

The local government system which acts as the springboard for entry into politics at the grassroots level has been made completely ineffective. The result is what we are seeing now — a politically naive people gullible for populist slogans, emotional narratives and a target for misuse of religious sentiments. Instead of having confidence in their strength, they wait

for a strong man who will save them from the clutches of some vague, ill-defined evil forces. Thus a populist leader who offers simple solutions to complex problems and makes empty threats to perceived enemies is seen as a messiah. This is what happened in the past few years and has culminated in the events of May 9, 2023.

So, where do we go from here? The short-term goal is to get out of the economic mess we are in. We all know what needs to be done but it is not being done because it is contrary to the interests of most so-called leaders. If there ever was a country in dire need of an honest and sincere political leadership, it is Pakistan.

Pakistan needs a leader who is willing to become a role model for the rest by giving up all perks, making tough economic decisions which will adversely affect him/her and who can stand on the moral high ground. A nation increasingly burdened by inflation, poverty and joblessness will stand behind such a leader and may be willing to forgive the past excesses.

But this will require making tough decisions, starting a pathway for an

inclusive economic system, where all share the fruits of good times as well as the losses incurred when the economy is not in the best shape. No nation can become great where only a few are wealthy while the rest struggle to just survive.

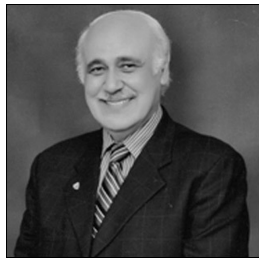
The long-term goal should be to increase human capital, without which progress is not possible. The World Bank report — the Pakistan Human Capital Review — documents and quantifies the country's human capital crisis. Pakistan's Human Capital Index (HCI) is 0.41 which is lowest in the region. The South Asian region's average is 0.48 with Bangladesh at 0.46 and Nepal at 0.49. Even the most economically advantaged groups in Pakistan have lower HCI compared to peer countries.

According to the World Bank, "if Pakistan improves both its human capital and its use of human capital, its GDP per capita could rise by 144 per cent." For that it has to control population growth, increase investment in education and healthcare and empower women increas-

ing their participation in the job market. Developing human capital needs comprehensive plan beyond laptop schemes, scholarship programmes, etc.

Is there a leader who is up to this challenge? Is there someone who has empathy for millions in this country whose lives are no better than animals — who has the vision and ability to find solutions to complex problems? Is there someone who is confident enough to not be threatened by new emerging leaders and who will open the doors of opportunity for them? Is there someone willing to change the economic structure so all stakeholders reap the benefits, and become the role model for that? Who will lead by example — someone who will sacrifice their personal interests for the greater good?

History has put this burden on the shoulders of the current leaders of state institutions, the men who hold the future of this country in their hands. How they negotiate through this complex maze of problems and its outcome will determine their place in history. — Courtesy TheNews

Rama's sandals**F.S. Aijazuddin**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi should seriously consider visiting Islamabad soon. He will find a number of kindred Ramabhakts there.

For those unfamiliar with the Hindu epic Ramayana, Rama (the eighth incarnation of Lord Vishnu), surrendered his kingdom in obedience to a rash promise made by his father, King Dasaratha. Rama quit the royal capital of Ayodhya and went into exile for 14 years, entrusting the administration of his kingdom to his younger half-brother, Bharata.

Pleading unworthiness, Bharata nevertheless agreed but asked Rama for his sandals to be placed on the vacant throne. He declared to the people of Ayodhya: "Accept the sandals as symbols of the feet of the Exalted One! Through these sandals belonging to my superior shall righteousness be established in the kingdom [...]. When he comes once more to Ayodhya, I shall fasten them to his feet, and, casting my burden upon him, in making over the kingdom to him, I shall serve him."

In Pakistan's politics, there are too many examples of such political surrogacy for them not to be interpreted as a pattern.

The pre-eminent case is the Sharif brothers. The elder brother, Nawaz Sharif, went into exile in 2019, leaving his younger brother, Shehbaz Sharif, to administer their PML-N on his behalf. Even though Shehbaz is now prime minister in his own right, following Inran Khan's ouster through a no-

confidence motion, he still holds out as he is acting only as his brother's proxy, waiting for his return before returning the prime ministership to him.

Many suspect that Nawaz Sharif may not want to become a fourth-term prime minister. Others question Shehbaz Sharif's altruistic intentions. He seems to be enjoying the perks of his position too much to hand them over without a frown. At another level, both would like to see themselves succeeded later rather than sooner by their children — Nawaz by Maryam and Shehbaz by Hanza.

In the PPP, Asif Ali Zardari, who served as Pakistan's president, is content to dumb-down as an MNA and share the steering wheel of the party with his son and Benazir's heir, Bilawal. It may be too early for him to negotiate the prime ministership for his son before the next general election. He might conceivably expect it as their share of the post-election spoils.

