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Sheikh Maher Al-Muaiqly, imam of the Grand Mosque in Makkah, delivers the Hajj sermon at Masjid-e-Nimrah

Delivers inspiring sermon on Arafah Day Sheikh Maher emphasizing faith, Islamic tenets to millions of pilgrims

**Imam urges pilgrims to pray for themselves, parents, relatives:
Emphasises Sharia's significance in leading one's way of life;
Prays for Palestinians under brutal oppression.**

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the auspicious day of Arafah, the annual sermon was delivered to millions of Muslim pilgrims gathered on the plains of Arafah, marking a significant moment in the Hajj pilgrimage on Saturday.

The sermon echoed themes of faith, obedience to Allah, and the pillars of Islam, reinforcing the core tenets of the Muslim faith.

The sermon began with praises to Allah, highlighting His attributes as the Most Wise, Most Aware, Most Knowledgeable, and Most Capable.

Sheikh Maher Bin Hamad Al Muaiqly, Imam and preacher of the Grand Mosque, delivering the sermon at Masjid Namira, emphasized Allah's control over the cosmos, citing Quranic verses to illustrate

His omnipotence and the creation's submission to His command: "He promptly covers the light of the day with the darkness of the night and has subjected the sun, the moon, and the stars to His command. To Him alone belong all creation and command. Blessed is Allah, the Lord of all creation." [7:54]

He underscored the Qur'an's role as a guide and

mercy for humanity, meant to rectify their ways and lead them towards righteousness. He highlighted the Qur'an's guidance towards what is most upright and its promise of great rewards for those who perform righteous deeds. "Indeed, this Qur'an guides to what is most upright, and gives glad tidings to the

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PM hopes current bailout package will be Pakistan's last IMF programme

In televised address to nation, Shehbaz Sharif vows tough reforms, collective effort for national progress; Says Govt successfully achieved tangible results on economic front during 100 days; Emphasises importance of learning from past mistakes to reclaim Pakistan's former glory

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday highlighting his government's achievements during the first 100 days, spurring out his five-year agenda of economic stability and public welfare marking the tough decisions of abolishing corrupt or loss-making ministries and departments, widening tax net and doing away with red tapism to achieve Quaid's Pakistan.

The prime minister hoped that "if we succeed in implementing the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme and achieve the targets set in the recent budget for upcoming fiscal year 2024-25, this will be the country's last



IMF programme and will leave our neighbours far behind in this race of development and economic growth."

The prime minister, in his maiden address to the nation, said that the government's prudent economic policies had resulted in reduced inflation from 38

percent to 12 percent, interest rate from 22 percent to 20 percent and repeated reduction in oil prices with the latest one on Friday - Rs10.5 per litre reduction in petrol and Rs 2.5 per litre in diesel prices.

"We have defined the future course of action and we will pursue it with utmost honesty and strictness. We will spend every saved penny on public welfare... We will eliminate red tapism... This journey is not only difficult and long but also demands sacrifice from the government authorities as well as the elite," he said in his televised address.

He said the country's economic situation in April 2022, when the PDM government took the charge, was in worst condition and the country was on the brink of default. PM Shehbaz Sharif pointed out that the PDM government under the leadership of the allied party heads including Muhammad Nawaz Sharif took tough decision and

saved the country from falling into default at the cost of their political gains.

"As a result of our performance of 16 months in the previous tenure and 100 days in current tenure, today, Pakistan is slowly coming out of the crisis and moving towards stability and development," he added.

He said the journey of the economic stability and prosperity was not so easy while the people were looking toward the government for immediate relief.

Due to the government's pro-people policies, he said the inflation hit people will get further

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QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti consulting allied parties and opposition MPs on next financial year's provincial budget. Governor Balochistan Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail is also present

Consultation held on next financial year's provincial budget: Govt. allies & opposition announce full support for formulation of budget & process of good governance and reforms

Members of provincial assembly belonging to treasury and opposition benches appreciate Chief Minister on taking them in confidence on all decisions; Sarfraz Bugti says reforms being brought for correct use of budget resources

Independent Report

QUETTA: In a rare happening and development, almost all the members of Provincial Assembly of Balochistan met and held consultation on the upcoming budget of the province for next financial year 2024-25 here on Saturday.

The members of assembly including the ministers as well as those belonging to government and opposition parties held detailed discussion on the provincial budget and appreciated the Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti on the initiative of consultation about the budget.

The Governor Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail and Speaker Provincial Assembly, Captain (Retd) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai especially participated in the consultation.

Needless to mention

here is that it was first ever consultation of Chief Minister with the members of assembly belonging to ally parties and opposition in the history of the province.

During the course of meeting, the government and coalition parties expressed wholehearted confidence on the Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti.

Besides all the government and opposition members announced wholehearted support in formulation of the provincial budget as well as the process of good governance and reforms.

They appreciated the initiative of Chief Minister in this regard.

The members of assembly said that we are well aware of the economic situation of the country and circumstances of the province.

They said that we appreciate the Chief Minister on taking them in confidence on all decisions.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister said that reforms are being brought for correct use of the resources in budget.

He said that the volume of development projects would be maintained while remaining in the resources.

He mentioned that the projects approved under PC-I have been made part of the development projects.

He reiterated his government to focus on the education and health in the next financial year's budget.

He said that there is a proposal to increase the education budget by 300 percent and health budget by 100 percent.

He said that the tendering process would be started from first week of

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CJP Isa says Imran Khan's audio conversation not leaked from Supreme Court

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: After quizzing the Supreme Court staff, Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa has said that the audio conversation allegedly featuring Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and judges was not leaked from the apex court. The News reported Saturday.

The top judge said he had inquired the IT staff who apprised that there were some voices in the audio which did not belong to the top court.

The conversation between the PTI founder and judges during second hearing of a case pertaining to

the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) amendment was leaked which was widely shared on social media platforms.

Nevertheless, Justice Athar Minallah, asked what the issue was even if the audio was leaked as the dialogues were made during an open court.

It should be noted that during the first hearing of the NAB amendment case, a picture of Imran from Courtroom No 1 was leaked, as the former prime minister appeared in the court via a video link from Adiala Jail. The image quickly went viral on social media.

Pakistan, Türkiye navies hold Turgutreis-9 exercise in Mediterranean



ISLAMABAD (INP): The naval forces of Pakistan and Türkiye have stages Turgutreis-9 exercise in the Eastern Mediterranean to enhance operational readiness and foster cooperation.

PNS Babur visited Aksaz naval base and participated in the exercise. The purpose of the exercise was to further enhance the interoperability and joint operations capability between the two navies.

"Training exercises were conducted in the Eastern Mediterranean with the participation of the TCG Heybeliada corvette, the TCG Doganay submarine, and the PNS Babur corvette of the Pakistan Navy," the Turkish National Defence Ministry said on X.

Hackers target Pakistan's mission at United Nations

UNITED NATIONS (INP): Hackers attacked internet accounts Pakistan's Permanent Mission at the United Nations on Friday night, taking down its official email ID and the YouTube channel.

According to media reports, the unidentified attackers hacked the official email ID which was used by the Mission's Informa-

tion Wing. After hacking, the YouTube channel's name along with banners and content were also changed.

The cyber attack happened at 04:00 pm American time on Friday.

The Pakistan Mission has appealed all to ignore all emails and videos until they retrieve their email account and YouTube channel, the sources added.

President Zardari arrives in Nawabshah

NAWABSHAH (APP): The President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari arrived his home town Nawabshah on Saturday.

Sindh Minister for Jail Ali Hassan Zardari, Commissioner Nawabshah Sajjad Hyder, Deputy Commissioner Shehryar Gul Mahar, SP Nawabshah Tanveer Tunio, Mayor Nawabshah Qazi Muhammad Rasheed Bhatti, Deputy Mayor Nawabshah Mubashir Arain and other were also present at the airport.

President Asif Ali Zardari would celebrate

Balochistan Govt announces Eid holidays from 17 to 19 June

QUETTA (APP): The Balochistan government on Saturday has announced Eid-ul Azha holidays from 17 to 19 June.

According to a circular of the S&GAD Department, all the offices of the Government of Balochistan would remain closed on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha from 17 to 19 June 2024 (Monday to Wednesday).

In this regard, Chief Secretary Balochistan has directed that all Divisional Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners of the province to ensure their presence in their respective divisions and districts

Earthquake jolts many Balochistan districts

QUETTA (INP): A number of Balochistan districts located along the border with Punjab were rattled by a moderate earthquake on Saturday.

According to Pakistan Meteorological Department, the earthquake was measured at 4.2 on the Richter scale and its epicenter was reported to be 177kms northeast of Sibi city.

So far there was no report of any injuries or dam-



SHAHEED BENAZIRABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari arrives at Nawab Shah Airport.

PM extends Eid greetings to Qatari Amir, Sultan of Oman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday held a telephonic conversation with Amir of the State of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani on the auspicious occasion of Eid ul Adha.

The prime minister extended warm greetings and best wishes to the amir, the government, and the brotherly people of Qatar on behalf of the government and people of Pakistan, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The two leaders exchanged views on the importance of Eid ul Adha, which symbolizes sacrifice, compassion, and unity.

"At this joyous moment, both leaders also spoke about the plight of the brave and innocent

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1500 personnels to be deployed as security plan prepared for Eid, says SSP Operations

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Quetta, Muhammad Baloch has informed that the security plan has been prepared for ensuring security on Eidul Azha in Quetta city.

Speaking to media, the SSP Operations said that according to the security plan, some 1500 personnels would be deployed to ensure security in Quetta city.

He said that process of checking is continued on the entry and exit routes of the city.

people of Palestine and urged the international community to redouble peace efforts and ensure an immediate end to violence and bloodshed in the region," it was further added.

The prime minister and the amir reaffirmed the strong bond of friendship and brotherhood between Pakistan and Qatar, rooted in shared values and mutual respect. They discussed ways to further strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation in various fields.

The prime minister expressed his appreciation for Qatar's support and participation with Pakistan, particularly in the areas of trade, investment, and labor.

Meanwhile Prime Minister Muhammad

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18 passengers injured in passenger van accident

UTHAL (APP): 18 passengers, including women and children, were injured on Saturday in Uthal, Lasbela after an overspeeding passenger van lost control and rolled over, a private channel reported.

The passenger van was going from Dadu to Awaran when it arrived at Uthal, near Lasbela the van lost control and rolled over, which resulted in the injuries of as many as 18 passengers, including women and children, according to the rescue official.

All the passengers were shifted to a nearby hospital.

Two lawyers including former president district bar killed in firing by police man

ATTOCK (Online): Two lawyers including former president district bar Attock Israr Ahmad and advocate Zulfiqar Mirza.

The bodies were shifted to district headquarters hospital Attock.

