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Pak urges US to forge balanced ties with S. Asian nations, not overly align with India

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States' policy to over-align itself with India negates the country's traditional policy of maintaining strategic balance in the relationship with South Asian countries, Pakistan Ambassador to the US, Masood Khan, has said, while underscoring that restoration of equilibrium would contribute to peace and security in the region.

At the same time, he said in a pod-cast with Tim Horgan of World Affairs Council of New Hampshire — a think-tank — that Pakistan and the US have now re-calibrated their relationship around two clusters — security and economic partnership.

"When we talk about Pak-US economic partnership, which is all encompassing, we also include climate change and issues like healthcare, education, people-to-people contacts, so that we could give strong sinews to this relationship," the ambassador said.

On US-China relations, the Ambassador said that the United States leadership has been managing the relationship with "great care and wisdom." He also noted that the recent visits have set the ground for a collaborative model, not a confrontational one.

The ambassador expressed the view that rapprochement between United States and China would be in the interest of

the two countries and the world. In this regard, he said that Pakistan could act as an economic bridge between China and the United States.

While the US was decoupling or de-risking, Masood Khan said it could relocate some of its industries to Pakistan.

The United States could also manufacture in Pakistan and export its products and services to China.

On Afghanistan, the Ambassador reiterated the call for Afghan Government to crackdown on militant groups like the TTP. "We want the interim Afghan government to crack down on these outfits, particularly the TTP, to delegitimize and neutralize them."



MURREE: Deputy Chairman Senate Saydal Khan meeting with President PML(N) Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.

Nawaz Sharif advocates strengthening parliament over street protests

ISLAMABAD (Online): Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif Sunday said that taking to the streets is a futile exercise, as the real forum for strengthening, protecting, and ensuring supremacy of the Constitution is the Parliament.

These views were expressed by the president of Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (N) and three-time former premier during a conversation with the Deputy Chairman of the Senate, Senator Syedal Khan, who called on him in Murree today.

Syed Khan congratulated him on being elected as the President of PML-N. On this occasion, Senator Irfan Siddiqui, the leader of the PML-N parliamentary party in the Senate, was also present.

Nawaz Sharif also congratulated the Deputy Chairman of the Senate on assuming his position and expressed the hope that he would play an effective role in the Senate for the strengthening of the federation, national unity, and the promotion of democracy.

India's Modi sworn in for record-equaling third term as prime minister

NEW DELHI: Narendra Modi was sworn in as India's prime minister on Sunday for a record-equaling third term, but as a restive coalition's head after a shock poll setback that will test his ability to ensure policy certainty in the world's most populous nation.

President Droupadi Murmu administered the oath of office to Modi at a grand ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the president's palace in New Delhi, attended by thousands of dignitaries, including the leaders of seven regional countries, Bollywood stars and industrialists.

Modi, who started as a publicist of the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological parent of his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is only the second person after independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru to serve a third straight term as prime minister.

Radio Pak legendary Urdu newscaster Taskeen Zafar passes away

ISLAMABAD (INP): Legendary voice of Radio Pakistan, Urdu newscaster Taskeen Zafar passed away in Rawalpindi after brief illness. She was 67.

Her name - e-Janaza will be offered at 4:30 pm at Eidgah, Lalkurti in Rawalpindi this afternoon. Born in Rawalpindi in 1957.

Captain among seven soldiers martyred in Lakki Marwat IED blast: ISPR

President, PM express grief

RAWALPINDI (APP): A Captain along with six soldiers of Pakistan Army on Sunday embraced martyrdom after an improvised explosive device exploded on vehicle of Security Forces in Lakki Marwat district.

According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, the martyred soldiers were identified as Captain Muhammad Faraz Ilyas (age: 26 years, resident of Kasur District) along with six other brave sons of the soil; Subedar Major Muhammad Nazir (age: 50 years, resident of; Skardu district), Lance Naik Muhammad Anwar (age: 34 years, resident of; Ghanchi district), Lance Naik Hussain Ali (age: 36 years, resident of; Ghizer district), Sepoy Asad Ullah (age: 33 years, resident of; Multan district), Sepoy Manzoor Hussain (age: 27 years, resident of; Gilgit district), Sepoy Rashid Mehmood (age: 31 years, resident of Rawalpindi district); who made the ultimate sacrifice and embraced martyrdom.

The sanitization of the area was being carried out to eliminate any terrorists present in the area and perpetrators of this heinous act would be brought to justice.

"Security forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the ISPR said.

Captain Muhammad Faraz Ilyas Shaheed belongs to Kasur district of Punjab. He got commission in Northern Light Infantry of Pakistan Army in 2020. He was going to get married on June 19, 2024. Faraz Ilyas Shaheed is survived by his parents and siblings.

Subedar Major Muhammad Nazir Shaheed belongs to Skardu district of Gilgit Baltistan. He performed the duties of defending the homeland for 31 years. Subedar Major Muhammad Nazir Shaheed has left his wife, two sons and five daughters among the mourners.

Lance Naik Hussain Ali Khan Shaheed belongs to Ghizer district. He served in Pakistan Army for 14 years. Lance Naik Hussain Ali Khan Shaheed is survived by his parents and siblings.

Lance Naik Muhammad Anwar Shaheed belongs to Ganche district of Gilgit Baltistan. He served in the Pakistan Army for 13 years to defend the homeland. Lance Naik Muhammad Anwar Shaheed has left his wife, two daughters and two sons among the bereaved.

Sepoy Manzoor Hussain Shaheed belongs to Gilgit

district. He served in Pakistan Army for 6 years for homeland defense. Sepoy Manzoor Shaheed has left behind his wife and three daughters.

Sepoy Asadullah Shaheed belongs to Multan. He performed national defense duties in Pakistan Army for 14 years. Sepoy Asadullah Shaheed has left his wife and one son among the bereaved.

Sepoy Rashid Mehmood Shaheed belongs to Rawalpindi. He served in the Pakistan Army for 13 years in defense of the homeland. Sepoy Rashid Mehmood is survived by his parents and siblings.

Meanwhile President Asif Ali Zardari on Sunday expressed grief over shahadat of personnel of security forces who lost

their lives after their vehicle reportedly hit an improvised explosive device (IED) in District Lakki Marwat.

The president paid tribute to the martyred Jawans of Pakistan Army and prayed for the high ranks of the departed souls, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

He also condemned the IED attack by the terrorists and reiterated the resolve of the entire nation to root out the cancer of terrorism.

Paying tribute to the sacrifices and valour of shaheed Jawans, the president said the nation would never forget the sacrifices of its sons and Shuhada and expressed condolences with the bereaved families and prayed for them to bear the losses with fortitude.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday while reiterating the resolve to continue fighting against terrorism till its complete elimination, expressed his deep grief over shahadat of seven security personnel, including Captain Muhammad Faraz Ilyas shaheed, in a terrorist attack in District Lakki Marwat.

The prime minister prayed for the bereaved families to bear the losses with equanimity, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

He said that the entire nation saluted the law enforcement agencies for their services and unprecedented sacrifices and stood with the brave Jawans.