In the Aiwan-i-Sadr, the incumbent has never pretended to be anything more than Inran Khan's sandals — a PTI apparatchik, there to do his leader's bidding.

Within the PTI, the decimation of its top hierarchy (one can hardly call it 'leadership', so precipitous and callous was their betrayal) has left its senior vice chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi as its reluctant spokesman. He is yet to be anointed successor pro temp by Inran Khan. For the time being, he seems to be content to use his leader's sandals as the symbol of absent authority.

Peripheral political parties like the PML-Q struggle to secure a foothold of relevance for their sons or nephews. The newest party — Jahangir Tareen's Istehkam-i-Pakistan Party — was established as recently as June 2023. Tareen, exiled by law from politics, as IPP's patron-in-chief

nominated Aleem Khan as its first president and accommodated other escapees from the PTI in senior positions. To those with experience of such makeshift hotchpotch, the IPP appears to its opponents less a fearsome adversary than a war-weary 'forlorn hope'.

The battle for power in the next general elections is strangely reminiscent of the recent shenanigans in the Ukraine. There, Putin's bulldog mercenary, Yevgeny Prigozhin, threatened to bite the hand that had been feeding him, unless his master fed him some more. Then, reportedly bought off by Putin with uncountable millions, Prigozhin suddenly abandoned his march on Moscow and, decamping to Belarus, betrayed his cannon-fodder mercenaries in the field.

One is reminded of Leon Trotsky's cutting observation about the French intellectual poseur André Malraux: "Malraux is organically incapable of moral independence; he was born biddable."

The outcome of the next general elections will depend not on electables, but on biddables. It is rumoured that, already, the two major parties within the ruling PDM alliance are squabbling over the trillions they can divert from the state treasury into their war chests. Democracy comes at a price, and the price for these swing constituencies is still under negotiation.

The recent helicopter trip to Parachinar by the civilian and military leadership together to celebrate Eid with the jawans defending the extremities of our country was more than a joint tribute to their bravery. The optics emphasised one thing: the present PDM coalition government (as long as it lasts), and its successor (however long that lasts) will have to be the Bharata in the civil-establishment relationship. Rama's ever-present sandals remain more than a metaphor. — Courtesy Dawn

Pardon my French**Rafia Zakaria**

I have never felt as uncomfortable and scrutinised in any European capital as I have in Paris, where many white people exude silent belligerence.

I wasn't surprised, then, by the video of a French policeman shooting a teenager of Algerian descent during a routine traffic stop. The teenager was 17-year-old Nahel Merzouk. In the days following the fatal shooting, thousands of rioters took to the streets of France and burned down shops and cars. The protesters said they identified with the teenager because they too had faced persecution by the police. The incident seems to have brought France's racism towards Muslims and other non-white immigrants to the forefront.

A huge crowd of French Muslims attended the funeral prayers of Merzouk, whose family members were protected by security guards provided by the mosque at which they were held. In an illustrative irony, no police officers were present at the large public event, even though 45,000 of them had been mobilised to go after rioters following his death. France has a large Muslim population, but their existence seems to be ignored by the state.

Some of those attending the funeral prayers pointed out to the media that had there not been a video of the incident, Merzouk's death, like so many others at the hands of an overzealous, brutal

French police, would have been ignored.

For its part, the Macron government has acted with the same wrongheadedness as the administrations before it. As rioters began to destroy government property and stores and started to attack police officers, government officials began to condemn the loss of property rather than the core reason behind the riots. Property losses and injuries to policemen were dragged to the centre of the debate rather than the animosity that state instruments show towards those of Algerian and Moroccan descent in France. This has only whetted the destructive appetites of the rioters, who see the response as yet another example of a white-dominated French state ignoring the pressing problems faced by French Muslims of Algerian and Moroccan origin.

Soon after Merzouk was killed, the protests had spread all across France. In one incident, rioters began to target the homes of mayors seen as colluding with the government. The home of the mayor of L'Hay-les-Roses — a usually quiet area — was targeted. The mayor's family was injured when rioters rammed their car through the gate of the residence, set the vehicle on fire and launched fireworks. The French association of mayors has become even more vocal about quelling the protests.

At a meeting with French officials on July 4, Macron hoped to "start the painstaking, long-term work needed to understand the deeper reasons" behind the events. It is difficult to establish if he meant this as a delaying tactic where the obvious racism of state officials towards the Muslim minority can continue to be ignored until later. Even if he was sincere about wanting to understand the problem, the fact that he does

not understand it yet is depressing enough. If anything, it reveals just how oblivious the French majority is to the lives of French Muslims living amongst them for decades. The fact that the country's top political official thinks that there is a need for further research to understand a very basic story of racism and abuse of power is alarming.