The lawyers in larger number gathered therein.

According to police spokesperson the bodies have been shifted to district headquarters hospital Attock and investigation into incident has been started. Police have registered case which include terrorism clauses too.

He entered into chamber of the lawyer and opened firing. As a result former president district bar association Attock and one lawyer were killed.



QUETTA: A view of traffic jam on Meezan Chowk due to Eid shopping.

Strategy on anvil to end abuse of laws to settle disputes, Masood tells Pakistani-Christians

WASHINGTON (APP): Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Masood Khan, has told Pakistani-American Christians that a strategy was being evolved to effectively stem the abuse of the country's laws for settling disputes and personal feud, and also to promote inter-faith harmony.

"The promotion and protection of the rights of minorities is top priority of the Government of Pakistan," he said during a meeting with over 100 Pakistani American Christians who had gathered to meet him at a church in the Greater Philadelphia Region, according to a press release of the Pakistani embassy.

The Ambassador said

that the Sargodha incident in which Nazir Masih, a 70-year old Christian, was killed was strongly condemned by the government and the civil society. The Police response, he said, was quick and nine members of Masih's family were saved. "Unfortunately, he could not survive." He assured the gathering of a transparent investigation into the incident and that justice would be served in the case. "The concerns of the Christian community will be addressed with full vigour," the ambassador said, assuring the community of the physical and economic well-being of the victim's family in Sargodha.

Christians, he said, are an integral part of the

societal fabric of Pakistan, and their contributions to the nation's development are invaluable.

Masood Khan also underscored the need for mutual respect and understanding among different faiths to build a more harmonious and inclusive society. In this regard, he referred to various legislative and administrative steps, including the law against forced conversion, child marriages and discrimination against any vulnerable group. Jaranwala incident, he recalled, had shocked the entire nation. "The President, Prime Minister, Army Chief, Chief Justice of Pakistan, all travelled to Jaranwala to express solidarity with the victims, and the entire nation had unanimously condemned

that outrageous crime". He also recalled that Ahl-i-Hadees had also offered their mosques to the Christian community to worship till their churches were rebuilt. "That is real Pakistan," he said, adding, "We will continue to follow policy of zero-tolerance for such crimes."

About hate speech, Masood Khan noted that Pakistan would continue to counter and penalize this phenomenon.

He also highlighted the measures being taken to improve police response to such incidents in order to reduce fatalities and enhance community safety. "Better police response is crucial in minimizing casualties and providing timely assistance to those in need."



LAHORE: Law Minister, Azam Nazeer Tarar distributing cheques at Punjab Bar Council

MNA predicts economic relief in upcoming days

ISLAMABAD (APP): Member of National Assembly (MNA) Daniyal Chaudhry on Saturday expressed optimism about the country's future, saying that people will see economic relief in upcoming days. Talking to a private news channel, the MNA emphasized that the federal budget 2024-25 was designed to protect the most vulnerable segments of society.

"We have ensured that those living below the pov-

erty line are safeguarded and will continue to prioritize their welfare," he stated. Chaudhry said the government was confident that Pakistan would soon be on a path to economic stability. "In the coming years, Pakistan will be on the right economic direction," he assured.

He said a key ambition of the current administration was to reduce reliance on international financial assistance.

"Our goal is to bid fare-

well to the IMF permanently and to leave sufficient reserves for the next government, so they do not face the difficulties we are currently experiencing," he explained. Addressing the political climate, the MNA condemned divisive tactics, emphasizing the need for unity. "The politics of detestation and hate always ruins a country," he remarked, calling for a more collaborative and constructive approach to governance.

PCB to reassess central contracts after disappointing T20 World cup performance

LAHORE (INP): Following the national cricket team's dismal performance in the T20 World Cup, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced plans to re-evaluate the central contracts of its players. This move could see several underperforming cricketers demoted or dropped from the central contract list.

Sources indicate that players who fail to deliver in the upcoming phase will face demotion, and many may lose their contracts altogether. Despite being awarded a 3-year contract starting July 1 of last year, the team's poor showing in recent tournaments has prompted this reassessment.

The national team has consistently underperformed, with failures in the Asia Cup, ICC World Cup, and T20 World Cup, as well as unsuccessful tours in Australia and New Zealand. Notably, during Zaka Ashraf's tenure, the players secured salaries increases through pressure tactics, yet the team failed to achieve success in major tournaments.

Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi and top officials convened late into the night to deliberate on the team's lackluster performance and the future of the central contracts. The PCB aims to restructure the remuneration and retention of players to align with performance expectations.

CM Murad terms FY 2024-25 provincial budget as pro-public

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Saturday said that Pakistan People's Party (PPP)-led provincial government had presented the pro-public budget for the next financial year 2024-25.

While addressing a post-budget press conference on the premises of Sindh Assembly, he said that no new schemes had been included in the Provincial Annual Development (ADP) plan.

He said that new schemes of Rs10 bn were for Karachi. The CM said that PPP-led government had constructed small dams in Thar. He said that agriculture production could be witnessed in Thar due to small dams, which had led to prosperity in the area.

Syed Murad Ali Shah said that the people of the province trust in PPP, adding

that PPP had achieved success always better than before in the elections. He said that PPP government would announce 75,000 jobs in education and 50,000 jobs in police.

Murad said that the jobs would be given on merit. He said that a party went to court and filed a petition against jobs, which had become hurdle in the recruitment process.

He said that the total outlay of the provincial budget was Rs 3,056 trillion. He said that the provincial government would make efforts to complete all the schemes.

The chief minister said that Rs 956 billion had been allocated for the development programmes.

He said that the interim provincial government had stopped the development projects of the

elected government. He said that the development budget of Sindh was more than other provinces. He said that the PPP-led government always introduced long term programmes.

The CM said that the minimum wage was proposed Rs 37000.

He said that Sindh government had proposed 30 percent increase in the salaries of government employees of grade 1 to 6, 25 percent for grade 7 to 16 and 22 percent for the grade 17 to 22.

He said that the prices had increased due to inflation and estimate could rise owing to it.

He said that new NFC award should be announced every five years as per the constitution. He further said that PPP had supported the federal government but was not part of it.



FAISALABAD: People arriving at Railway station depart their hometowns to spend Eid ul Azha holidays with their loved ones

Sheikh Maher emphasizing faith...

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People of Iman who perform righteous deeds, that for them alone will be a great reward." [17:9]

Reaffirming the fundamental Islamic belief, Sheikh Maher testified to the oneness of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him. He described the Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him as a mercy to creation, a caller to all that benefits humanity and brings Allah's mercy upon them. Supporting these points from the verses from the Qur'an, he emphasized the Prophet's role and the comprehensive nature of Allah's mercy: "As for My mercy, it encompasses all things in this world. However, I will record My mercy in the hereafter for those who have Taqwa, give Zakah, and have Iman in our signs." [7:156]

Sheikh Maher reiterated the Five Pillars of Islam: the testimony of faith, prayer, Zakah, fasting during Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Hajj. He supported each pillar with corresponding Quranic verses, stressing their importance in a Muslim's life: "The month of Ramadan is the one in which the Qur'an was sent down as guidance for mankind, and as clear evidences that show the correct path and distinguish between right and wrong. Therefore, whoever witnesses the month among you must fast it." [2:185]

Highlighting the Shariah's emphasis on pre-

serving religion, life, intellect, wealth, and honor, Sheikh Maher stressed the importance of these essentials for stability and prosperity. He said violations of these necessities were deemed crimes warranting punishment, underscoring the importance of justice and moral conduct: "Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing." [4:58]

Sheikh Maher encouraged pilgrims to adhere to the regulations of Hajj, emphasizing the significance of sincerity in worship. He recounted the Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him's practices during Hajj, urging pilgrims to emulate his actions, such as combining and shortening prayers and making frequent supplications.

Concluding with heartfelt supplications, Sheikh Maher included prayers for Muslims worldwide, particularly those facing hardships. Special prayers were made for the leadership of Saudi Arabia, thanking them for their efforts in facilitating Hajj.

The sermon ended with a call for forgiveness, safety, and blessings for all Muslims: "O Allah, forgive the Muslim men and women, and the men and women of Iman. Protect them from all evil. Preserve for them their religion, their safety, their lives, their wealth, their minds, and their honor."

Govt. allies & opposition...

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next financial year.

He announced to hold conference of the officers responsible of execution of development projects after Eidul Azha.

He said that the concerned high ups preparing PC-1 are responsible to complete the projects on time maintaining good quality.

He on the occasion announced to establish the center of Gambat medical institute for the lever transplant in Naserabad.

Besides, the anti-narcotics crackdown would also be started after Eid, he added.

He also announced to make the drug addicts rehabilitation centres functional.

Meanwhile, the Provincial Minister for Planning and Development belonging to PPP, Mir Zahoor Buledi said that the reforms in budget would bear positive results.

He said that the pace of work on the development projects has been expedited on the CPEC as well as on the projects of regional and international importance.

The Provincial Minister belonging to PML-N, Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran said that we support the measures taken for ending corruption and establishing good governance in the province.

Moreover, other members participants expressed support for the provincial budget.

They also hailed the initiative of consultation on budget saying that they would support the government in every collective matter of public interest.

Pak Army, FC open social welfare home and boys hostel in Buner

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps North have inaugurated a new Social Welfare Home and Boys Hostel in Buner. The inauguration ceremony, led by Inspector General Frontier Corps Khyber Pakhtunkhwa North, marks a milestone in community support initiatives, says in media reports.

Located in Gagra, the complex features a Women's Skill Center, where over 100 women and girls are currently undergoing training in computer skills. This initiative underscores efforts to enhance local women's participation in the workforce through

practical education. Additionally, the newly constructed hostel accommodates 30 orphan students, providing them with a stable environment to pursue their education without financial burden. The facility aims to ensure uninterrupted learning and support for vulnerable children in the region.

A community school within the complex is now operational, offering free education to 150 students. Beneficiaries also receive complimentary uniforms and stationery, further easing the financial strain on local families.

Lawmakers hail PM's address

LAHORE (APP): Lawmakers on Saturday lauded the address of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to the nation by making practical steps to provide the maximum relief to the people.

The lawmakers, while talking to APP, hailed the address of the PM in which the premier announced an agenda of economics stability and public welfare.

Member National Assembly (MNA) Dr Shaista Khan appreciated the PM's address while hailing the practical efforts to provide the maximum relief to the people.

She also termed the budget 2024-25 a balanced one which reflected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's concern for downtrodden people of the country where salaried class' rights were being protected.

She said the working class as well as pensioners had been given a reasonable raise in their wages which was an appreciable measure. The government is on its best way to reduce a gap between the rich and the poor segments of society," she said, add-

ing that funds approved in the budget and other measures adopted for development projects would open a new era of progress and prosperity.