The prime minister also resolved to make terrorists accountable.



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Pakistan, IMF disagree on key loan program points

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are still grappling with several key issues as they negotiate the terms of a new loan program. According to sources within the Finance Ministry, disagreements persist on tax exemptions for former FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) regions and the tax treatment of various income groups.

A major sticking point appears to be the continuation of tax breaks for Pakistan's former FATA territories. While the IMF pushes for their immediate removal, the Finance Ministry argues that a one-year extension is crucial to support development efforts in the region. This includes tax breaks on imported machinery and income tax relief.

One area where progress has been made is income tax on exporters. Both sides have reportedly agreed to a revised system that calculates taxes based

on exporters' income and expenses, replacing the current flat rate of 1%.

However, negotiations remain deadlocked regarding income tax rates for salaried and non-salaried individuals. Additionally, the IMF's proposal to impose an 18% sales tax on the agriculture and health sectors faces resistance from Pakistan.

The Finance Ministry has signaled its openness to taxing pensions exceeding one lakh rupees per month. Meanwhile, discussions are ongoing regarding the creation of a national tax authority or council to streamline federal and provincial tax collection. The IMF has reportedly linked the loan program's terms to Pakistan's new budget and is unwilling to budge on Parliamentary approval of these conditions. This signifies a potentially difficult road ahead for the government, as implementing these measures could face public backlash.

Muqam asks CM KP to focus on resolution of people's problems rather point scoring

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions and Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir Affairs, Engr Amir Muqam has asked the Chief Minister (CM) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to focus on the resolution of people's problems rather than point scoring.

He said that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) did want tall hallow claims and wanted development and prosperity.

In response to the address of chief minister in Swat, Engr Amir Muqam said in a statement that tall hallow slogans are very easy to chant but PTI Government did not make anything

for the province during its 11 years of rule. He said that these elements wanted to repeat the May 9 gory incidents. The government would not allow attacks on the official installations, he said and added that these elements were wasting time and insulting people's mandate. The minister said that the CM KP had forgotten that during his party, political leaders were targeted and fake cases against them were registered. He said that these elements were claiming themselves innocent after facing corruption cases and were making hue and cry when investment started coming again to the country.

Government decides to continue PTI's ten billion tree initiative

ISLAMABAD (INP): The PML-N-led federal government has decided to continue Ten Billion Tree Tsunami project, initiated by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, a private news channel citing sources said on Sunday.

The government has decided to increase the budget for the Ministry of Climate Change by Rs11.82 billion for the fiscal year 2024-25, with aiming at mitigating the effects of global warming and promoting sustainable development.

The budget includes a significant allocation of Rs15.62 billion for the Green Pakistan initiative, previously known as the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami — a project initially launched in 2018 by PTI. The project aims to plant trees across the nation and combat the adverse effects of climate change.

The government has also proposed a new project to combat climate change, details of which are yet to be disclosed. It has also been proposed to provide Rs1.019 billion to the Ministry of Climate

Change to enhance its technical capacity and effectively implement climate change projects.

The budget also allocates Rs15.775 billion for four ongoing schemes, aimed at promoting sustainable development and environmental conservation. Furthermore, the government has proposed Rs100 million for the Pakistan Biosafety Clearing House. In a move to improve water quality monitoring capabilities, the government has allocated Rs30 million for the purpose.



GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan in a meeting with the Prince Rahim Aga Khan.

Governor Kundi challenges CM Gandapur for a debate

PESHAWAR (INP): Tug of war between Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi and Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur continues and former challenges latter for debate.

Talking to media persons in Peshawar on Sunday, the Governor KP said that Gandapur could debate with him on any channel of his choice.

Faisal Karim Kundi said that the chief minister was talking like this to secure a job. The CM must engage in reasoned discourse, he added. He said, "I will like to tell the KP chief minister that dancing horses don't win races."

Why Gandapur's father was forcibly retired from the army, the governor questioned.

Nevertheless, Kundi once again invited the chief minister to sit together for the progress of the province.

PML-N solo flight in federal budget preparations irking PPP

ISLAMABAD (INP): In the lead-up to the PML-N's federal budget announcement, serious reservations have emerged from the coalition partner PPP, highlighting a lack of consultation and inclusion.

According to sources, senior PPP leader Khurshid Shah expressed complete ignorance of the proposed federal budget. In response to questions about the upcoming budget, Shah revealed significant communication gaps between the PML-N and its coalition partners.

"What suggestions have been given to the government regarding the upcoming budget? Are you satisfied?" Shah was asked. He replied, "What kind of proposals, what kind of budget? The government has not informed us of anything, nor have we been taken into confidence."

Shah criticized the lack of transparency, stating, "We have no knowledge of PML-N's plans regarding privatization policy, taxes, or the development pro-

gram. We are unaware of how provincial shares are allocated in measures aimed at providing relief to the people, or what is new in the federal ministries' plans."

He further questioned the budget's origin, asking, "We haven't even been informed if this budget is being drafted by the government itself or if it is an IMF-imposed budget. The PPP has supported the government extensively, so what exactly has been done? Should we tell the public that we do not know?"

Shah emphasized that the PPP would have to carefully consider its political stance on the budget. "We cannot silently support the government while witnessing the people being burdened by the budget. We have a manifesto, and our proposals should have been included in the federal budget. It is unfortunate that this was not done without the need for our input," he lamented.

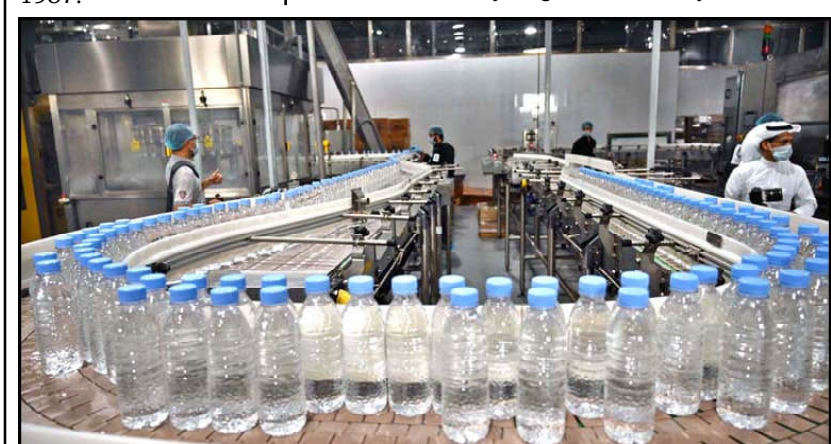
MAKKAH (APP): A month-long pre-Hajj flight operation, which began on May 9 to transport around 70,105 from major cities of Pakistan to holy cities of Madinah and Makkah under the government scheme, would complete with the arrival of the last flight at the King Abdulaziz International Airport Jeddah on Monday morning.

As per the schedule, a copy of which is available with APP, a Saudi Airlines SV-3727 would leave Islamabad International Airport for Jeddah at 3 a.m. (PST) carrying 380 passen-

gers - the last batch of Pakistani intending pilgrims under the government scheme.