Only a few weeks have passed since hundreds of Pakistanis died while being smuggled to Europe on a fishing boat. It truly hurts the heart to realise that young people from Pakistan are quite literally putting their lives at risk to get to European countries, including France, where it is almost guaranteed that they will be treated poorly, exploited, perhaps even killed as non-white immigrants. And yet it appears that these migrant flows from an inflation-wracked, climate change-battered, and politically stunted Pakistan will increase.

One of the biggest gripes the mainstream middle-class French have against the poverty-stricken French Muslims of the suburbs is that they take advantage of the social welfare state set up after World War II. These immigrants should not be milking the government in this way is the refrain. It is a clever trick, because the real sentiment behind it is that the social welfare system should only benefit good white people (the real French) and not the immigrants.

It is quite likely that as more migrants pour into European countries, the now quaint-sounding liberal values of freedom, equality and brotherhood will be done away with altogether. In their place will be some formula that permits racist European states to limit government benefits to non-white people. — Courtesy Dawn

China proposes SCO members to expand digital currency settlements

BEIJING (APP): China has proposed to expand cooperation on sovereign digital currency among member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Experts have said that the proposal will elevate the transaction efficiency among SCO members.

In addition to the expanded cooperation on using sovereign digital currencies, the Chinese side also suggested that SCO to scale up local currency settlement between SCO members and promote the establishment of an SCO development bank.

The trade among SCO members can be expanded with higher efficiency through the increasing adoption of sovereign digital currency as enterprises can lower

potential risks resulting from geopolitical factors and the fluctuation in the US dollar exchange rate, Wang Peng, a research fellow at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, told the Global Times. As a major SCO member, China has been implementing targeted efforts to boost the use of yuan in cross-border settlement.

In January 2023, a cross-border trade center was established at China-SCO Local Economic and Trade Cooperation Demonstration Area (SCODA) in Qingdao, East China's Shandong Province, where enterprises can choose to settle their international trade with SCO members in the yuan.

Lu Wei, a representative from SCODA, said in a statement sent to the

Global Times that the trade center can effectively reduce companies' settlement cost while avoiding the risks incurred by frequent exchange rates turbulences.

By the end of June, the trade center of SCODA has facilitated 24.29 billion yuan (\$3.35 billion) worth of cross-border settlement. The center processed 3.84 billion yuan in cross-border financing using the yuan, with 1.25 billion yuan coming from overseas markets, according to SCODA.

SCODA also revealed that demonstration area will set an innovation lab targeting China's Cross-Border Interbank Payment System, aiming to expand the utility of the system among SCO members and the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative.



ISLAMABAD: Andreas Ferrarese the Italian Ambassador in Pakistan and Secretary Ministry of Economic Affairs in a group photo after signs the Exchange of Letters as Pakistan and Italy extend Pakistan's Italian Debt Swap Agreement (PIDSAs) timeline until December 2024, at the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

PTI govt left biggest trade deficit in country's history, damaged economy: Kiyani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Coordinator for Economy and Energy Bilal Azhar Kayani Thursday lashed out at the previous government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was responsible for damaging the economic sector and left biggest trade deficit in the country's history.

"PTI government brought the country on the verge of bankruptcy but the PDM-led government saved it from the default", he said while talking to a private news channel.

He further blamed that the political instability created by chairman PTI has also caused irreparable damage to the country's economy adding that the economy is in dire need of reforms which will be directly related to political stability as well.

Replying to a

question, he replied that we need to learn from our past mistakes and devise medium and long-term policies to improve the economy, adding, economic indicators are constantly improving after the signing of the staff-level agreement with the IMF.

The trust of domestic as well as foreign investors in Pakistan's economy will no w enhance, he said, adding, the IMF agreement will also open the door to external financing, including funding from bilateral and multilateral institutions and individual investors.

IMF deal was the need of the hour, he said, adding, the conspiracies of some inimical forces did not succeed and that it was very important for Pakistan to get the IMF program as it will help achieve financial discipline.

Pakistan's total foreign reserves rise to \$9.74b

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan rise to US\$ 9,745.5 million while reserves held by the central bank reached US\$ 4,462.7 million.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that foreign reserves held by the central bank increased by US\$ 393 million to US\$ 4,462.7 million 'mainly due to receipt of official GoP inflows' as of June 30, 2023.

Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at US\$ 5,282.8 million, it added.

In the previous week ending on June 23, 2023, total liquid foreign reserves held by the country was US\$ 9,340.8 million. Among them, foreign reserves held by the central bank were US\$ 4,069.9 million while net foreign reserves held by commercial banks were US\$ 5,270.9 million.