The PML-N government was making all-out efforts to provide relief to the people by presenting policies and a budget, aligned with public expectations with significant allocations for welfare projects particularly addressing the needs of the working class and government employees, she mentioned.

She said that political stability was indispensable for economic development, adding that the solution of the country's problems lies within the parliament and all political parties have to work together.

MPA Mian Marghoob Ahmad commended the address of the prime minister and appreciated practical efforts to provide the maximum relief to the people.

He said speech of PM Shehbaz Sharif was based on reforms which aimed at improving the overall economic condition of the country.



QUETTA: Quetta Bar Association President, Advocate Qari Rehmatullah along with others addresses to media persons at Quetta Press Club

PM hopes current bailout package...

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ther relief in near future, he said.

"Similarly, the 22 percent interest rate has now come down to 20 percent that would help reducing the interest burden on the country's debts and further promote the domestic investment in the country."

He advised the nation to get united and play role for the country's development and prosperity adding that it should also show a sense of sacrifice and adopt austerity measures in their lifestyles.

PM Shehbaz Sharif cited the Pakistan Public Works Department (PWD) as an example of a government department plagued by corruption, which had a devastating impact on the country's economy. He revealed that a staggering 50% of funds worth over a hundred billions of rupees allocated to development projects are lost to corruption within this department.

"I have decided that those ministries and departments which had become a hub of corruption must have to be eliminated," he said adding that in this regard a ministerial committee had also been formed.

He expressed his commitment to take solid decisions in one and a half month-time. "You will see a big change in this regard in less than two months," he added.

Recently, he said he visited China where the agreements amounting to billions of dollars were signed. Similarly he said, the UAE government had also committed to invest at least \$10 billion in various Pakistan's sectors.

The prime minister had also chalked out a comprehensive strategy to materialize the committed foreign investment in Pakistan's various sectors including mines and minerals, agriculture, information technology and others under Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

"But before that, we have to create such an environment that we should ensure the domestic investment. We have the best financial experts, businessmen, traders and industrialists who could boost the domestic investment and play role in the country's development and prosperity," he said.

He informed that the government was in progress to fully digitize the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) system. The digitization of the FBR will help boosting the tax collection and reducing the departmental corruption," he added.

He said the incapable and corrupt elements in FBR had been side lined while the efficient and honest officers were being encouraged to increase the FBR's efficiency and boost revenue collection which had already shown a significant increase of record 30 percent this year as compared to the last year.

He said yesterday, the government had also approved a massive reduction of electricity tariff for the industrial sector across the country which was expected to provide relief of over Rs 200 billion to the industry. "It will help bring down the manufacturing cost of the goods making them competitive in the global market."

He said the business

community had expressed satisfaction over the budget announced by the federal government for the year 2024-25. He also vowed to minimize the gap between rich and poor, saying that without it the country cannot developed.

In May 2024, he said the overseas Pakistanis had dispatched over \$3 billions of remittances which reflected their trust on the incumbent government.

The prime minister said the government had established a Pakistan Endowment Fund under which the deserving children and students especially from remote areas of the country would be given free education.

He told that the government had embarked upon its five-year national development plan under which tough decisions would be implemented to bring the country out of economic crisis and put it on the path of prosperity.

The government, he said will no more construct industries, nor it will do any business. "We will promote the private sector, facilitate them, and support them so that the private sector could play its due role in the country's development."

He emphasized that the journey of development was not an easy task as there were several elements creating hurdles. However, he believed that this time no such elements would succeed in creating hurdles in the country's journey of development.

He resolved that he would not take any pressure and would take every tough decision that would be in the larger interest of the country.

PM extends Eid greetings to

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Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday held a telephone conversation with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of the Sultanate of Oman to extend warm greetings and best wishes on the auspicious occasion of Eid ul Azha.

The prime minister expressed his heartfelt felicitations to the Sultan, the government, and the people of Oman, and prayed for their well-being, prosperity, and happiness.

Sultan Haitham bin Tariq reciprocated the greetings and best wishes and expressed his appreciation for the prime minister's thoughtful gesture.

On this blessed occasion, both leaders also prayed for peace and unity among the ranks of the Muslim Ummah, PM Of-

face Media Wing said in a press release.

During the conversation, the two leaders reaffirmed the strong bond of friendship and brotherhood between Pakistan and Oman, rooted in shared values and mutual respect.

They also discussed ways to further strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation in various fields.

The two leaders also discussed the regional situation, particularly developments in Palestine and agreed to continue to work together to promote peace, stability, and prosperity in the region and beyond.

The prime minister reiterated his cordial invitation to the Sultan to undertake an official visit to Pakistan at his earliest conven-



QUETTA: People selecting and purchasing shoes from road side vendor stall during eid shopping.

Naqvi pays surprise visit to Karachi Company Police Station

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid a surprise visit to Karachi Company Police Station located in G-9 Markaz Islamabad here on Saturday.

During his visit he was disappointed to see dilapidated condition of the police station.

He observed the front desk, crime computer and FIR branch were located in very small rooms and there was present a sleeping cart in the investigation officer's room. Moreover, there he saw poor sanitation, doors were broken and the rooms of the investigating officers in the basement were in very poor shape.

Federal Interior Minister expressed his anger

over the poor condition of the police station.

He also inspected the basement, ground and first floor of the station.

Interior Minister met with the citizens in the police station and heard their problems and inquired about their cases.

Interior Minister checked the records of the front desk and reviewed the progress on the applications. He directed to process the applications within the stipulated period.

He directed SHO to take appropriate action to resolve the issues of citizens.

On the request of a citizen, he assigned SHO the task of arresting robbery suspects within 7 days.

Interior Minister also inspected the police officers' barracks in the basement.

He said that it was his first visit of any police station in Islamabad but was very disheartened to see the condition of the police station.

He stated that if such is the case with the justice providers then what will happen to the citizens.

He emphasized that all police stations in Islamabad will be upgraded like Punjab. Interior Minister checked the records of the front desk and reviewed the progress on the applications. He directed to process the applications within the stipulated period.

KP Governor meets federal petroleum minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Saturday met with Federal Minister for Petroleum, Musaddiq Malik in Islamabad and discussed various economic and public welfare related issues. They also discussed various aspects of federal budget, issues relating to oil refineries situated in KP and security of oil wells. Member Provincial Assembly, Ahmad Kundi was also present in the meeting, said a release issued here. The Governor also urged federal minister to play role for giving the Federal Excise Duty of oil wells and the problems of gas load shedding.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Musaddiq Malik, Dean of the African group and Ambassador of Morocco Mohamed Karmoune, and heads of missions of the African countries cutting cake to celebrate the Africa Day at a local hotel in the Federal Capital.



ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi distributing gifts among the children during his visit to residence of the family of Shaheed ASI Mohsin Zafar.

IGP Islamabad visits family of Shaheed ASI Mohsin Zafar

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: According to details, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, visited the family of Shaheed ASI Mohsin Zafar at their residence.

The IGP Islamabad met with the widow and children of the martyr ASI. He distributed gifts among the children and inquired about their welfare. He listened to the problems facing the martyr's family and assured them that these issues would be resolved.

The IGP Islamabad highlighted that 62 officers of the Islamabad Police have sacrificed their lives in the line of duty. He emphasized that Islamabad Police never forgets the sacrifices made by its martyrs. "A nation that honors the sacrifices of its martyrs remains resilient," he added. "These brave sons who sacrificed their lives for the peace of the country are a proud asset of Islamabad Police. It is because of their sacrifices that we can sleep peacefully."

Pak Army, FC open social welfare home & boys hostel

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps North have inaugurated a new Social Welfare Home and Boys Hostel in Buner. The inauguration ceremony, led by Inspector General Frontier Corps Khyber Pakhtunkhwa North, marks a milestone in community support initiatives, says in media reports.

Located in Gagra, the complex features a Women's Skill Center, where over 100 women and girls are currently undergoing training in computer skills. This initiative underscores efforts to enhance local women's participation in the workforce through practical education.

Additionally, the newly constructed hostel accommodates 30 orphan students, providing them with a stable environment to pursue their education without financial burden. The facility aims to ensure uninterrupted learning and support for vulnerable children in the region.

IRSA releases 305,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 305,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 281,800 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1444.83 feet and was 46.83 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 117,300 cusecs and 120,000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1182.45 feet, which was 134.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 44,000 cusecs and 65,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 159,900, 153,500, 104,000 and 48,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 81,300 cusecs of water released.

Met office predicts rains on second day of Eid

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Meteorological Department has predicted rains on the second day of Eidul Azha. According to the Met Office, moist currents from the Arabian Gulf are likely to enter the upper and central regions of the country. On June 18, rains are likely to hit different parts of Gilgit, KP, Punjab, Islamabad, Balochistan and Sindh as the moist currents will be entering the western regions of the country.

Weather pundits say Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir are likely to experience heavy rains/thunder showers with gusty winds from 18-22 June.

Heavy rain is also expected at some places in Kashmir. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will have very hot and dry weather during June 16-18.

The Meteorological Department said that between June 18 and June 22, Chitral and Abbottabad are likely to experience intermittent rains at few places with wind and thunderstorm. During June 16 to 18, the weather will remain very hot and dry in most parts of Balochistan. The weather experts said in their report that between June 18 and 22, there was a possibility of rain at some places in Islamabad.



ISLAMABAD: A man selling flax and plastic mat used for sacrificial meat on Eid ul Adha.

ICP chalked out comprehensive security plan for Eid-ul-Adha

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad capital police have chalked out a comprehensive security plan to maintain peace and tranquility in the district during the Eid-ul-Adha, a public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of DIG Islamabad Ali Raza, a comprehensive security plan for Eid Ul Adha has been issued.

According to the security plan, more than 2,000 police personnel including Zonal DPOs, SDPOs will shield Eid prayers to be offered in mosques and imam bargahs which have been categorized according to their sensitivity. Likewise, police personnel will be deployed at Faisal Mosque to provide security cover to the devotees.

All the mosques, imam bargahs, religious

places, public parks and other important places would be provided maximum security, while all security will also be monitored through safe city surveillance cameras and special police squads.

Likewise, the dolphin personnel will be deputed in the city for patrolling at all public and sensitive places while personnel of the special branch will perform their duties during Eid prayer. Similarly, the Islamabad police officials including one SP and DSPs are deployed to maintain traffic flow in the city. The Chief Traffic Officer will monitor all the traffic arrangements. One wheeling will not be allowed and those violating traffic rules will be dealt with iron hands while public places, parks, playgrounds will be kept under strict vigilance and security cover.