This year, 160,000 Pakistani pilgrims will perform the religious obligation of Hajj, with 70,000 arriving under the government scheme and around 90,000 through private Hajj Groups Organizers (HGOs).

Official statistics indicate that around 63,321 pilgrims have already reached Saudi Arabia under the private scheme, with the remaining individuals expected to arrive before the start of Hajj on June 14, the 8th of Zilhajj.



SAUDI ARABIA: Workers busy in packing zamzam water in Zamzama Factory for distributing among the hajjaj at Zaidiah.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Enduring friendship

The optics from Shehbaz Sharif's China trip appear to be positive. The highlight of the visit came on Friday, when the prime minister met China's top brass, including President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang.

In other engagements, Mr Sharif and his delegation, including top ministers, networked with Chinese investors and officials. The meeting with Mr Xi was warm, as China's leader extolled the virtues of the bilateral relationship, and promised to "build a closer China-Pakistan community".

As for concrete takeaways, there were pledges to revive CPEC, with Xi Jinping saying Beijing was willing to create an "upgraded version" of the corridor, while at least 32 MoUs were signed, covering various sectors such as transport, infrastructure, agriculture, etc.

While both the Pakistani and Chinese sides were effusive in their praise for the bilateral relationship, concerns regarding security were communicated by the highest echelons of the state. President Xi hoped that Pakistan would "effectively guarantee the safety of Chinese personnel", while Premier Li echoed similar concerns.

Such messaging was expected from Beijing, especially after five Chinese workers were killed in the Dasu terrorist attack earlier this year. For his part, Mr Sharif extended his condolences over the loss of life, and promised that Pakistan would do all it could to protect Chinese personnel and interests. Mr Sharif also promised Chinese investors in Shenzhen that the state had zero tolerance for corruption.

From the PM's interactions, it is clear that China will stand by Pakistan and is committed to deepening ties, but that Pakistan will have to deliver on promises of fool-proof security, and crack down on corruption. China is perhaps Pakistan's closest bilateral partner, along with Saudi Arabia, and maintaining this relationship is essential to the country's geo-economic and geopolitical interests. Attracting new Chinese investment, and launching the 'second phase' of CPEC, can play a key role in getting Pakistan out of the dire financial straits it finds itself in currently.

But it is clear that the state will have to work overtime to ensure that the new CPEC projects, as well as the multiple MoUs signed in Beijing, are translated into reality. It should be remembered that following his recent trips to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the PM returned with pledges of billions of dollars in investments. Most of those pledges — if not all — have yet to materialise. Perhaps the issue is that whether it is our friends in the Gulf or our partners in China, Pakistan's foreign allies want to see internal political stability, a commitment to financial transparency and fiscal responsibility, as well as a secure environment free of terrorism before they commit their funds. This is perhaps the biggest obstacle that confronts the state in attracting foreign investment.

Modi's 'guarantee'

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

That Modi would win his third term was never in doubt. However, contrary to expectations, he did not achieve the landslide he was hoping for. Why has 'Modi ki guarantee' (a boastful commitment to people's welfare) not delivered the two-thirds majority to which he aspired? Several reasons are being cited: high unemployment rates, rising inflation, and the incumbency factor. The opposition projected Modi as a fascist in the making. His intense anti-Muslim rhetoric scared away not only Muslim voters, whom he called 'ghusbathiy' or infiltrators, but also liberal Indians attached to India's secular and pluralistic ethos. Losing the seat housing the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya is a case in point.

Yet, with 240 seats, the BJP is the largest party in Lok Sabha, way ahead of the Indian National Congress, which secured 99 seats. With its coalition partners, the BJP is assured of a third consecutive term led by Modi. This has become possible because of several notable achievements, mostly in the economic field. Under his watch, India became the fifth largest economy, compared to the 10th when he took over the reins of power 10 years ago. GDP has grown by 162 per cent, average income by 135pc, and foreign exchange reserves by 113pc to \$620 billion. There has been a surge in internet usage, while digital transactions have grown by 358pc to \$95bn. A series of initiatives were launched to make India a manufacturing hub. Modi's government added 50,000 kilometres of national highways (a 60pc increase since 2014) and 31,000 km of rail net-

works, with plans to start bullet trains. Thirty million houses have been built for the poor.

With the economy doing well, India was able to spend more for its defence needs. According to the Stockholm-based organisation Sipri, India spent \$83.6bn on its military in 2023, the steepest annual rise since 2009, and a 44pc increase since Modi took over in 2014. It is now the fourth largest military spender in the world. Notably, the bulk of the funds for military procurement (75pc) were allocated to domestically produced equipment, which has boosted local manufacturing, including that of homebuilt aircraft carrier, Vikrant. He also fast-tracked India's space programme, achieving the landing of Chandrayaan-3 on the moon in August 2023.

What does Modi's third term look like? Ostensibly, his top priority is to place India on course to become a developed country by 2047. He is also likely to continue his efforts to consolidate India's status as a 'Hindu first' nation, but it appears that this may not dilute his focus on the economy. He envisions that by 2030, India should be a \$6.7 trillion economy, surpassing Japan and Germany to become the third-largest global economy. Even though India is the third-largest climate polluter, Modi wishes to make India climate-friendly by 2070. He also plans to move the country towards digital governance.

India's foreign policy under Modi's third term is likely to continue in the same mode: navigating a tough balance in its relations with mutually antagonistic major powers: the US (strategic partner), Russia (enduring friend), and China (competitor); while en-

hancing special affinities with the Gulf sheikhdoms. He is likely to continue projecting his country's image as a leader of the 'Global South'.

Modi has disconnected his country from Pakistan in every domain. During the election campaign, he was utterly hostile to Pakistan. The jingoistic rhetoric of Modi's companions was centred around the mindset of 'ghus ke mareng' (infiltrate and kill), which is dangerous for regional peace. Its talk of targeting Azad Kash-mir and Gilgit-Baltistan is also empty rhetoric, as any misadventure is likely to receive a befitting response, as in Feb-March 2019. India's accusation of Pakistan committing cross-border terrorism is also not borne out by the facts. It is not India that is suffering from terrorism, but Pakistan, where Indian operatives have managed to kill 20 Pakistanis during 2023, similar to what they did in Canada and the US.

It appears that in his third term, Modi might not take any positive initiative towards Pakistan, even though he wants a stable western border to continue his focus on his economic vision and goals. Pakistan's government would be well advised to wait until a positive initiative is taken by the Modi government.

Should he change his mind and approach Pakistan for limited cooperation, Pakistan should respond positively. Meanwhile, it should focus all its energies inward to achieve a degree of political stability, continuity of economic policies, and human development in pursuit of a clear vision and positive strategy for the country. That is the only way Pakistan can regain its relevance in the eyes of friends and foes alike. -- Courtesy Dawn

Policing one's own

Muna Khan

What did you have for lunch last Sunday? What about 10 Sundays ago? Or 10 years ago? What thoughts run through your mind as you try to answer these questions? Memory is the ongoing process of information retention over time, according to Harvard, and a lot of research continues to go into understanding how memory works. Fear not, my piece isn't about cognitive science, but how our past actions, seemingly innocuous, can impact our present.