PSX turns around to bullish trend, gains 626 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 626.01 points, a positive change of 1.44 percent, closing at 44,178.85 points against 43,552.84 points the previous trading day.

A total of 297,822,139 shares were traded during the day as compared to 351,181,910 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs.12.428 billion against Rs.12.014 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 335 companies transacted their shares in the stock market;

200 of them recorded gains and 112 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 23 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 28,845,201 shares at Rs.1.21 per share; Pak Elektron with 16,169,219 shares at Rs.10.66 per share and Pak Petroleum with 14,126,634 shares at Rs.67.24 per share.

Mehmood Text witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.43.15 per share price, closing at Rs.725.00, whereas the runner-up was Shield Corp with an Rs.21.97 rise in its per share price to Rs.314.86.



MULTAN: A trader selling seasonal fruit mango at Fruit Market.



Federal Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar chaired a meeting on restructuring of PIA at Finance Division.

Dar seeks early legislation for quick resumption of PIA flights to USA, UK

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday instructed the relevant authorities to bring forward appropriate legislation as soon as possible to ensure quick resumption of PIA flights to the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK).

The minister was chairing a meeting on matters related to the Civil Aviation Division (CAA) and the Airport Security Force (ASF), according to a Finance Ministry press release. Earlier, the minister was briefed on the issues being faced by the aviation

sector pertaining to regulation, service provision, and security functions. The meeting discussed various legal solutions available and the necessary amendments required in the aviation laws/ordinances in order to enhance the capacity in the aviation sector and to make it compatible with the international standards.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Aviation and Railways Khawaja Saad Raique; Federal Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar; Federal Minister for Law & Justice Azam Nazir Tarar; SAPM on Finance Tariq Bajwa also present.

Naqvi presides over ceremony for providing skill courses to inmates

Independent Report LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi presided over an agreement signing ceremony between the Technical Education & Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) and the Punjab Prisons Department aimed to facilitate technical courses for prisoners in 10 additional jails across the province. The agreement was signed by the Chief Operating Officer of TEVTA Ahmad Khawar Shahzad and IG Prisons Farooq Nazir, at the CM office.

Under this agreement, a total of 16 skill-based courses will be organized in Lahore, Kasur, Sheikhupura, Pakpattan,

Okara, Jhang, Sargodha, Vehari, Toba Tek Singh, and Layyah jails. Upon successful completion of these courses, which typically last between 3 to 6 months, the inmates will receive certificates to support their reintegration into society.

The courses will cover a wide range of skills, including electrical work, welding, plumbing, motorcycle mechanics, fashion design, and computer applications.

During the event, the COO TEVTA highlighted that each course can accommodate up to 25 detainees. It was mentioned that TEVTA had already provided training to 20,000 inmates.



HYDERABAD: Sindh Abadgar Ittehad President Nawaz Zubir Ahmed Talpur addressing a press conference at HPC.

Baligh initiates joint research to improve crop quality, boost agri production

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: On the special direction of Governor Punjab Muhammad Baligh Ur Rehman, Chinese scientists, Punjab University and Guard Agriculture Research and Services will collaborate on modern research to develop the best quality seeds of rice, cotton, and wheat crops to boost agricultural production and meet the ever-increasing food needs of the growing population.

Vice Chancellor Punjab University Prof Dr Khalid Mahmood has already notified a high powered academia industrial linkage committee comprising Prof

Dr Muhammad Arshad Javed, head of Plant Breeding and Genetics Department Dr Nasim Ahmad Yasin, Dr Abdul Qayyum Rao and Prof Dr Shakil Ahmad, Director ORIC with Shahzad Ali Malik, Sitara-I-Intiaz, as its Convenor, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

Chairman, Pakistan Hitech Hybrid Seed Association Shahzad Ali Malik, while chairing the preliminary meeting of the committee, expressed his solemn resolve to promote the linkage and assured full cooperation from his company and collaboration with Chinese scientists.

IMF board to give approval of Pakistan loan within days: PEW

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) Brig. (ret'd) Aslam Khan on Thursday hoped that few days are left for the meeting of the Executive Board of the IMF for the review and possible ratification of the Staff Level Agreement with Pakistan.

In a statement issued here, he said that the IMF's Executive Board's meeting scheduled to be held on July 12, during which there was a strong possibility of approving a loan of three billion dollars and releasing

the first instalment of one billion and ten crore dollars. Brig. (ret'd) Aslam Khan said that the approval of IMF loan will open the way for more loans and investments for Pakistan, which will improve the situation.

The government should start a diplomatic campaign to get the international community and friendly countries to implement their commitments in addition to obtaining new loans, he concluded.