3 PTI leaders booked for scuffling with police during protest

ISLAMABAD (INP): Police in Islamabad on Saturday registered a case against all three PTI-backed independent candidates from the federal capital under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

In the FIR registered against Shoaib Shaheen, Amir Mughal and Ali Bukhari, it was stated that during their protest outside the National Press Club, they tried to crash their cars into the policemen in order to kill them.

It was further stated that the PTI workers, carrying guns with them, misbehaved with the police personnel deployed at the site and also had a scuffle with them. They snatched anti-riot kits from them, tore their uniforms and even pointed their guns at them, read the FIR.

Later they while shouting slogans blocked the road. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had on Friday staged a protest outside the National Press Club in Islamabad, leading to multiple arrests by the police. The demonstration, organised by the party to voice various grievances, saw heightened tensions as the law enforcement officials intervened. The Islamabad police arrested PTI Islamabad president Amir Mughal along with eight others workers during the protest.

Delightful Ethiopian food becomes center of attraction at Africa Day celebrations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The delightful Ethiopian food on Saturday took a center stage at the Africa Day celebrations, breeding the interest of most of the participants due to its rich flavours, diversity and cultural significance.

The event, held to commemorate Africa Day 2024 and forge a strong connection between African nations and Pakistan, featured cultural shows, African heritage and diverse cuisines of different countries of Africa. Upon arrival, the guests were accorded a warm welcome by the Dean of the African Group Mohamed Karmoune, Ambassador of Morocco, and other heads of missions from other African countries. Federal Minister for Energy Mussadaq Masood

Islamabad Police committed to resolve public issues on priority; says DIG

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: According to the details, following the special directives of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Ali Rizvi, the DIG Islamabad Islamabad Ali Raza said that the Islamabad Police is committed to resolve public issues on priority. He said this while listening to the complaints and issues of the public as well as police officials during the Khuli Kachehri held at his office. Senior police officers were also present on this occasion.

During the Khuli Kachehri, he listened to the complaints of the citizens and marked their applications to the concerned officers for timely action on merit. He also directed them to send reports to his

Not seeing any dialogue between PTI, Govt: Rashid

ISLAMABAD (INP): I am not seeing dialogue between the PTI and the government," Sheikh Rashid Ahmed has said in an interview with a private TV Channel.

"I am not seeing successful dialogue and neither hopeful for it," former federal minister said. "Initially they were not holding talks, now they will not accept the conditions set for dialogue," he said. "Two months after Eid are crucial, seeing decisive development by August," he further said. "There might be some new to come on surface," he added. "This government is a show off".

He said, Nawaz Sharif has been better than Shehbaz and less corrupt".

Dengue larvae found at 650 locations in ICT

ISLAMABAD (INP): Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon chaired a weekly dengue review meeting in which officials briefed the DC about the detection of dengue larvae at 650 different places in ICT.

DC issued specific directives to the ACs asking them to initiate punitive action against all commercial establishments where positive dengue larvae have been found, in this regard owners of nurseries, under-construction buildings and hotels.

Lawyers Gul joins police investigation in Khawar Manika attack case

ISLAMABAD (Online): Lawyer Usman Gul has joined investigation before police in Khawar Manika attack case.

The court ordered all accused to ensure their presence on next hearing.

Khawar Manika attack case and bail before arrest pleas of PTI lawyers came up for hearing before Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) Islamabad Saturday.

Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra of ATC Islamabad heard the petitions.

Shoaib Shaheen, Fatch Ullah and other accused appeared in the court along

3 PTI leaders booked for scuffling with police during protest

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ISLAMABAD: Citizens taking interest in buying camels at I-14 Cattle market to pay Sunnah Ibrahimy this year, but due to rising inflation, prices of camels are skyrocketing.

PTI's Shoaib, 80 others booked in vandalism case

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad police have registered cases against PTI leader Shoaib Shaheen and 80 others over a violent protest outside the National Press Club.

As per details, the cases were registered against the PTI leaders Amir Mughal, Ali Bukhari and others under the terrorism act and charges of attempted murder, robbery and vandalism.

According to the police, the protesters clashed with the police, snatched weapons, and damaged public property. The police have arrested 10 protesters so far.

The protesters, led by Shoaib Shaheen, Amer Mughal, and Ali Bukhari, had gathered outside the National Press Club to protest against the government.

Last week, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders were booked for allegedly delivering anti-state speeches and inciting people against the state.

28 leaders of the PTI including Sindh President Haleem Adil Sheikh, MNAs Shehryar Afridi, and Shandana Gulzar were booked on the charges of sedition, inciting the public, and spreading chaos.

APHC calls for shutdown on Modi visit to IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (INP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has called for a complete shutdown in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir on Friday (June 21) against the scheduled visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the territory.

According to Kashmir Media Service, call for the strike has been announced by Advocate Abdul Rashid Minhas, the APHC spokesperson in a statement in Srinagar. The strike is aimed at expressing Kashmiris' rejection of all anti-Kashmir agendas of BJP-led Hindutva government of India.

The shutdown, as per APHC spokesman, is also meant to protest against India's illegal occupation, and to reiterate the persistent demand for the settlement of the Kashmir dispute to foster peace in the region. Additionally, the strike emphasizes opposition to ongoing atrocities, illegal detentions, the revocation of Kashmiris' political rights including Article 370 and 35A, dismissals of Kashmiri government employees, and property seizures, he added.

The spokesperson

APHC calls for shutdown on Modi visit to IIOJK

stressed the significance of ensuring the strike's success, urging active participation from the people of the occupied territory.

Furthermore, the APHC condemned Modi's visit, asserting that it seeks to mislead the global community about the real situation in IIOJK, which has witnessed unprecedented brutality under BJP rule.

He pointed out that BJP-led Indian government was not only subjecting the Kashmiris to oppression and state terrorism but also insulting them by revoking their political rights. He said the entire world is well aware of India's double standards. KMS-R

The spokesman stressed that BJP regime's dual approach, involving oppression and atrocities alongside deceptive economic packages, only exacerbates the suffering of Kashmiris.

The APHC has called upon the international community to take prompt action to resolve the Kashmir dispute, cautioning the grave threat it poses to peace and stability in South Asia, and the exacerbation of the suffering of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.



ISLAMABAD: Girls taking interest in an Egyptian stall on Africa Day at a local hotel in the Federal Capital.

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Slow start

As Pakistan marks the first 100 days of this National Assembly's tenure, a report by Fafen reveals a mix of significant shortcomings as well as commendable efforts. The slow legislative progress remains a concern. Despite high attendance, with an average of 230 members per sitting, the NA managed to pass only a single money bill during this period. The delayed formation of standing committees, in violation of procedural rules, further hindered its effectiveness. The proceedings were also marked by points of order consuming 30pc of the time MNAs met, rather than substantive legislative business. Additionally, it wasted valuable time on protests, with lawmakers from the Sunni Ittehad Council and allied independents staging 11 protests on the floor, further detracting from legislative productivity.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's attendance at only two sittings is also a point of concern. This low attendance rate, especially when compared to former premiers Imran Khan and Nawaz Sharif, who attended 29pc and 26pc of the sittings respectively, sends a troubling signal about the executive's commitment to parliamentary engagement. Additionally, the NA's inefficiency in addressing its scheduled business is disturbing. Nearly 24pc of the business remained either deferred or unaddressed, exposing the gap between intent and action. Meanwhile, the disparity in participation is stark, with 49pc of lawmakers remaining inactive, not sponsoring any agenda items or taking part in discussions. Public engagement suffered due to restricted access to the public's gallery, a move detrimental to transparency. The limited availability of livestreams and video recordings of proceedings further restricted public oversight. Despite these shortcomings, the NA made some notable strides. The high attendance rate, with 302 members at its peak, indicates a general commitment to parliamentary duties. This is further evidenced by the enhanced focus on gender responsiveness. The NA established a parliamentary committee on gender mainstreaming and adopted resolutions promoting gender equality and addressing inappropriate language against women lawmakers. The commitment to bipartisanship is another positive aspect. The House allocated nearly 54pc of the time used for points of order to the opposition, fostering an environment of inclusivity amidst polarisation. The PM's maiden speech outlined comprehensive plans for various sectors of government and the economy. These commitments, if followed through, could significantly impact our development trajectory. The participation rate among female MNAs is particularly encouraging, with a higher rate of 61pc compared to their male counterparts at 49pc. So while these first 100 days reflect persistent inefficiencies and areas needing urgent reform, they also highlight promising steps. Moving forward, it is imperative for the NA to build on the positives while addressing its inefficiencies to truly serve the people.

**Samia Liaquat
Ali Khan**

The latest GSMA Mobile Gender Gap report (using 2023 data) shows some positive global developments with regards to women's access to mobile phones and internet usage through these phones. According to the survey (conducted annually) 66 per cent of women from low and middle-income countries now use mobile internet compared to 78pc of men. However, it is key to note that mobile internet users do not necessarily own a phone — any person who has used mobile internet (on their own or someone else's mobile) within the past three months is included. In Pakistan, 86pc of men own a mobile phone compared to 53pc of women, while with regard to mobile internet adoption 53pc of men as compared to 33pc of women have such access. In both cases, the differential between male and female access comes to 38pc (refer to GSMA's report for details on methodology).

A total of 12 low- and middle-income countries

were surveyed for this report — six from Sub-Saharan Africa, four from South Asia and two from Latin America. Pakistan ranks the lowest with regard to the gender divide in mobile phone ownership; 88pc of women own a mobile phone in Nigeria, 75pc in India, and 87pc in Mexico. Ethiopia comes closest to, but still beats Pakistan, with 57pc of women there owning mobiles. Gender gaps in smartphone ownership also vary across survey countries and once again Pakistan's gender gap is the widest at 49pc. But possibly, the most worrying part of the survey is the response to a question based on perception. Respondents were asked whether mobile internet is more important for men or women. In 11 out of 12 countries, a majority (70pc or more) believed it to be of equal importance. In Pakistan, however, 42pc of men and 28pc of women believed it is more important for men.

The digital divide in gender is a reflection of the society we live in. While there appear to be many voices calling for gender inclusion, as a society, we

seem to be keeping the brakes on. Recently, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority unveiled its digital gender inclusion strategy. Developed with the support of Unesco and private sector actors, the strategy which should have been cutting edge in its approach fumbled badly. Problem identification was not an issue — it referred to the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement survey, which reveals that women from marginalised communities face severe barriers to digital technology access, stemming from factors such as limited education, financial constraints, cultural and social restrictions, and a lack of awareness about the advantages of digital technology. It also referred to earlier GSMA surveys which identify the top barriers for women in Pakistan to be difficulties in reading and writing, family disapproval, perception that the internet is not relevant for women, handset cost, safety and security concerns.