The British politician and academic Faiza Shaheen knows this well now. The former Labour candidate, who narrowly lost her constituency in 2019, learned last week that she'd been blocked by her party from contesting the election next month, reportedly over her tweets relating to Israel.

Earlier, she was asked by the party's national executive committee to explain her tweet history from as far back as 2014, when she was not a member of the Labour party. She was asked why she liked a tweet featuring a video skit by US talk show host Jon Stewart about not being able to freely talk about Israel and Palestine. As he begins to talk about the war on Gaza in that sketch, Stewart's colleagues on the show jump up and rebuke him for daring to question Israel's actions. It is a comedic but essentially accurate representation of how difficult it is to talk about Israel in the West without being shut down for being anti-Semitic — a trend that continues.

"Just merely mentioning Israel or questioning in any way the effectiveness or humanity of Israel's policy is not the same thing as being pro-Hamas," Stewart says in the skit before he is shut

down by the same colleagues. (You'd be forgiven for thinking this commentary is from today.)

Fast forward to 2024, and Stewart is back hosting the comedy show once a week and being critical of the Zionist state. However, liking his politics on social media has pretty damning consequences. Shaheen doesn't even remember liking that tweet 10 years ago, but her detractors remember. She acknowledged that the tweet she liked references antisemitic tropes and apologised for it, but as we've seen well before the Oct 7 attacks, you can be forgiven everything but a hint of criticism of Israel.

Shaheen has since resigned from the Labour party and plans to run as an independent. She has been replaced by a pro-Israeli candidate who is not from the area. Shaheen's supporters are angry at the Labour party, which, in its defence, says they want the most suitable candidates. To be clear, Shaheen went through all the processes required and was cleared to run for the seat.

"They would rather lose than have a left-pro-Palestine candidate. This is offensive to my community," she tweeted.

Shaheen's politics reflect issues Labour once stood for: wealth inequality, public ownership, environmental issues, and Palestine. But under Keir Starmer's leadership, the party stands for something else. In fact, Starmer is accused of purging the party of left-wing candidates; incidentally, all of them have one thing in common — they spoke in favour of an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

Labour is widely expected to win next month's election, and is already behaving like Israel's newest best friend; a trusted one that

can be counted on to do its bidding. I see its de-selection of Shaheen as one example of wanting to make its rich donors with ties to Israel happy. The manner in which political parties and other organisations like the media aid Israel in shutting down conversations by slapping the "antisemitic" label is horrifying. This is how meaningful conversations on Israel's treatment of Palestinians — grounded in truth — are blocked. All critics are silenced and vanished from screens.

Two examples this year include female journalists Saniga Myska of LBC radio and Belle Donati of Sky News, who were reportedly let go of shortly after difficult interviews with Isra-eli officials. Both women are respected journalists who were merely doing their jobs when they asked tough questions. Apparently you can't ask these sorts of questions of Isra-eli officials. How can voters and audiences be OK knowing foreign powers have that kind of hold on their media? This is deeply worrying for a free press.

The double standards are all too clear to see. Shaheen's social media activity is open to scrutiny, but Labour candidate Luke Akehurst's is not. He's a staunch supporter of Israel, has called the UN antisemitic, and said Palestinians actors "staged atrocities in Gaza" in his tweets. He isn't policed for his views.

I'm hopeful that Shaheen stands a chance next month, because she has a strong supporter base which, I believe, has grown in the last week out of anger at Labour's policies rooted in racism and Islamophobia. Shaheen's courage should inspire young women here, too. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Australian High Commissioner highlights education and trade cooperation with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Neil Hawkins on Sunday emphasized Australia's commitment to investing in Pakistan's future through education and trade.

In an exclusive interview with the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), he said, "By investing in the people of Pakistan, particularly the young people who study in Australia, we hope they will return with valuable skills to contribute to Pakistan's future," Hawkins stated.

He highlighted the sustained efforts to offer scholarships, focusing on women in executive leadership, climate change and agriculture. "Gender equality and climate change

are major focuses for us," he said, underscoring the shared climate challenges between the two nations and the potential for cooperative efforts.

The environmental focus, particularly on water and agriculture, remains a critical aspect of their support, with Hawkins noting his recent visit to northern Pakistan to witness climate change impacts firsthand.

Regarding trade, Hawkins noted a significant increase from the 2.5 billion dollars trade volume in 2022, with a 30 percent rise this year. Key exports include agricultural products like cattle, wheat, and canola, with nearly 90 percent of Pakistan's canola sourced from Australia. "If you're enjoying chana or

chickpeas for breakfast, they're likely from Australia as well," he added.

This dialogue was part of an event celebrating the achievements of 60 Pakistani scholars who completed their studies in Australia through the prestigious Australia Awards scholarship program. These scholars, including 21 men and 39 women, were recognized for their academic excellence and dedication.

"I am proud to join the celebrations with these Pakistani scholars who have completed their studies funded by Australia," Hawkins said. "I congratulate them on their hard work and dedication. I am confident their newly acquired knowledge and skills



SARGODHA: A farmer busy in planting saplings of rice in his field along Shekan Road.

Railways earn over Rs 70 bln till May

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has achieved an unprecedented earning of over Rs. 70 billion till the month of May (FY 2023-24) despite facing a financial crisis due to floods in the monsoon season. "The department is expecting to generate revenues up to Rs. 80 billion by the end of this financial year through the consistent efforts and hard work of the Railway workers," sources in the Ministry told APP.

The department has witnessed a historic

increase in revenue in the current financial year as during the last financial year (2022-23), it earned around Rs. 40 billion.

The sources said that out of Rs 70 billion, the revenue was derived from passenger and freight trains while other sectors of the department also contributed to the total revenue. At present, they said that Pakistan Railways is operating around 96 passenger trains, more than the previous year when 86 trains were running.

SNGLP punishes 17 consumers for illegal use of meters

MULTAN (APP): Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGLP) punished 17 citizens during a crackdown for last two days.

According to officials of Task Force, the consumers were using gas illegally as they were found making commercial use of gas, offering illegal connections to others and had also shifted meters at different sites by themselves.

The gas metres of all 17 consumers were disconnected for violation of the laws.

Similarly, another 17 consumers have been warned to shift their meters near service points in interior city as these had been installed outside the service points.

The department urged citizens to cooperate and informed about illegal use of gas at phone number 0619220085 as secrecy would be maintained.



BEIJING: Federal Minister for Communications, Privatization and Investment Board, Abdul Aleem Khan presiding a high level meeting with the officials of Chinese Business group.

Top Chinese firms say: PM Shehbaz visit boosts Pak-China relations

BEIJING (APP): Chinese companies operating in Pakistan expect better opportunities for the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) following Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to China.

World leading Chinese engineering and power companies such as CMEC and POWERCHINA Pakistan aimed to enhance investment and undertake new projects across various sectors.

Talking to the Chinese media, Dai Bao, Vice General Manager of China

Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC) Pakistan has expressed strong interest in collaborating with the Pakistani government during the second phase of the CPEC.