Pakistan, Italy extend PIDSAs timeline until December 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Italy have reached an agreement to extend the timeline of the Pakistan-Italian Debt Swap Agreement (PIDSAs) through the Exchange of Letters (EoL).

Mr. Andreas Ferrarese, the Italian Ambassador in Pakistan and Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, signed the EoL and extended the timeline of the PIDSAs up to December 31, 2024, on the same procedures, modalities, terms, and conditions as defined in the signed Agreement dated November 4, 2006, between Pakistan and Italy, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

During the extension period, the remaining activities of PIDSAs will be completed i.e. the remaining debt will be

cancelled, completion of ongoing PIDSAs projects, handing/taking over of assets, impact evaluation of the PIDSAs Programme, and final report of the PIDSAs Programme.

The Government of Pakistan and the Government of Italy had signed an agreement for Development Swap, on November 4, 2006, which came into force in 2009. Approximately \$100 million (US \$26.52 million & Euro 58.74 million) equivalent to PKR 8.276 billion of Pakistan's debt owed to Italy is to be swapped for expenditure on development projects under the country on Health, Education, Agriculture, and Environment, Micro Credit Schemes, Poverty Alleviation, Rural Development and Infrastructure.

Management Committee (MC) is the highest decision-making body of Pakistan Italian Debt Swap Agreement (PIDSAs), co-chaired by H.E. the Italian Ambassador and Secretary Ministry of Economic Affairs along with representatives of the Federal and Provincial Governments. To date, 48 projects have been approved and funded by PIDSAs, out of which 45 projects have been completed and 3 are in progress.

The Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs thanked the Government of the Republic of Italy for providing assistance under the Debt Swap Agreement and other Technical Assistance and emphasized further enhancing the bilateral ties between the two countries.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, Maersk Pelepas, MSC Lisbon, Eva Usuki and Milaha Ras Lafan carrying Containers, LNG and Chemicals, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Engro Vopak Terminal and Pakistan Port Gas Terminal respectively.

Meanwhile, two more ships, Southern Anoa and Seaspan Beacon with Palm oil and Containers also arrived at the outer anchorage of Port Qasim during the last 24 hours.

A total of 07 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two container ships 'Maersk Pelepas and MSC Lisbon' sailed out to sea on Thursday morning and four more ships, Eva Usuki, N-Orhan, Huang Shan and Yakul Silver are expected to sail on the same day. The cargo throughput of 128,071 tonnes, comprising 109,048 tonnes imports Cargo and 19,023 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,959 Containers (1,840 TEUs Imports and 1,119 TEUs export) was handled at the port.

Amin vows to address IT, Telecom issues, safeguard user rights

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information Technology Syed Amin Ul Haque on Thursday made a firm commitment to tackle the challenges faced by the Information Technology and Telecom industry while ensuring the protection of cellular users' rights.

During a meeting with Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of telecom companies, namely Ufone, Jazz, and Telenor, the minister recognized the need for striking a balance between service providers and users.

He assured the CEOs of his dedicated efforts to resolve the issues plaguing the IT industry.

Additionally, the minister emphasized the active measures being taken to settle these matters through relevant forums, aiming for positive outcomes.

Furthermore, Syed Amin Ul Haque chaired a Universal Service Fund (USF) Policy meeting, where the USF Company's annual budget of Rs 18,036 million for FY

2023-24 was approved. The meeting was attended by high-ranking officials from the IT sector, including the Secretary IT and representatives from the Cabinet Division and Finance Ministry. The CEO of USF briefed the chair about the ongoing projects.

The minister also presided over the Policy Committee meeting of the Research & Development Fund. The CEO of Ignite, a government-owned technology innovation organization, presented various future projects during the meeting. The annual budget of Ignite for FY 2023-24, amounting to Rs 3,206 million, was approved.

Syed Amin Ul Haque highlighted the challenges faced by telecom companies in importing equipment and upgrading systems due to limited Letters of Credit (LCs), causing delays in completing USF's ongoing projects. The minister assured his commitment to addressing this issue and finding suitable solutions.



Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Syed Amin Ul Haque chairing policy Committee meeting of Research & Development Fund in Islamabad.

China's services trade sustains growth in first 5 months

BEIJING (Xinhua/APP): China's services trade sustained its growth momentum in the first five months of the year, official data showed Thursday.

The country's services trade reached nearly 2.61 trillion yuan (about 362 billion U.S. dollars) from January to May, up 10.2 percent year on year, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed. Trade in knowledge-intensive services expanded 13.6 percent year on year to exceed 1.12 trillion yuan in the period, the data showed. The figure accounted for 43.1 percent of the country's total volume of services trade, up 1.3 percentage points from the same period last year. Travels services saw a notable recovery during the period, with trade in this sector.