Where the strategy revealed a disconnect with reality was in its responses to the said challenges. The

approach to and process of resolving the issues are alarmingly blinkered. While the rhetoric speaks of enhancing digital literacy, improving affordability, investing in relevant content and services, ensuring online safety, improving access, and challenging prevailing social norms, the ways of doing so reflect entrenched patriarchal beliefs. How can one tell? Proposed solutions entail forming a number of committees that are linked to and managed by government ministries, to address challenges. It speaks of getting civil society organisations to communicate messages at the grassroots level to change social norms.

This told me the authors of these solutions were mired in the pre-digital top-down and siloed way of thinking which still governs 99pc of Pakistan. Solutions and approaches referred to have been around for 30 years, and have yet to show impact. Transferring these same old solutions to address the gender digital divide means that we continue with business as usual. Women's digital access and digital freedom

remain under attack, on par with their physical freedom.

Most readers will have seen the recent news where the DG of Immigration and Passports had the audacity to state that divorced women need to have their ex-husband's names on their passports to prove parentage. That blew me away. I am a citizen of this country and an adult — but heaven forbid — because I am a woman I still need to be told how to think, what to think, what to do, how to act and how to dress. As long as the mentality of controlling women guides everything we do (and in Pakistan I have realised that the priority remains the control of women), then such strategies are in themselves anathema to the values they espouse of inclusion and equality.

So where do we go from here. We have to persevere and there are silver linings. The first being that we have a woman as IT minister, who is young and a potential powerhouse, and who can surround herself with the right kinds of minds that

can break the mould. A variety of industry experts and think tanks have already given some guiding thoughts on what needs to be done. This includes mapping the digital ecosystem to understand where other policies or practices are harming women and as a first step to remove these stumbling blocks. It also includes developing programmes for women who may already have some access to mobiles but are hesitant to use them — so digital literacy skills and online safety and security advisory services are critical.

But how to change family disapproval, male control and perceptions of lack of relevance? This requires evolved leadership that can build alliances between public and private sectors, and between men and women to address the male mindset. Whether it is the creation of the Pakistan Single Window, or the Pakistan Digital Stack, one thing is for certain — those responsible for designing and managing such platforms, and use cases, will set the tone for women's digital liberties in the future. -- Courtesy Dawn

Is Ogra listening?

Zofeen T. Ebrahim

I have a confession to make. For the last two years, I had been involved in an illicit activity — getting an LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) cylinder refilled for use at home, every 10 days from a makeshift shop in Karachi's Shirin Jinnah Colony in the Clifton area. Till a few days ago, I found out that this refilling, which is called decanting (the process of filling a cylinder by transferring liquid LPG to it from another cylinder), when done outside an authorised filling plant, is deemed unsafe and, therefore, unlawful by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra).

This is not the only shop. The one-kilometre stretch between Ziauddin Hospital and the Bees Number bus stop is dotted with about eight such shops. In Karachi, there are about 7,000 such khoka-style shops and across Pakistan, some 30,000. In the last four years, the shop owner I go to, says his business has grown. From 70 kg per day, in 2022, he is selling up to 160 kg per

day currently. In the winter, he sells even more. This is because with almost no piped natural gas coming in, people from the more affluent areas in Clifton have turned to using this 'poor man's fuel'. The volume of gas these bangalore owners use, he says, is nearly five times that consumed by those living in the nearby informal settlements.

Along with the surge in the use of LPG, fatal accidents associated with this fuel have also increased. The death toll from the May 30 explosion at a gas-filling shop in the Paretabad neighbourhood in Hyderabad has climbed to 27. After Paretabad, two more explosions occurred in Bhitshah and Ratodero in Sindh.

Things are no better in the other provinces. A report by the Punjab Emergency Service Department cited by Dawn, showed a total of 328 incidents of fire caused by leakage and explosion of LPG cylinders in the last two years in the province.

With Pakistan left with just 18.34 trillion cu-

bic feet of the fuel from its natural gas reserves of 63.248 TCF, output declining at the rate of eight per cent per annum, and with expensive electricity, domestic consumers are relying more and more on LPG as their energy alternative. Last year, the Ogra chairman predicted that from 4,500-5,000 tonnes a day, LPG demand would increase to 15,000 tonnes in the next few years. Punjab is the highest consumer at 60pc, followed by Sindh and Balochistan at 15pc each, and KP, Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK cumulatively consuming 25pc.

After the explosion in Ratodero, the administration did what local administrations in Pakistan do best: it sealed 14 refilling shops that were in the heart of the town. This knee-jerk reaction may lessen the number of casualties but will not prevent accidents from happening.

As businesses go, the increase in LPG demand has led to an increase in the number of LPG-marketing companies operating in Pakistan. From just 11 such companies in 1978, today there are over

315 players distributing gas through as many plants. Incidentally, all have been granted operating licences by Ogra, but without the authority's oversight to ensure compliance with safety codes.

In comparison, India with over 1.4 billion people, and a much greater fuel need, has just 22 such marketing companies. Even Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Vietnam have only a handful each.

One wonders why Pakistan needs over 300 companies plying a hazardous trade that the regulatory authority is clearly unable to manage. Has any feasibility study been done to find out if there is a need for so many companies in the first place? Some suspect Ogra's profit motives. In that case, why is the petroleum ministry not questioning this disorderly expansion?

Across the globe, because of its volatile nature, LPG is stored and transported in specially designed cylinders with utmost care while adhering to international safety protocols. But in Paki-

stan, the story is quite different. In the last six to seven years, over 50 cylinder-manufacturing cottage industry units have sprung up in Gujranwala, violating the SOPs and guidelines issued by Ogra, say experts. The cylinders are put out in the market without having gone through metallurgy analyses or tensile strength tests.

That is not all, there is the question of the quality of fuel used. Of the 40pc LPG imported, a major chunk is Iranian LPG. The one coming via the sea route is carefully tested before it is offloaded, but there is no such checking of the same fuel coming to Gwadar and Taftan by road. Experts say Pakistan should be wary of this sulphur-rich fuel which is carcinogenic when burnt.

Since reliance on LPG will increase, a safety framework needs to be in place. This can include strict regulatory oversight, regular inspections and an ongoing public awareness campaign, regarding this relatively cleaner fuel made of propane and butane, but which is highly flammable and needs delicate handling.

It is time Ogra got its act together and enforced stringent standards for manufacture and the use of safe LPG cylinders. This would mean sealing those units producing cylinders without following design codes. This would only be possible if regular inspections are carried out and heavy penalties imposed on those flouting safety rules. It should be made mandatory for marketing companies to go through regular inspections of their equipment and put their workforce through trainings and refresher courses each time they want to renew their licences to produce, distribute and refill cylinders. Now that more and more people are using LPG, it is important to hold regular public awareness campaigns on the safe handling of LPG cylinders, their maintenance and what to do in case of an explosion. At the same time, people should also be made aware of the faulty cylinders that are available in the market.

Quetta transport

Dr Noman Ahmed

Sections of the press have reported that the federal government is not agreeable to allocating funds for the procurement of 100 buses for Quetta. This is a huge disappointment for Quetta's citizens, who have few choices when it comes to commuting. A recent study on transport and land use reforms in Quetta found that multiple issues impact the city's public transport.

Quetta's population is rapidly increasing as families grow and migration takes place, including from Afghanistan and Iran. For the rich and a section of the middle class, private cars, luxury jeeps, and motorcycles are common modes of transport. For the working classes, migrant workers, women, students and white-collar employees, mobility is an enormous challenge.

As in other Pakistani cities, urban expansion is underway in Quetta. Low-density and low-rise development is common, resulting in considerable distances and high dependence on motorised transport. The city is experiencing growth in the north and south as the eastern and western flanks have a hilly terrain, causing Quetta to expand in a quasi-linear manner. The distances are increasing with the passage of time, making commuting difficult, cumbersome and unaffordable.

Studies by the Urban Unit Lahore, which is currently preparing the Quetta Master Plan, show that several initiatives were undertaken to reform the transport sector, including a Quetta Development Package in 2022, which aimed to expand the road network, improve conditions for pedestrian mobility, and increase street lighting. Some work has been done, though it

must be expedited to meet the prescribed targets. A glance at the vehicle inventory indicates that public transport vehicles are limited in number.

Quetta has 2,363 buses and 2,332 mini-buses, which are the mainstay of public transport. These numbers are insufficient for a city of over two million people. Private cars exceed 17,000, while there are 299,420 motorcycles. School vans and shared vehicles are also part of this transport infrastructure. This shows that a sizeable number of people from the middle- and lower middle-income groups use motorcycles. However, given the poor air quality as a result of vehicle emissions, industries and sand/gravel mining, it would be in Quetta's interest to limit the number and operations of motorcycles and private vehicles on its roads.

It may be noted that Quetta benefits from pleasant climatic conditions for most of the year. Cycling can be promoted as a desirable commuting option. One observes a few cycles — mostly imported (read: smuggled) — from neighbouring countries on the streets. If traffic velocities are effectively managed and some dedicated lanes and facilities extended to cyclists, it can become a popular transport option, especially with greater enforcement of traffic rules to ensure the safety of cyclists.

Some months ago, eight ecofriendly buses, as part of a public-private initiative, began plying from Balochistan University to Balali on a dedicated route. This service changed perspectives, and was appreciated for its convenience, punctuality and dependability. When this writer spoke to a few students of Balochistan University, they not only appreciated

the project but also made a passionate request to government agencies to extend the service to many underserved areas of Quetta, including Hazara Town, Nawan Killi, Sariab Road, Pashtun Bagh, Kuchlak, etc.

Many said that by paying only Rs40 as fare, their journeys had been greatly economised. Female students said that even when they shared auto-rickshaws, the cost would be anywhere between Rs100 and Rs180 per person per trip. Those living along the bus route have truly benefited from the bus service. Female students also demand that dedicated buses for women operate during the morning and evening peak hours. Those who have visited Karachi lately want a bus service on the lines of the pink buses for women there.

It is unfortunate that women from conservative backgrounds often find it difficult to convince their families to allow them to enrol in college or university. Non-availability of decent urban transport translates into the discontinuation of education for many young women in Quetta. Thus increasing the number of buses and having them ply more routes, including in remote locations, will benefit Quetta residents — especially the women. In addition, the authorities would do well to introduce electric vehicles in the city. True, the electric supply system in Quetta is hardly satisfactory, but this must be rectified as rising air pollution, resulting from vehicular emissions, is a big cause of concern. If public buses, and later ordinary cars shift to electric mode, the environment will soon show signs of improvement. -- Courtesy Dawn

Climate debt trap

Jamil Ahmad

Heavy and rising debt has emerged as one of the toughest hurdles for developing nations to address climate change, alleviate poverty, and seek economic development. The total external debt of 118 low- and middle-income countries doubled to \$3.1 trillion in 2022 from \$1.5tr in 2010, rising to about 15 per cent of their GDP.