He acknowledged the recent high-level meeting between President Xi and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The initial phase of the CPEC laid a robust foundation for Pakistan national destiny and established a pivotal framework for further bilateral cooperation. This

progress paves the way for the next steps, and both sides eagerly anticipate the new phase of CPEC. The Prime Minister visit to China signaled the beginning of this transformative stage.

The company senior representative highlighted that both nations aspire to witness fresh achievements and embrace a renewed outlook of the joint corridor.

China, drawing from its experience with reform and openness, extends a friendly hand of support to Pakistan.

Malik for resolving Pak, India conflicts to spur regional economic growth

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's former President Iftikhar Ali Malik Sunday pointed out that long pending unresolved conflicts between Pakistan and India hinder economic growth and overall prosperity in the region.

In a media statement here Sunday, he noted that increased trade and economic collaboration between India and Pakistan could lead to significant advancements in technology, infrastructure, and overall economic

development. He called on both the governments to prioritize peace and stability, suggesting that joint efforts in trade and commerce could pave the way for a more prosperous and harmonious South Asia. Iftikhar Malik urged the new Indian leadership to hold constructive dialogue with Pakistan, emphasizing that diplomatic efforts are essential to overcoming historical grievances and building a future based on mutual respect and cooperation.

Waves of inflation continue in Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): The wave of inflation continues in Peshawar, increasing the price of vegetables, fruits and live chicken per kg while most of the vendors could not follow the official rates issued by the district administration. The price of the vegetables increased with every passing day and the price of Onion jumped from Rs. 120 to Rs 180 while tomato 110, lemon 350, garlic 540 and ginger 700 rupees were being sold. The ginger was 650 and it increased by Rs. 50 to reach Rs. 700 per kg well before the forthcoming Eid-ul-Adha.

SPARC hails SIFC for boosting Pak economy through tobacco tax hike

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) hailed the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) and previous work on investing in better economic decisions, and tobacco topped the list when it came to increasing taxes on non-essential items for boosting the economy.

Health activists are hopeful that SIFC will advocate for an increase in cigarettes taxes by 26% in upcoming budget of year 2024-25.

This will be a Win -

Win situation for both the economy and public health as it will generate PKR 17 Billion in revenue and after this tax increase, there is huge potential for long-term savings in health cost recovery by 19.8 percent.

Malik Imran Ahmad country head Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK) said, "Higher taxes on tobacco products can lead to increased revenue for the government. Pakistan currently holds the highest proportion of young people, as 64% of the total population of Pakistan is below the age of 30.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor busy in extracting mustard oil at his stall in weekly Sunday Bazaar, H-9 Sector.

LCCI holds consultative session on national industrial policy

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) hosted a pivotal consultative session on the formulation of the National Industrial Policy (NIP) here on Sunday.

Chairing the session, LCCI President Kashif Anwar said that the current policies are designed for those who are in the tax net and for documented industries. He emphasized that policies should be made to expand the tax base and support the industrial sector. He mentioned that SRO 1842, SRO 350 and the Income Tax Amendment Act 2024 are making the business environment more difficult.

He elaborated on the process of petitioner assessment that if assessment by assessing officer exceeds Rs 20 million, the petitioner has to go to the tribunal for remedy. If the tribunal also decides against the petitioner, the next forum is the high court, and for the assessment below Rs 20 million, the next forum for remedy is commissioner appeal and then high court. In High Court, for attaining stay, the petitioner has to deposit 30 percent value of the assessed amount for seeking stay which will create cash flow problems and other difficulties for the tax payers.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi addressing the Annual Convocation of the Allama Iqbal Open University.

Senior minister exemplifies Punjab govt's first 100 days' performance

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Sunday the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) governments in Centre and Punjab has reignited hope among the populace and steered the country back on the path of prosperity in its first 100 days.

In a statement issued here, she said every sector was witnessing growth, and inflation was on a downward trajectory. "Prudent decisions have led to a historic alleviation of the people's burdens. In this short span, the price of bread has dropped from 14 to 12 rupees, exemplifying tangible relief for masses. Instead of

fueling violence, the youth are being empowered with laptops. Pakistan stands as a beacon in Asia, with inflation rapidly decreasing," she added.

The minister asserted, "The 100-day milestone once again highlights the stark contrast between the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and the conspiracies orchestrated by Imran Khan. "The resounding praise for the performance of PM Shehbaz Sharif and CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif resonates loudly, while Imran Khan's falsehoods and plots only intensify.

Hyderabad receives pre monsoon showers

HYDERABAD (APP): Hyderabad received low to moderate monsoon showers with thunderstorms on Sunday evening, entailing widespread power outages in the wake.

It also rained in the neighbouring Janshoro and Matari districts.

Mayor Kashif Ali Shoro and Deputy Commissioner Zainul Abedin Memon put the staff of Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (HMC) and Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) on alert.

The Mayor also visited some drainage pump-

ing stations in the city to ensure that all the stations worked properly even during the power outages.

The DC said in a statement that Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (HESCO) should restore the electric supply especially in those 11 KV feeders which powered the drainage pumping stations.

He added that the field teams of HESCO should visit the concerned area and if they were satisfied they should give clearance to the company for the restoration.

12 dead, 1291 injured in 1219 road accidents in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): At least twelve persons were killed and 1291 injured in 1219 Road Traffic Crashes (RTCs) in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours.

Out of these, 583 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 708 victims with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by Rescue Medical Teams thus reducing the burden of hospitals.

Furthermore, the analysis showed those 718 drivers, 49 underage drivers, 143 pedestrians, and 442 passengers were among the victims of road traffic crashes.

CTD releases report on attacks on KP polio teams

PESHAWAR (APP): The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Sunday has issued a report on the attacks on polio teams wherein a total of 15 attacks on polio teams were reported this year.

There were 4 attacks on polio teams in Bannu, 3 attacks each in Bajaur and Tank while one attack on polio teams was reported each in Khyber, Lakki Marwat, Mardan, North Waziristan and South Waziristan.

During the campaign, 13 police personnel deployed for security.

PPP embraces youths with open arms: Murtaza

LAHORE (APP): Syed Anwar Rajput, Muhammad Adeel Khan Kamoka, and Rana Waqas Tanveer, along with their colleagues, into the PPP, emphasized his party's dedication to youth representation, declaring it the true party for young Pakistanis.

Speaking at a ceremony at the People's Secretariat on Sunday, Murtaza underlined that the PPP, led by its young chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, continues to champion the voices of the youth at every level. The event celebrated the induction of prominent young leaders Husnain

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"We welcome these dynamic young leaders who have chosen to join our ranks. The PPP, with its commitment to youth empowerment under Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, is dedicated to enabling the youth to take the reins of the nation," said Murtaza.

2-day TDAP expo of handicrafts, bangles concludes

HYDERABAD (APP): The two-day Handicrafts and Bangles Expo 2024 concluded here on Sunday with thousands of people visiting the expo and showing keen interests in the products displayed on more than 50 stalls at the event.

The stalls were set up at Dolmen Banquet in Latifabad by entrepreneurs, traders, and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) from Hyderabad and rural areas while the expo was organized by Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) and Thardeep Rural Development Program (TRDP).