Kashif highlights potential benefits of barter trade

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Executive Officer, Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Kashif Ashfaq on Thursday said that barter trade among Russia, Iran and Afghanistan would hold several potential benefits and significance for these countries.

Presiding over the PFC Board of Directors meeting, he said that this wise and timely epoch making decision of Pakistan would promote regional integration and economic cooperation by leveraging their geographic proximity. Russia, Iran, and Afghanistan can enhance trade routes, connectivity and people-to-people exchanges, leading to a more integrated regional economy, he said.

Kashif Ashfaq said that it would help further

strengthen economic ties and promote cooperation among these countries and facilitate the exchange of goods and services without necessarily involving traditional currency transactions. It will also be particularly useful for the countries facing financial constraints or limited access to global financial systems, he said and added that barter trade would serve as an alternative mechanism for conducting business when traditional financial channels were restricted and in addition to bypassing monetary transactions, these countries can continue trading despite the sanctions shocks. The PFC head said it can help address trade imbalances between these countries that promotes mutual benefits and foster economic equilibrium.



TORGHAR: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif laying the foundation stone of the RCC Bridge on the River Indus that will connect Torghar with Buner District, Torghar, KP.

High-time for nation, State institutions to unitedly act for country's progress: PM

PM directs for speedy work of Rs 24 bln mega projects for Torghar-Buner road connectivity

TORGHAR, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said it was high-time for the nation and the State institutions to join hands in making the country progress.

The prime minister said it was the responsibility of the government, judiciary, armed forces and the people to act in unison for ensuring development of the country.

He was addressing the local elders in Torghar after laying foundation-stone of Torghar-Buner Highway, the Buner-Karakar Link Tunnel and Torghar-Buner RCC (Reinforced Cement Concrete) bridge.

The prime minister highlighted the significance of unity, hard work and dedication by the nation to make the future of Pakistan brighter.

He said Pakistan recently faced financial challenges and got a staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund to avert default. He mentioned in this regard the supportive role of army chief General Asim Munir for clinching the \$3 billion deal with the global lender.

He expressed confidence that Pakistan would soon gain a significant place in the comity of nations.

PM Sharif said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province was blessed with natural resources, however stressed the need for exploring the avenues of development for the benefit of people. The prime minister acknowledged the sacrifices of the forefathers of the locals who donated their lands during the formation of Pakistan 70 years ago.

He regretted the apathy of political leaders in the past, who neglected the area and did not make efforts to mainstream it in the journey of national development. He emphasized giving opportunity to the locals to help them prosper in educational and professional fields.

Religious scholars condemn burning of Holy Quran

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prominent scholars, intellectuals, and leaders representing various schools of thought and religious denominations from across the country on Thursday strongly condemned the recent incident of burning the Holy Quran in Sweden.

In a joint statement, they expressed their outrage and announced that on upcoming Friday would be observed as 'Quran Sanctity Day.'

They called for peaceful protests and condemnation of the incident in all mosques, emphasizing the need for swift action against the blasphemous act.

The Chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council and Prime Minister's Special Representative on Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, along with respected figures such as Maulana Ziaullah Shah Bukhari, Maulana Muhammad Khan Laghari, Allama Arif Wahidi, Allama Abdul Haq Mujahid, Maulana Muhammad Rafique Jami, Maulana Asad Zakaria Qasmi, Maulana Nauman Hashir, Maulana Muhammad Shafi Qasmi, Allama Zubair Abid, Maulana Asadullah Farooq, Maulana Muhammad Ashfaq Pitafi, Maulana Tahir Aqeel Awan.

Demonstrate complete solidarity with Muslims: Bishop Khalid, others strongly flay desecration of Holy Qura'an in Sweden

QUETTA: The prominent Christian minority religious leaders including Bishop Khalid Rehmat, Pastor Simon Bashir and others have strongly condemned the incident of desecration of Holy Qura'an in Sweden.

While addressing a press conference here on Thursday morning, Bishop Khalid Rehmat and others said that we strongly condemn the incident of desecration of Holy Qura'an and its burning in strongest words.

Bishop Khalid also described the desecration of Holy Qura'an as totally unacceptable, blasphemous and sacrilegious.

He expressed complete solidarity with the Muslim brethren and sisters over the most condemnable act. He said that the incident is totally intolerable.

Bishop Khalid Rehmat demanded of the world rights organizations to give exemplary punishment to the miscreants involved in the sorrowful act.



HUB: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Lasbela Deputy Secretary General, Maulana Shah Muhammad Siddiqui addressing a Press Conference.

Langove condemns suicide attack at security forces in Miran Shah

QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs, Mir Ziaullah Langove has strongly condemned the suicide attack at the security forces in Miran Shah area of North Waziristan.

In a condemnation statement issued here the other day, the Provincial Minister paid homage to the martyr security personnel in the terrorist attack.