The amount of finance required to meet their debt payments has also increased. In 2022, developing countries spent \$443 billion to service their public debts, according to the World Bank's International Debt Report. This number will be overtaken soon, as 2024 is projected to be the costliest debt service year yet this century, according to the Debt Relief for Green and Inclusive Recovery, which focuses on the linkages between debt distress and climate change.

Fueled by inflation, high interest rates, energy crisis, and economic uncertainty after Covid-19, the implications of all-time high debt service payments are alarming, shrinking the fiscal space for developing countries to scale up investments in climate and sustainable development. About 50 developing countries are sliding towards default as a major chunk of their income is eaten up by debt, leaving little for basic services.

This liquidity crunch is forcing a situation where climate and environment are relegated to the backburner even though inaction in these two areas poses risks. The inability of developing countries to protect themselves against the vagaries of global warming due to fiscal constraints has ramifications beyond national and regional boundaries. It is risking sustainable devel-

opment and compounding the global crises of poverty, climate, food insecurity, water, clean air, energy, and health. The world cannot afford this.

Can there be a quick fix? What will constitute a lasting solution?

Immediate debt relief is one option, which frees fiscal space for climate and development. Lowering the costs of borrowing and extending long-term loans provide relief.

Debt swaps for climate and nature are also considered a win-win, where creditors are expected to forgo existing debt in return for climate- or nature-related actions and policies. Invoking the 'polluters pay' principle, the V20, a group of 68 climate-vulnerable countries, has proposed imposing carbon tax on major economies to mobilise finances for sustainable investments in their regions.

However, any long-term solution will not be forthcoming without a comprehensive review of the existing sovereign debt mechanisms. Established some 80 years ago, the international financial system is confronted today by challenges posed by climate change; its strict conditionalities make access to funds difficult for those who need it most, and its old mechanisms are struggling to come to the rescue of emerging and developing economies.

UN Secretary General António Guterres has called for a complete overhaul of the global financial architecture, which he describes as morally bankrupt for its failure to respond to new challenges. The Bridgetown Initiative has also tabled a number of proposals to revamp the global financial system.

While the reform process will take time to unfold, the secretary general has suggested the Sustainable Develop-

ment Goals (SDG) stimulus package of \$500bn a year in three priority areas: tackling the high cost of debt and rising risks of debt distress, massively scaling up long-term financing for development through public development banks, including multilateral development banks, and expanding contingency financing for countries in need.

These proposals have generated momentum for discussion in political and technical fora. The UN climate change conferences also deliberate on this issue. This year's spring meetings of the World Bank and IMF focused on how to assist countries address climate change and help the most indebted nations. Last year's Africa Climate Summit and the Asean meetings discussed how to address the financial challenges of climate-vulnerable nations. Additionally, a group of 100 prominent individuals, including former heads of state and government and industrialists, sent an open letter to the G20 leaders in April during the IMF/World Bank spring meetings calling for urgent reforms to the international financial system and actions to address the burden of debt hindering progress on climate and SDGs.

While climate action is now part of economic policymaking nationally, international financial mechanisms are yet to effectively respond to developing nations' funding needs.

Removing the burdensome debt, as the letter says, will allow countries to invest in their people and their future. This must be done without delay. Anything less will blow the climate debt trap into a climate death trap for the world's poor. -- Courtesy Dawn

Responsibility rests with govt to ensure protection of lawyers community: Maryam Nawaz

LAHORE (APP): Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif met a delegation of apex bodies of Bar Councils here on Saturday.

Federal Minister for Law & Justice Azam Nazir Tarar and Ahsan Bhoon were also present.

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif announced to increase a grant for the well-being of lawyers up to rupees one billion.

She also announced plans to establish a specific hall for the women lawyers and a day care centre in the Bar Councils.

On being informed about the murder of two lawyers in Attock, she expressed her deep sense of sorrow, grief and also consoled with the office-bearers of the bar councils over the occurrence of the

murder of two lawyers.

On the direction of CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the police took the accused into custody.

She directed to put the accused on trial in a Special Court under the Bar Council Act and Lawyers Protection Act.

She said, "The responsibility rests with the government to ensure protection of the lawyers community."

The CM accepted the invitation to visit Punjab Bar Council and also expressed her willingness to undertake a visit on the invitations extended by the Presidents of Bahawalpur and Multan Bar Councils.

The chief minister awarded cheques of grant worth rupees 5 crore to the Punjab Bar Council and rupees one crore each for

Bahawalpur and Multan High Court Bar Councils.

It was agreed to restore treatment facilities for the lawyers community in the government hospitals. Maryam Nawaz Sharif said, "The struggle of the lawyers community for the supremacy of the rule of law is praiseworthy. We will extend complete assistance for upholding the rule of law and equal access to justice for a common man. The government will continue to fulfil its administrative responsibilities for enhancing the performance of judicial system and timely provision of justice."

Matters pertaining to strengthening a partnership between the government and lawyers community were discussed in the meeting.



LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif in a group photo with delegation of apex bodies of Bar Councils.

ATC orders for filing challan of cases registered against Qureshi in Lahore

LAHORE (Online): Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) Lahore has ordered to file challan of cases registered in Lahore against Shah Mehmood Qureshi.

Judge Khalid Arshid of ATC has issued written order in respect of cases registered against former Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in Lahore Saturday.

It has been said in the court's order investigating officer should further 30 days physical remand of Shah Mehmood Qureshi. Investigating officer did not present any progress report about former foreign minister in the court.

The court ordered to send Shah Mehmood Qureshi to jail on 14 days judicial remand.

The court wrote in the decision that investigating officer said mobile phone of Shah Mehmood Qureshi has to be recovered.

According to counsel of former foreign minister police had got mobile phone at the time of arrest.

The court while directing to file challan of the cases registered against former foreign minister in Lahore issued orders to send Shah Mehmood Qureshi to jail on judicial remand.

She also took notice of a severe traffic jam at Thokar Niaz Baig yesterday and while expressing her indignation directed not to create such an unpleasant situation in future again.



HYDERABAD: Sindh Governor, Kamran Tessori addressing during cheques distribution to families of Paratabad tragedy at a local hall.

PDMA issued pre-rain, thunderstorms warning in upper districts of KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Saturday issued a pre-rain and thunderstorm warning in the upper districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from next Tuesday to Saturday.

Weak westerly winds are likely to enter the western regions of the country on Tuesday evening as PDMA has issued an alert to all district administrations in view of the weather situation.

The PDMA has issued instructions to the district administration to pre-emptively deal with any untoward incident due to dusty winds, windstorms and thunderstorms. The district administration is

also directed to ensure the availability of small and large machinery to deal with any untoward incident in advance. Farmers should adjust their watering routines according to the weather, especially in wheat harvesting areas.

In case of strong winds, people should stay away from power lines, dilapidated buildings and structures, cyan boards and billboards. Tourists and locals in sensitive highlands are instructed to take precautionary measures to be aware of weather conditions.

In sensitive districts, messages to the district administration should be conveyed to the local population in local languages. In any emergency,



LAHORE: Visitors viewing the displayed items during the Art and Design exhibition (Degree Show 2024) at Johar Town.

LG minister visits cattle markets, inspects facilities

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Local Government (LG), Arshad Ayub Khan on Saturday visited various livestock markets in Mansehra, Abbottabad, Havelian and Haripur tehsils and inspected facilities in the markets.

The provincial minister also visited Town Municipal Offices (TMA) in Mansehra, Abbottabad and Havelian and directed the authorities to ensure cleanliness conditions in villages and cities.

He also cancelled holidays of sanitation staff and sought a complete report of sanitation measures taken on Eid-ul-Adha. He directed the Regional Municipal Officer Hazara to visit the offices of all TMOs of Hazara Division every month and submit their performance report to him.

Minister Sohaib visits villages affected by river

SARGODHA (APP): Provincial Minister for Communication and Works Punjab Sohaib Ahmad Bharth visited the villages of Bhera, affected by massive erosion of the river Jhelum and inspected restoration and repair work on Saturday.

He was accompanied by MNA Mukhtar Ahmad Bharth, Commissioner Sargodha Ajmal Bhatti and officers of Irrigation and Communication and Works departments. The officials briefed the minister about land erosion and revealed that stones were being thrown into the river to stop erosion and save villagers. The minister said that Rs20 million had been allocated initially for repair work. He added that the government would make more arrangements on a permanent basis as the flow of water decreases.

ANF recovers over 182 kg drugs in five operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover over 182 kg drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters' spokesman here on Saturday. He informed that 4 kg ice was recovered from the parcel sent to Kenya from a cargo office in Rawalpindi. 88.8 kg hashish and 700 grams opium were recovered from the possession of an accused arrested in Khushab. 22.8 kg hashish and 2 kg opium were recovered from the possession of an accused along with two women.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah addressing a post-budget press conference at Sindh Assembly building.

CM directs SSWMB to ensure lifting of 154,482 tons of offals, garbage during Eid ul Azha

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has instructed the local bodies, solid waste management and other relevant authorities to ensure that the city of Karachi was kept clean and tidy during Eid ul Azha.

He emphasized the importance of desilting the stormwater drains before the start of the monsoon season.

The meeting was attended by provincial ministers, Sharjeel Memon, Saeed Ghani, Makhdoom Mahboob, Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, SMBR Baquallah Unar,

Home Secretary Iqbal Memon, IG Police Ghulam Nabi Memon, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, provincial secretaries, MD SSWMB Intiaz Shah, Municipal Commissioner KMC, Pak Army, Navy representatives, CEOs Cantonments, Chief MET Dr Sarfraz and Director KE Haris Siddiqui.

MD SSWMB Intiaz Shah briefed the CM that some 113,000 tons of residual waste and municipal solid waste was generated in Karachi on Eid ul Azha last year, which was efficiently and timely lifted and disposed off in trenches at landfill sites.

This year, 2024 Karachi is expected to generate 96782 tons of offals or 154,482 tons of offals and garbage for which 99 collection points have been set up in 246 union committees of the city, he told. As per SSWMB figures, District Central is expected to generate 31,100 tons of offals and garbage followed by East 27050 tons, Korangi 24,285 tons, South 20,303, Keamari 18,349 tons, Malir 16481 tons and West 16,481 tons, he said and added that the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board has also prepared a comprehensive plan to execute the grand operation.

Sanam, Aliya facing consequences of their crimes, misdeeds: Azma

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Information Azma Bokhari has said that Sanam Javeid and Aliya Hamza are facing the consequences of their crimes and misdeeds.