They showcased a variety of products including horticulture, handicrafts, bangles, pottery, perfumes, food, traditional and cultural outfits. The visitors showed profound interest in the stalls showcasing innovative techniques in horticulture, such as the banana tissue culture lab which was established to prepare disease-resistant and export-quality varieties of bananas.

The stalls also demonstrated the process of preparing fiber from banana waste, which supported the textile industry and produced liquid fertilizer and organic matter, thereby reducing environmental pollution.

KP Govt lawyer's statement in SC on appointment of VCs incorrect, misleading: Kundi

PESHAWAR (APP): The Government Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday termed the statement of lawyer of KP government in Supreme Court of Pakistan regarding selection of vice chancellors and sending its summary to the Governor KP was totally incorrect and misleading and urged the Chief Justice to take notice of it.

The Governor made it clear that neither the said summary has been received by the governor house nor he stopped it.

The Governor has requested Chief Justice of Pakistan to take notice of this serious matter, stating that if such erroneous statements are made at the official level in front of the esteemed apex judiciary of

the country, then it would be extremely unfortunate for the country, said a statement issued by Governor House here.

Addressing as the special guest at the Annual Convocation 2024 of Allama Iqbal Open University in Peshawar, the Governor said that erroneous statement was made by KP government lawyer in the Supreme Court regarding the appointment of vice chancellors claiming that the selection had been finalized and summary was sent to the Governor House for approval. However, the Governor clarified that no such summary had been received, and no approval was granted.

Expressing his deep concerns, the Governor

stated that first orders for acting vice chancellors in seven top universities were issued against legal norms and later its summary was sent to the Governor House for approval that was returned back with an objection of being unlawful.

The Governor said that seeing this kind of education system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was a matter of great concern.

Despite completion of selection of vice chancellors by academic search committee for 24 universities, he said that the appointments have not been made and a letter was written to CM KP to complete the appointment process quickly to take these universities out of administrative and educational crisis.



LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Industries and Commerce Chaudhary Shafay Hussain being welcomed during his visit to Women Resource Centre.

ANF recovers over 391 kg drugs; arrests 18 accused

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting seven operations across the country managed to recover over 391 kg drugs and arrested 18 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman. He informed that 195.6 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of four suspects rounded up in two operations near Lakpas Toll Plaza.

Maryam focusing on resolving public problems: MPA

SIALKOT (APP): Senior leader Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Member Punjab Assembly (MPA) Muhammad Manshaullah Butt has said that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is focusing on resolving public problems.

He expressed these views while addressing a joint meeting of labor

union and trade union representatives at the Surgical Instruments Manufacturers Association of Pakistan (SIMAP). He said the Chief Minister had fulfilled the promise of providing quality and low-cost bread (roti) to the people. This is a historic relief to 130 million people in the first 100 days of any government.

International News

Gaza's Health Ministry says 274 Palestinians were killed in Israeli raid that rescued 4 hostages

Monitoring Desk
DEIR AL-BALAH: At least 274 Palestinians including dozens of children were killed, and hundreds more were wounded, in the Israeli raid that rescued four hostages held by Hamas, Gaza's Health Ministry said Sunday. The military said its forces came under heavy fire during the complex daytime operation deep inside the territory.

The killing of so many Palestinians, in a raid that Israelis celebrated as a stunning success because all four hostages were rescued alive, showed the heavy cost of such operations on top of the already soaring toll of the 8-month-long war ignited by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack.

The operation deep into Nuseirat, a built-up refugee camp in central Gaza dating back to the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, was the largest rescue since Oct. 7, when Hamas and other militants stormed across the border, killing some 1,200

people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 hostages.

Scores of hostages are believed to be held in densely populated areas or inside Hamas' labyrinth of tunnels, making rescue attempts extremely complex and risky. A raid in February rescued two hostages while leaving 74 Palestinians dead.

Israel's massive offensive has killed over 36,700 Palestinians, according to the health ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its counts. It said 64 children and 57 women were killed in the latest raid, and 153 children and 161 women were among the nearly 700 wounded.

In Gaza, medics described scenes of chaos after the raid. Overwhelmed hospitals were already struggling to treat the wounded from days of heavy Israeli strikes in the area.

"We had the gamut of

war wounds, trauma wounds, from amputations to eviscerations to trauma, to TBIs (traumatic brain injuries), fractures and, obviously, big burns," said Karin Huster of Doctors Without Borders, an international charity working in Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital.

"Kids completely grey or white from the shock, burnt, screaming for their parents. Many of them are not screaming because they are in shock."

The Israeli military said it had attacked "threats to our forces in the area," and that a special forces officer was killed in the rescue operation.

Israel's military spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, told reporters Saturday that the hostages were held in two apartments about 200 meters (219 yards) apart. He said the forces moved in simultaneously on both.



Palestinians inspect a house hit in an Israeli strike in Nuseirat refugee camp, in central Gaza Strip.

Rights groups hail Israel's addition to UN list of shame

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: Human rights groups have welcomed the United Nations decision to place Israel on a "List of Shame" of countries that fail to protect children in war. The UN informed Israel about the move on Friday. Israel has killed tens of thousands of Palestinian children and maimed many more in its brutal bombing on Gaza, sparking global outrage against its military offensive.

The UN decision was welcomed by the world's two major rights groups, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW). Amnesty Secretary General, Agnes Callamard, stated that the decision was long overdue.

"It should not have taken 15,000 children killed in Gaza for Israel to be on this shameful list," she tweeted.

"It's a thoroughly justified, albeit long overdue, move by the Secretary-General," said HRW's Louis Charbonneau.

Israel extends Al Jazeera ban by 45 days, citing security threat

Monitoring Desk
JERUSALEM: A ban on Al Jazeera's operations in Israel was extended for another 45 days by Israel's telecoms regulator on Sunday after the cabinet agreed its broadcasts posed a threat to security. A Tel Aviv court last week upheld an initial 35-day ban on Al Jazeera operations in Israel, imposed by the government on national security grounds, which ended on Saturday. In a separate ruling on a petition by Al Jazeera against the closure, Israel's Supreme Court described the measure against the Qatari-backed.

Protesters slam Biden in Gaza rally near White House

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON/LONDON: Thousands of protesters held a "red line" rally near the White House on Saturday, voicing anger at US President Joe Biden's tolerance of Israel's brutal military campaign against Hamas.

Chanting "From DC to Palestine, we are the red line", the demonstrators held a long banner scribbled with the names of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces.

In London thousands of people marched through the city centre to parliament calling for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza. The demonstration was organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Marchers waved Palestinian flags and chanted: "End the genocide" and "Free, free Palestine".

While Biden has faced criticism for playing a balancing act on key ally Israel's actions in the conflict, the White House said last month that a deadly Israeli strike on Rafah did not cross a "red line" that Biden had seemingly set two months earlier when asked about a potential invasion of the southern Gaza city.