He expressed sympathy and condolence with the bereaved families of those martyred in the attack.

The Minister Home made pledge to continue war against terrorism until the peace is completely restored in the country.

He said that we are indebted to our brave security personnel who have been embracing martyrdom in the war against terrorism.

He also applauded the role of security forces who are playing pivotal role in elimination of terrorism.



QUETTA: Bishop Khalid Rahmat holds protest along with others outside Press club to condemn the desecration of Quran Pak in Sweden.

UAE striving for all-inclusive platform at COP-28 for unified global climate action: Al Jaber

ISLAMABAD (APP): President-designate of COP-28 and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Minister for Industry & Advanced Technologies, Dr. Sultan Al Jaber on Thursday said the UAE was striving to ensure that the 28th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC meeting, to be hosted by Dubai this year was ensured as an all-inclusive platform for unified global action.

The UAE Minister made these remarks during a talk held here at the Foreign Service Academy (FSA) flanked by Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Pakistan Senator Sherry Rehman and Director General, FSA Ambassador Mazhar Javed.

Speakers for students' role in ending corruption

QUETTA (APP): The Speakers in a seminar emphasized on the role of students to play their role in elimination of corruption from the society and termed it as a global epidemic.

A seminar was organized by National Accountability Bureau Balochistan at Government General Musa College Quetta.

The theme of the seminar was to create awareness among the students against erroneous practices and save the new generation from the abuse.

The Principal of the college, Hafiz-u-Rehman, Deputy Directors NAB, Mehbood Alam and Khurram Shehzad expressed their views in the seminar.

In their speech, they highlighted the students' role in the elimination of corruption and the NAB's procedures.

Explaining corruption, they pointed out the impact of corruption upon the community and called students to rise their voices against corruption accordance with our religion.

WMFP flays attack on journalist Milashina

QUETTA (PR): Women Media Forum, Pakistan (WMFP) condemns the attack on journalist Yelena Milashina in the strongest terms and stands in solidarity with her.

Such brutal attacks on journalists are a direct attack on freedom of speech and WMFP condemns it and demands that journalists, especially women journalists be allowed to work without intimidation.

Since 2003, Pakistani media has seen a rise in women joining the media who have had to struggle to make their place in the profession. They have been attacked online and offline.

Like their colleagues across the world, women journalists and media workers have pushed back and stood strong. This resilience is seen in women journalists and media workers in other regions as more and more women speak up against threats against them and others.

thanked the government of Pakistan and FSA and the Minister for Climate Change for facilitating his visit. He expressed that he had assumed the task of COP-28's presidency with humility and a deep sense of responsibility.

"Over the last few months, I have had the opportunity to engage with all stakeholders from all over the world including businesses, governments, students, and scientists etc."

He added that during all the engagements he convened the discussion for all inclusive platform. "The voices were most resonant of the people at the forefront of the climate change. The sad reality is that climate change is having profound impact on the lives



QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Kalat Munir Ahmed Durrani meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Election of chairman and vice chairman: Candidates elected unopposed in Gwadar, Harnai, Kharan and Hub district councils

Harnai respectively.

Both the candidates were having affiliation with Pashtoonkhw Milli Awami Party (PkMAP).

While from Kharan district council, Mir Muhammad Juma Kubdani and Mir Mohsin Zahir were elected as the chairman and vice chairman of Kharan district council respectively.

Jumma Kubdani was the candidate of BNP and Mohsin Zahir was candidate of JUL. They were also elected unopposed as no other filed nomination papers against them.

Moreover, Ibrahim Doda and Kamal Muhammad Hassani were elected unopposed as chairman and vice chairman of Hub district council.



QUETTA: Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Muhammad Anwar Kakar presiding over a meeting of officers of concerned departments regarding monsoon rains

Azerbaijan President's Advisor calls on Air Chief, lauds PAF professionalism

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high level defence delegation headed by Advisor to the President of Azerbaijan, Khalid Ahadov called on Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Mars hal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu here on Thursday and lauded the historic and exemplary professionalism demonstrated by the personnel of Pakistan Air Force (PAF).

The meeting underscored discussion on several key areas of mutual interest and regional developments, a PAF news release said. During the meeting, the Chief of the Air Staff shared his vision of modernizing PAF's capabilities to achieve operational excellence in air, space and cyber domains.

The Air Chief emphasized the longstanding religious, cultural and historical bonds between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, which are exemplified through robust bilateral relations.

He mentioned that it was imperative to allow the affected communities' voices to be heard and respond to their queries who were facing climate change and come up with result-oriented outcomes. The COP process has evolved over the years and become politically charged and a comprehensive forum, he said, adding, "In about 148 days from today UAE will host COP-28 in Dubai. This is going to be the first ever official assessment of how world acted upon Paris Agreement."