She expressed these views while rebutting Barrister Saif's statement. "They were not told by Maryam Nawaz to attack the Corps Commander House and burn the statues of martyrs. On May 9, a gang of miscreants had gone out to capture the fort but now why are they shedding crocodile tears?" she added. She said that Maryam Nawaz was imprisoned twice for being Nawaz Sharif's daughter. "The facilities available to the founder PTI in jail

were not available to her. Maryam Nawaz neither played a women card nor complained of getting inadequate facilities in jail. The religious touch, womens' card and treachery card are Imran Khan's favourite hobbies," she maintained. "The PTI founder, during his tenure used to hurl threats and committed atrocities and is now begging to get relief. He should keep his threats and accusations to himself. The Sharif family has been witnessing such political jugglery and dramas of the people like you for the last three decades. You have nothing left to impress the masses about the performance of your Chief Minister Ali Amin.

13 dead, 1464 injured in 1358 road accidents in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): At least thirteen persons were killed and 1464 injured in 1358 Road Traffic Crashes (RTCs) in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours. Out of these, 686 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 778 victims with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by rescue medical teams thus reducing the burden of hospitals. Furthermore, the analysis showed that 808 drivers, 56 underage drivers, 153 pedestrians, and 516 passengers were among the victims of road traffic crashes. The statistics show that 267 RTCs were reported in Lahore which affected 293 persons placing the Provincial Capital.



FAISALABAD: Passenger rush at GTS Chowk in the city, as transporters have increased the fares owing to Eid.

Punjab to launch historic air ambulance service on motorways

LAHORE (APP): In a landmark move set to transform emergency medical care, the Punjab government is initiating an air ambulance service on motorways in the province.

This development was hailed as a "golden chapter" in Punjab's history by Provincial Health Ministers Khawaja Salman Rafique and Khawaja Inran Nazir during a meeting at the Project Management Unit (PMU) on Saturday.

Khawaja Salman

Rafique described the air ambulance service as a flagship program of the Punjab government, emphasizing its groundbreaking nature for patient convenience. "For the first time in Punjab's history, we are launching an air ambulance service, ensuring swift medical assistance for critical cases on motorways. Training sessions are underway to equip rescue teams with the latest skills needed for this service," he stated.

Khanzada termed budget public friendly

ATTOCK (APP): Member district monitoring committee and former provincial minister Jahangir Khanzada termed the budget 2024-25 a people friendly, as it reflects Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision for the people's welfare of the country, where the rights of the salaried class were protected.

Talking to newsmen in Hazro here Saturday, he said that despite of the difficult financial situation, the government presented a balanced budget in accordance with public expectations, with significant allocations for welfare projects, particularly, addressing the needs of the working class and government employees.

The federal budget's measures would strengthen the economy and reduce the hardships of weak segments of society, he added and said unlike the previous budgets, the present budget will reduce the gap between the rich and the poor segments of society.

The funds approved in the budget for development projects will open a new era of progress and prosperity, he added.

Deceased sanitary workers' children get Rs1 mn cheque each

SARGODHA (APP): Provincial Minister for Communications Malik Sohaib Ahmed Bharth, visited Bhalwal on Saturday and met with the families of sanitary workers, who had lost their lives.

He expressed sympathies for the precious human lives lost. On behalf of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the minister handed

over cheques for Rs1 million each to the children of all three deceased workers. Two days ago, the Chief Minister had also sent a cheque for Rs3 million to the widows of the each deceased.

The provincial minister instructed to expedite the case of employing the children of the employees, in addition to pensions and other matters.

Governor distributes Rs20m cheques to families of deceased victims of cylinder blast

HYDERABAD (APP): The Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori distributed cheques of Rs2 million to each of the family of 27 children and adults who lost their lives because of May 30 blast in a shop selling Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) in Pareetabad area of Hyderabad.

Speaking at the event, held at a restaurant here on Saturday, the governor informed that the financial support for the bereaved families had been provided by Jafriya Disaster Management Cell (JDC) and Karachi's businessman Ali Shaikhani.

Tessori expressed sadness over the loss of invaluable lives including those of children in the explosion. "There is a need to conduct a comprehensive inquiry of that incident so that by knowing the causes we can prevent the recurrence of such disasters," he underlined.

He said it was the responsibility of the government to take measures to address problems being confronted by the people in their daily lives.

The governor said the supply of gas cylinders happened in many parts of the world but the best possible safety measures were adopted in those countries to prevent explosions of the cylinders. "This is the reason we don't get to see Pareetabad like incidents in those countries," he noted.

Tessori appreciated JDC and Shaikhani for helping the affected families in their time of need and indescribable sorrow. Convener of Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, MQM-P's Ferooz Sattar, JDC's head Zaffar Abbas and Shaikhani were present on the occasion.



LAHORE: US Consul General Kristin K Hawkins meeting with Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan at Governor House.

JJ files contempt of court plea against Mayor Karachi for collecting municipal tax

KARACHI (Online): JJ Karachi has filed contempt of court plea against Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab in Sindh High Court (SHC) for collection of municipal tax through electricity bills.

JJ leader has filed petition in SHC against mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab.

The petition has been filed by opposition leader in Municipal Corporation and JJ leader Saif ul Din advocate through Usman Farooq advocate.

According to petition Mayor Karachi had filed affidavit in regard to constitution of committee and approval of council on the matter of recovery of municipal tax. Mayor Karachi had assured for not making additional reduction.

It was further said in the petition that mayor had assured not to impose tax on consumers using electricity units less than 300. Municipal

commissioner issued notification for constitution of committee on May 31 too. Mayor Karachi was head of the committee and there were 8 other members of committee.

The petitioner said during the first meeting of committee on June 03, the dispute of PTI parliamentary leader came to fore. PPP parliamentary leader assured to hold meeting on next day after resolving the dispute. But on the same day mayor Karachi held meeting with members of PPP and opposition parties were not informed about it.

It was further said in the meeting the matter of municipal tax was not included in agenda in city council meeting on June 10.

Mayor Karachi has clearly violated affidavit filed by him in the court. Mayor Karachi has stopped from the agreement with K-Electric for recovering municipal tax.

Bhai Karam Singh conservation begins

LAHORE (APP): The Walled City Lahore Authority (WCLA), in partnership with the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB), has initiated an extensive conservation project for the historic Bhai Karam Singh Gurudwara.

According to a press release issued here on Saturday, the endeavour, fully funded by ETPB and executed by WCLA, represents a major step in preserving the region's cultural heritage.

Launched in May 2024, the project aims to restore the 19th-century Gurudwara to its original splendour, ensuring its long-term preservation and adaptive reuse.

The conservation project will include restoration efforts to preserve the Gurudwara's original structure, ornate decorations, and intricate carvings.

This will involve structural consolidation, roofing, and flooring

repairs. Damaged lime plaster will be removed and replaced to enhance structural strength, with new lime plaster applied. Pucca Qalai and stucco work will be undertaken based on historical evidence.

Additionally, existing woodwork will be repaired, and new woodwork would be provided where necessary.

Upon completion of the conservation work, the Gurudwara will be opened to the Sikh community and tourists.

This will allow the Sikh community to perform their religious obligations and enable tourists to experience the region's rich cultural heritage.

The adaptive reuse strategy will balance preservation with practical functionality, ensuring the property remains a vibrant cultural hub. The conservation project is expected to be finished within 24 months from its initiation date.



MULTAN: Federal Minister for Housing and Works, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, giving a letter from the Prime Minister to the father of Shaheed Sepoy Asad Ullah at his residence.

Special desk in SIFC to attract foreign investment

ISLAMABAD (INP): The regional and country desks have been established in the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) Secretariat.

Due to the continuous efforts of the Government of Pakistan, given the increasing potential of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), regional and country desks have been established immediately.

These desks will be fully empowered to focus on investment proposals from the respective countries and will be provided with all necessary resources.

Six regional and country desks have been established to focus on the needs of foreign investment, which will be self-sufficient in every way. One desk has been established for China, the Far East and the rest of the world. Another desk has been established for Central Asian countries, Russia, Middle East and Africa.

A separate desk has been set up for Europe, North America and South America, while separate desks will look after investments with Qatar and Kuwait. Two separate desks have been set up for Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The establishment of these desks in the SIFC Secretariat will further speed up the work for foreign investment.



KARACHI: Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) Chairman, Chela Ram Kewlani addresses to media persons during press conference regarding Federal Budget 2024-25, held at Karachi press club

SECP warns public about fraudulent car financing scheme by Etihad Auto Solutions

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has taken cognizance of an unincorporated entity by the name of Etihad Auto Solutions for offering car financing schemes against an advance or down payment of 25% at extremely low markup rates.

The sponsors of Etihad Auto Solutions have also registered another company under the Companies Act, 2017 with a similar name Etihad Auto Solutions (Private) Limited in order to deceive the public, said a new release.

It is falsely claimed that Etihad Auto Solutions (Private) Limited is a non-banking finance company (NBFC) registered with SECP.

SECP hereby warns

the public not to deal with M/s Etihad Auto Solutions (Private) Limited and/or Etihad Auto Solutions in any form or arrangement, as these entities are neither licensed by the SECP as NBFCs nor are they allowed to offer car financing services.

The SECP has already initiated action against M/s Etihad Auto Solutions (Private) Limited and Etihad Auto Solutions, which includes closing down their operations and referring the matter to relevant law enforcement agencies. The general public is once again informed that the "Certificate of Incorporation" of a company merely confirms its registration with SECP and does not allow the company to raise deposits or launch investment schemes.

Fly Jinnah launches non-stop flights between Islamabad, Bahrain

KARACHI (INP): Fly Jinnah, Pakistan's low-cost carrier, has commenced non-stop flights between Islamabad and Bahrain, adding another destination to its rapidly expanding network after the launch of flights to the UAE and Oman, says in media reports.

The carrier commemorated the start of its new route with a pre-departure inaugural ceremony at Islamabad International Airport attended by Fly Jinnah representatives and senior management representing Islamabad International

Airport. The new route will initially start with a frequency of two weekly flights.

Commenting on the launch of the airline's fourth international route, Fly Jinnah's spokesperson said: "Fly Jinnah is proud to mark another milestone with the introduction of our fourth international route, linking Islamabad and Bahrain. This strategic expansion underscores our dedication to offering our valued customers new options for affordable and value-driven air travel domestically and internationally.



ABBOTTABAD: Laborers are busy in unloading bananas from truck to earn their livelihood for support their families, at Fruit and Vegetable Market in Abbottabad.

FESCO updating its feeders' data after every 3 hours to ensure uninterrupted supply

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) is updating data of its all feeders after every three hours to ensure an uninterrupted power supply to its consumers during the summer.

FESCO spokesman Tahir Sheikh said here on Saturday that additional staff had been deputed to resolve public complaints on an urgent basis across

the region. He said that the scorching heat caused numerous problems for the people. However, the FESCO was striving hard to ensure an uninterrupted power supply round the clock. In this connection, it is also updating its feeders' data on its social media accounts so that people could manage their normal activities. This data is also regularly published in electronic.