Migrant arrests drop at US-Mexico border as Biden asylum ban rolls out

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The number of migrants caught illegally crossing the US-Mexico border dropped, a senior US border official told Reuters, saying it signaled a restrictive new Biden administration policy was deterring some illegal immigration.

US Border Patrol arrested around 3,100 people crossing illegally, down roughly 20% from the days before, the official said.

China says US provoking arms race in moves into South China Sea

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: The US poses the largest security challenge in the South China Sea as its military deployment there is turning it into "the whirlpool of an arms race". Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong said in remarks published on Sunday.

Recent maritime runs between China and the Philippines, a US treaty ally, have made the highly strategic South China Sea a potential flashpoint between Washington and Beijing.

"At present, the biggest security challenge in the South China Sea comes from outside the region," Sun said in comments published by his ministry, after attending a high-level meeting on East

Asian cooperation in Laos. Sun said US-led forces were "promoting military deployment and actions in the South China Sea, inciting and intensifying maritime disputes and contradictions, and damaging the legitimate rights and interests of coastal countries".

A move by the United States to deploy medium-range missile systems in the area "is dragging the region into the whirlpool of an arms race, placing the entire Asia Pacific region under the shadow of geopolitical conflicts", Sun said.

China is committed to properly managing disputes with the parties in the South China Sea through dialogue, he added.

Developing countries call on US to lift Palestinian UN veto

Monitoring Desk
ISTANBUL: The D-8 group of developing nations called on Saturday for the US to lift its veto on the full membership of Palestine as an independent and sovereign state in the United Nations. The Palestinians are currently a non-member observer state, a de facto recognition of statehood that was granted by the UN General Assembly in 2012. In a declaration after a meeting in Istanbul of its council of ministers, G-8 members Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey also demanded all countries stop supplying weapons and ammunition to Israel.

The UN General Assembly last month backed a Palestinian bid to become a full UN member by recognising it as qualified to join

and recommending the UN Security Council "reconsider the matter favorably". The Palestinian push for full UN membership comes several months into a war between Israel and Palestinian militants Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and as Israel is expanding settlements in the occupied West Bank, which the UN considers to be illegal.

As the Palestinian death toll in Gaza has exceeded 36,000 and a humanitarian crisis has engulfed the enclave, human rights groups and other critics have faulted the US for providing weapons to Israel and largely defending Israel's conduct.

On Saturday, Israeli military said they rescued alive four hostages who were seized by Hamas during the Oct 7 attack in which Israeli said 1,200 people were killed and 250 abducted.

Iran OKs 6 candidates for presidential race, but again blocks Ahmadinejad

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: Iran's Guardian Council on Sunday approved the country's hard-line parliament speaker and five others to run in the country's June 28 presidential election following a helicopter crash that killed President Ebrahim Raisi and seven others. The council again barred former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a firebrand populist known for the crackdown that followed his disputed 2009 re-election, from running.

The council's decision represents the starting gun for a shortened, two-week campaign to replace Raisi, a hard-line protégé of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei once floated as a possible successor for the 85-year-old cleric.

The selection of candi-

2 killed, fires rage in Lebanon after Israeli strikes

Monitoring Desk
BEIRUT: Israeli strikes on Saturday killed two people and sparked wildfires in southern Lebanon, state media said, with Hezbollah announcing the death of one fighter.

Hezbollah, a Hamas ally, has traded near-daily fire with Israeli forces in the eight months since the Gaza conflict began, triggered by Hamas' October 7 raid. The deadly clashes have intensified in recent weeks, causing multiple brush fires on both sides of the Israel-Lebanon border. Lebanon's official National News Agency (NNA) said on Saturday that "an Israeli drone carried out an air attack with two guided missiles, targeting a cafe in Aitarun and killing the cafe's owner, Ali Khalil Hamad, 37, and a young man named Mustafa A. Issa."

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Additional Foreign Secretary Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui at the Senior Officials Meeting preparatory to the Ministerial Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum held in Laos.

Pak commitment to regional peace, security, prosperity highlighted at ASEAN forum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Additional Foreign Secretary (Asia & Pacific), Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, represented Pakistan at the Senior Officials Meeting preparatory to the Ministerial Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

Ambassador Siddiqui appreciated ARF's pivotal role in multilateral efforts for regional peace and prosperity, according to a statement issued on Sunday.

Reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the ASEAN Regional Forum's mandate, he emphasised the importance of international collaboration for shared objectives of stability and sustainable prosperity.

Stressing the need for

an equitable and inclusive security framework, the Additional Foreign Secretary underscored the importance of resolving the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people for lasting peace and security in South Asia.

Ambassador Siddiqui condemned the rising tide of Islamophobia and the resurgence of Islamophobic political agenda as strategies in election campaigns. He emphasised the importance of comprehensive approaches to address the root causes of terrorism.

He also called for international scrutiny and accountability for extrajudicial killings by foreign agents inside Pakistan.

Nilofar hails UNFPA & CEJ-IBA's support for launching NMF on WRs

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), Nilofar Bakhtiar has highly appreciated the partners UNFPA and CEJ-IBA for their unwavering support in launching the National Media Fellowship on Women's Rights.

Lauding the partners, she stated, "I am immensely proud of you all fellows who have produced 165 impactful stories and two documentaries, shedding light on crucial issues of gender-based violence and child marriage.

Their diverse backgrounds, representing all regions of Pakistan, have enriched our initiative. Looking ahead, I encourage all journalists to continue championing women's rights and addressing gender-based violence and child marriage in their reporting."

Nilofar Bakhtiar said



RAWALPINDI: A large number of spectators watching T-20 cricket match between Pakistan and India during ICC Men's T20 World Cup on big screens installed by Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

Pakistan to boost 26% BISP funding for poorest amidst IMF demands

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan's Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), a social safety net for the poorest families, is set for a significant funding boost in the upcoming budget.

The government is proposing a record allocation of Rs 593 billion, a 26% increase from the current year, in response to demands from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The IMF has called for expanding BISP coverage and increasing cash transfers to counter rising inflation. The proposed budget reflects these demands, with plans to add more families to the program and raise the quarterly stipend from Rs 10,500 to Rs 13,000.

Sources say the additional funding aims to increase BISP beneficiaries from 9.6 million to 9.7 million families. The goal is to eventually reach

20 million households, potentially requiring further financial support.

Negotiations are underway with the World Bank for loans to achieve this target, particularly for improving health and education outcomes under BISP's conditional cash transfer program.

While the BISP expansion brings relief to the poorest, concerns remain for the lower-middle class. This segment, often hit harder by inflation due to a lack of safety nets, might see their struggles worsen due to other IMF conditions.

The IMF is pushing for the withdrawal of reduced sales tax rates and elimination of exemptions, potentially leading to widespread price hikes on essential goods. Additionally, limiting electricity subsidies to BISP beneficiaries could further burden lower-middle-class families.

Foreign investment coming back to Pakistan under PM's leadership: Engr Amir Muqam

SWAT (APP): Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Affairs Engr Amir Muqam here on Sunday said that huge foreign investment had again started coming to Pakistan due to successful policies of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Government that had restored confidence of the international investors.