He mentioned that it was imperative to allow the affected communities' voices to be heard and respond to their queries who were facing climate change and come up with result-oriented outcomes. The COP process has evolved over the years and become politically charged and a comprehensive forum, he said, adding, "In about 148 days from today UAE will host COP-28 in Dubai. This is going to be the first ever official assessment of how world acted upon Paris Agreement."



ISLAMABAD: Chairman National Disaster Management Authority Lt. Gen. Inam Haider Malik presiding Flood Management Conference.

CM takes notice of reports of increase in prices of flour; directs to bring stability

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo has taken notice of the reports of increase in prices of flour in Quetta and different other parts of the province and directed the Food department and district administration to take steps to bring stability in the prices of flour in their respective areas.

According to an official hand out issued here on Wednesday night, the Chief Minister said that the provision of flour would be ensured to the general public at the prescribed rates in the province.

The Chief Minister particularly directed the Commissioner Naseerabad and Deputy Inspector General of Police to ensure implementation on the ban imposed on carrying / transportation of the wheat out of the division.

He also directed to submit a report about the steps taken in this regard.

Moreover, the Chief Minister described the achievement of target of purchase of wheat by the Food department for the current year. He said that the people would get relief with this success.

Mr. Bizenjo highly appreciated performance of Food Department saying that its performance remained excellent under leadership of Minister Food, Engineer Zamarak Khan Achakzai.

He said that the Provincial Minister Food and his team's performance remained excellent when it comes to talk about purchase of wheat in transparent manner.

The Chief Minister expressed the hope that neither there would be any shortage of flour with availability of wheat this year nor profiteers would have the chance to fleece the people.

Alvi appoints Justice M. Ibrahim as acting PHC chief justice

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday appointed Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan as the Acting Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court.

The president made the appointment as the seat fell vacant after the elevation of Chief Justice Musarrat Hilali to the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan is the senior most judge of the Peshawar High Court.

The president made the appointment under Article 196 of the Constitution, till the appointment of a new chief justice.

APNA is playing role of strong bridge in US, Pak relations

WASHINGTON (Online): Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Masood Khan has said Association of Physicians of Pakistani Descent of North America (APNA) is playing the role of a strong bridge in Pakistan and the US relations.

CM takes notice of reports of increase in prices of flour; directs to bring stability

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo has taken notice of the reports of increase in prices of flour in Quetta and different other parts of the province and directed the Food department and district administration to take steps to bring stability in the prices of flour in their respective areas.

According to an official hand out issued here on Wednesday night, the Chief Minister said that the provision of flour would be ensured to the general public at the prescribed rates in the province.

The Chief Minister particularly directed the Commissioner Naseerabad and Deputy Inspector General of Police to ensure implementation on the ban imposed on carrying / transportation of the wheat out of the division.

He also directed to submit a report about the steps taken in this regard.

Moreover, the Chief Minister described the achievement of target of purchase of wheat by the Food department for the current year. He said that the people would get relief with this success.

Mr. Bizenjo highly appreciated performance of Food Department saying that its performance remained excellent under leadership of Minister Food, Engineer Zamarak Khan Achakzai.

He said that the Provincial Minister Food and his team's performance remained excellent when it comes to talk about purchase of wheat in transparent manner.

The Chief Minister expressed the hope that neither there would be any shortage of flour with availability of wheat this year nor profiteers would have the chance to fleece the people.

CPEC an inclusive platform for 3rd parties to benefit from investment opportunities: FO

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Thursday reiterated that being an important node in cross regional connectivity, China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was an inclusive and open platform for interested third parties to benefit from investment opportunities in its priority areas like industry, agriculture, IT, science and technology," she remarked. She said Pakistan and China were celebrating the 10th anniversary of CPEC which was an important pillar of the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership with China.

The spokesperson recounted that the people of Pakistan had witnessed the remarkable achievements and fruits of high-quality development stimulated by CPEC since its inauguration in 2013. "Under the first phase of CPEC, China invested around US\$ 25.4 billion in Pakistan, primarily in energy and transport infrastructure sectors. CPEC projects have added: 8000 MWs of energy to the national grid; 510 km of highways; 932 km of road networks; and 820 km.

Naseerabad: Deputy Commissioner Ayesha Zehri visiting a polling station during Local Bodies elections

QUETTA (APP): The provincial government has decided to set up Balochistan Comprehensive Environment and Climate Change Research Institute to conduct research for the protection of the environment.

The environmental research institute will help identify and contain the toxic contaminants affecting the quality of water, soil, and air in the province, an official of Balochistan government said.

He said the Balochistan government has decided to set up a climate change unit under the regulation of the Environmental Protection Agency to work on the minimizing effects of climate change in the province.

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