Addressing party workers here at Malam Jabba, the federal minister said that important MoUs and agreements were signed during the successful visit of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to the brotherly

country of China that would largely benefit the people of Pakistan.

Engr Amir Muqam said that investments were also coming from brotherly Islamic countries including Saudi Arabia and UAE which strongly reflected investors confidence in the economic and foreign policies of Shehbaz Sharif Govt. He said that vast opportunities for investment were existed in agriculture, mines and mineral, tourism and Information Technology in Pakistan especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Owing to the prudent economic, fiscal and trade policies of PML-N Govt, he said that prices of daily use commodities were sig-

nificantly decreased and the value of rupee against dollar stabilized. He said that Opposition leaders were victimised during PTI Government and fake cases were registered against PML-N leadership. He said that PML-N leadership had faced all the cases with steadfastness and were acquitted by the courts of law.

On the other hands, he said that PTI leadership was making tall hallow slogans in a bid to instigate people and putting pressure on institutions to release PTI founder arrested in corruption cases. He said that these negative elements were provoking people to repeat the May 9 gory incidents.

office on Sunday.

The panelists included renowned journalists Salman Ghani, Saleem Bukhari, Ayesha Ashfaq, Mohammad Mehdi, and Najam Wali. Director General Bushra Bashir and other officers of the PID. The discussion delved into the political and economic significance of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its revival for Pakistan's progress.

Ms. Ayesha Ashfaq, Head of Department of Development Communications at Punjab University, commenced the dialogue by underscoring the positive

outcomes expected from the PM's visit, particularly highlighting the signing of 32 new agreements and MoUs. She emphasized the crucial role of effective communication, both through mainstream and social media, to elucidate the importance of CPEC to the common populace to ensure effective implementation of CPEC projects in future. Saleem Bukhari, a senior journalist and analyst, underscored the criticality of the IT sector within the signed MoUs, foreseeing its pivotal role in Pakistan's future progress. Moving on, Najam Wali

Khan, a senior broadcast journalist, stressed the correlation between economic stability and political stability, advocating for robust measures to counter misinformation and build public trust that must go along to ensure effectiveness of CPEC projects.

Mohammad Mehdi, a foreign affairs expert and senior columnist, emphasized the imperative of capacity building for the effective implementation of CPEC projects. Lastly, Salman Ghani, a senior journalist, lauded PID Lahore's initiative in facilitating such discussions.



KARACHI: A 5-member delegation of PML (N) led by central senior Vice President Shah Muhammad Shah meeting with Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori.

China distributes meat to needy people in Gwadar

ISLAMABAD (INP): In connection with the celebrations of the upcoming Eid ul-Adh, the meat of sacrificial animals has been distributed among local people of Gwadar by the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad and the China Overseas Port Holding Company (COHPC). More than 20 goats have been sacrificially slaughtered, and their meat has been doled out to needy communities, offering a profound gesture of brotherhood and philanthropy.

Around 393 less fortunate families received the meat in 2 kg packets. Zahid Baloch, a destitute member of a fisher family, told Gwadar Pro, "Skyrocketing inflation has wreaked havoc on people's already ramshackle financial condition.

Tarar grieves over demise of senior newscaster Taskeen Zafar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Sunday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the death of Radio Pakistan's senior newscaster Taskeen Zafar.

In a condolence message, the minister said he was deeply saddened to hear the news of the death of Taskeen Zafar.

Taskeen Zafar was a talented and experienced newscaster and her demise was loss of not only Radio Pakistan but also to the media industry, he maintained.

Pilgrims laud Saudi leadership's support for Hajj

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pilgrims performing this year's Hajj under the Guests of the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques Program for Hajj, Umrah and Visit hailed the generous gesture as proof of the special care and attention the Kingdom's leadership pays to Islam and Muslims.

Islamic Society of Vietnam secretary-general Mustapha Yousef praised the great services the Kingdom provides to pilgrims, not only at holy sites but in all roads pilgrims take. He said the Kingdom's generosity has always removed all obstacles and ensured pilgrims a smooth Hajj.

The Chairman of the Kashmir Council EU said that we have told several European personalities and European Parliament candidates that India is claiming democracy on the one hand but, on the other hand, oppressing Kashmiris and suppressing their democratic rights for more than seven decades. Since August 2019, since India abolished the special status of Kashmir and divided Occupied Kashmir by changing the domicile laws, New Delhi is trying to eliminate the identity of Kashmiris and change the proportion of the population of Jammu and Kashmir.

PM may dissolve NA within three months, claims Wasan

Monitoring Desk
KARACHI: Known for his bold predictions about the country's politics, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Manzoor Wasan on Sunday made a bold statement anticipating the incumbent government's dissolution in the next three months.

The politician said that the next "trimester is extremely crucial" regarding the political landscape. "Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif may dissolve the National Assembly within the next three months."

Wasan also ruled out the possibility of Pakistan

Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Nawaz Sharif becoming the next premier in the current political scenario.

He said that it would be seen what kind of setup emerges afterwards, but the provincial assemblies will remain intact.

The politician further stated that he doesn't see any favourable circumstances for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan or other politicians. "Reliefs are given and taken back, so Imran Khan shouldn't be living in his own imaginary world."

Zubair announces to quit PML-N

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former Sindh governor Muhammad Zubair on Sunday announced to part ways with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

Talking to a private TV news channel, Muhammad Zubair announced his decision to quit Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz. In support of his decision, Muhammad Zubair said he had differences with the party leadership on the no-confidence move against the former prime minister and PTI founder Imran Khan, the 16-month performance of the Pakistan Democratic Movement's government and other issues.

"I conveyed my differences to the party lead-

ership long ago," he added. The former Sindh governor said currently he has not decided to join any political party and will make a decision regarding this in the near future.

Muhammad Zubair said PML-N deviated from its "Vote Ko Izzat Do" slogan.

Earlier, Mohammad Zubair said that PML-N had abandoned the "vote ko izzat do" (respect the vote) narrative days before the PDM government.

The former governor said that PML-N started with a confrontational narrative, then turned to reconciliation and now they are running the campaign on the economic narrative.

IMF demands imposing tax on farm sector

ISLAMABAD (INP): The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has demanded more tax collection from provinces and imposition of the agriculture tax, official source said on Sunday.

The IMF has urged for imposition of tax on the agriculture income adding that the farm sector paying low tax in Pakistan over its share of income.

The monetary fund has also advised the government to use the national tax council for enhancing provincial taxation. "The province's tax share in national revenues has been at the minimal level of one percent," IMF has pointed out.

The IMF has also demanded full tax collection

on properties in as well as sales tax on services in provinces.

The International Monetary Fund earlier demanded Pakistan to public assets of office holders, government officials, ministers, and parliamentarians. According to sources, the IMF has suggested strict anti-corruption measures in the upcoming budget 2024.

The monetary fund directed the government to establish a portal to declare assets of public officials, but the government has failed to do so, sources said.

Pakistan's authorities are bound to create a portal and disclose asset details under the agreement with the IMF, sources added.



KARACHI: A large number of citizens are enjoying and cooling themselves during the hot weather of summer season, at Sea View Beach in Karachi.