GILGIT: Deputy Speaker Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Sadia Danish visiting the stall during the Summer Fest 2024 organized by the Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

Govt urged to review proposed normal tax regime for exports

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) has urged the government to review proposed normal tax regime for exporters.

LCCI President Kashif Anwar made this demand while addressing a post budget seminar organised by Lahore Chamber here Saturday. During the seminar, Chartered Accountant Umar Zaheer Mir gave a comprehensive presentation on the budget and answered questions from representatives of all sectors, including exporters.

Former President LCCI Shahid Hassan Sheikh, Executive Committee members Raja Hassan Akhtar, Atiq Rehman, other members, and a significant number of

the business community attended the seminar.

Kashif Anwar added that they are not against proposed taxes on exporters but opposed changing the decades-old tax regime on exports overnight.

He mentioned that previously a one percent final tax on exporters' turnover, which has now been included in the normal tax regime, affecting exports.

He highlighted the importance of taxing agriculture if the government aims to bring everyone into the tax net. He pointed out that the IT sector does not bring a significant portion of its earnings into the country due to some strict policy measures. He argued that the country's current

situation does not warrant imposing more taxes on existing taxpayers. He suggested that the government should use data to bring defaulters into the tax net and then introduce new taxes for current taxpayers.

He emphasized the necessity of expanding the tax base and noted that the Lahore Chamber has supported efforts to broaden the tax net from the beginning. He urged the government to review the agreements made with IPPs and to bring all sectors, including agriculture, that are currently outside the tax net into it.

Chartered Accountant Umar Zaheer Mir provided a detailed presentation on the budget, discussing its various aspects.

Rs.922.5mln fine imposed on 9073 power pilferers

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) caught 9073 power pilferers during last 280 days and imposed a fine of over Rs.922.5 million for stealing electricity in six circles of the company during the ongoing special anti-power theft drive.

FESCO Spokesman Tahir Sheikh said here on Saturday that over 21.1 million detection units were charged and 8881 cases were registered against power theft in various police stations.

The police arrested 6906 pilferers so far including 45 accused during past 24 hours.

FBR to impose 18% sales tax on packaged food items from July

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Amjad Zubair Tawana, has announced that an 18% sales tax will be levied on processed and packaged flour, pulses, rice, sugar, and spices starting from the next financial year. This decision was disclosed during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee chaired by Saleem Mandvi Wali.

The session, which included notable participants such as Industry Representative Sheikh Waqar Ahmed, also considered a proposal to impose the same tax on

locally produced baby milk. Sheikh Waqar emphasized the need for a gradual increase in the sales tax to avoid a sharp rise in baby milk prices.

Chairman FBR highlighted that milk companies have repeatedly raised their prices over the past two years, burdening consumers without contributing to the government's revenue. He noted that these companies have not entered the tax net despite substantial price hikes. Additionally, the complete abolition of zero rating from the next financial year was confirmed.



CHINIOT: Large number of Sacrificial animals available at Cattle Market at Jhang Road but there are no buyers. It is feared that the sacrifice rate will be lower this year.

KPFS&HFA operation continues

PESHAWAR (APP): The operation of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority (KPFS&HFA) continued against adulteration mafia and the food safety team raided a spice factory in Charsadda Road of Peshawar after receiving a tip-off, said the spokesperson of Food Authority here on Saturday.

The team during the raid, seized 1296 kg of bran, 128 liters of harmful dyes, 90 liters of oil from the factory, spokesperson said.

Bran, harmful non-food grade color and salt mixed with it was being used in the preparation of spices, he said. After sealing the factory, 1075 kg of substandard spices were also taken into government custody, spokesperson said. The operation was conducted under the supervision of Assistant Director Abbas, spokesperson said, adding the Citizens.

Prices of sacrificial animals see sharp increase

RAWALPINDI (APP): With just one day left until Eid ul Azha, the prices of sacrificial animals have increased sharply as the purchasing process has gained momentum ahead of Eid.

The traders as well as buyers at cattle sale points have also expressed concern over the high cost of the animals as well as transportation charges.

Cattle traders usually come to Rawalpindi from other parts of the district like Chakwal, Fateh jang, Talagang, Attock, Taxila, Gujar Khan and other cities. People were visiting animal markets to buy or see suitable animals but most of the buyers looked disappointed upon observing the high prices of animals which they said were beyond what they could afford.

The prices of the sacrificial animals have further increased this year as compared to last year

owing to an increase in transportation charges and other associated expenses. Due to the high prices of the sacrificial animals, most people are giving preference to the collective Qurbani ritual instead of sacrificing animals individually on Eid ul Azha.

The residents of various localities have arranged for combined sacrifices with the cooperation of various religious and social organizations including local madrassas and mosques.

A large number of people have also arranged for combined qurbani with their relatives and friends. The prevailing economic crunch leading to limited incomes and livelihood amid steady increases in animal prices in recent years has led to the trend of collective sacrifices, citizen Nadeem said.

Sindh Govt tapping renewable resources to reduce power tariff: CM

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that his government was committed and striving hard to tap renewable resources on the fast track so that the overall basket tariff of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) may be reduced and made more affordable to the general public of the country.

"Apart from reduction in tariffs, renewable energy will also contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for creating a clean, reliable and sustainable environment."

This he said while presiding over a meeting held before the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Sindh Transmission and Dispatch Company

(STDC) of the Sindh Government and its private partners Gul Ahmed Group for laying 60 km long transmission line from Jhimpir to Landhi where the Gul Ahmed Group is installing a 100 MW wind power plant at Jhimpir here at the CM House here Saturday.

Sindh Minister for Energy Nasir Shah briefed the CM that Gul Ahmed Group approached STDC for the construction of a 132kV Transmission Line from their power plant at the Jhimpir wind corridor to the Gul Ahmed Group located in the Landhi area. He said that the Sindh government had already allocated 524 acres and 558 acres of land in the Jhimpir area wind corridor for the purpose.

The STDC will be laying a 60 km long Transmission Line from the Jhimpir power plant,

Thatta to Landhi Area, Karachi to transmit 100 MW wind power. This project is based on Business to Business (B2B). The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2027, he told.

The minister said that both the above projects were environmentally friendly and would promote Green Energy in the province and cheaper sources of electricity. Nasir Shah added that these projects would boost economy through the creation of jobs in Sindh.

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, along with provincial ministers Sharjeel Memon, Nasir Shah, Zulfiqar Shah, Dost Rahimoo and others witnessed the signing ceremony.

Director General STCD Saleem Shaikh, Zain Bashir and Ziad Bashir of Gul Ahmed Group signed the MoU.



FAISALABAD: President, Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Khurram Tariq speaking regarding the budget.

Gold rates decrease by Rs.200 to Rs.241,300 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs. 200 and was sold at Rs. 241,300 on Saturday compared to its sale at Rs. 241,500 on previous day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.171 to Rs. 2,06,876 from Rs. 2,07,047 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs. 1,89,636 from Rs. 1,689,793 the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver and 10 grams silver remained unchanged at Rs 2750 and Rs2357.68.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$9 to \$2,332 from \$2,323 the Association reported.

SNGLP punishes 5 consumers for illegal use of meters

MULTAN (APP): Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGLP) punished five citizens during a crackdown here Saturday.

According to the 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 the five consumers were disconnected for violation of the laws.

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

Pakistan's e-commerce expected to cross \$100bn by 2030: FCCI SVP

FAISALABAD (APP): Pakistan has been ranked 46th in terms of e-commerce as its business volume has crossed \$ 5.2 billion which is expected to cross \$ 100 bn by 2030.

Addressing a training session organized in collaboration with Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) on e-commerce-101, Dr Sajjad Arshad, Senior Vice President (SVP) Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), said that it could play a key role in arresting unemployment in the country. It is more suitable for young educated girls who could achieve economic empowerment by efficiently utilizing e-commerce in addition to earning sustenance for their families and contributing their role in the economic stability of Pakistan, he added.

He mentioned his visit to Ethiopia and said

that its Prime Minister has revolutionized its economy by weeding out the traditional system of bureaucracy. Pakistan should also focus on nation building to put the country on the road to progress and prosperity, he added.

He thanked TDAP for selecting the FCCI for organizing the important session on e-commerce and assured to provide free space for similar events in future. He said that training sessions on e-commerce should be arranged on a monthly basis to provide skills to the maximum number of youths to enter into the arena of e-commerce. Persons linked with e-commerce could have connectivity across the globe with the minimum input cost as there was no need of traditional shops, human resource and direct person to person contacts, he added.

He mentioned his visit to Ethiopia and said

that its Prime Minister has revolutionized its economy by weeding out the traditional system of bureaucracy. Pakistan should also focus on nation building to put the country on the road to progress and prosperity, he added.

He thanked TDAP for selecting the FCCI for organizing the important session on e-commerce and assured to provide free space for similar events in future. He said that training sessions on e-commerce should be arranged on a monthly basis to provide skills to the maximum number of youths to enter into the arena of e-commerce. Persons linked with e-commerce could have connectivity across the globe with the minimum input cost as there was no need of traditional shops, human resource and direct person to person contacts, he added.

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Over Rs 5bn approved fixed for development projects in NA-53

RAWALPINDI (APP): The government has approved Rs. 5 billion 5 crore and 28 lac for the construction and repair of roads in Rawalpindi's constituency NA-53 including that Rs.5 crores for Remodeling project of Kachehri which will get 2 billion rupees.

Rs.1.5 billion have been allocated for the Adiala Road Flyover which is the second much-needed project of Rawalpindi, whereas Rs. 20 crores will be spent for the completion of Mahota-Mohra Dam.

Talking to APP here on Saturday, Member National Assembly (MNA) and Chairman

Coordination Committee, Eng. Raja Qamar ul Islam shared details of development schemes for his constituency approved in the budget for the financial year 2024-25. He informed that Rs.5 crores for Rescue 1122 and Rs. 1.34 crore for completion of Girls College Jhata Hatial will be sanctioned.

He stated that many mega projects of NA 53 have been approved in the budget. With a cost of 2 billion rupees, the road from Khawaja Corporation to Gorakhpur is being constructed and broadened, along with the construction of a flyover at Khawaj Corporation at 1.5 billion.

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that its Prime Minister has revolutionized its economy by weeding out the traditional system of bureaucracy. Pakistan should also focus on nation building to put the country on the road to progress and prosperity, he added.

QUETTA: A view of rush on bazaar stall during eid shopping.

Lebanon village shaken by deadly Israeli strike

Monitoring Desk
JANNATA: Plumes of smoke billowed on Friday over a south Lebanon village after a deadly Israeli strike as shopkeepers swept shattered glass and vowed to stay put despite soaring cross-border violence.

Jannata had been largely spared more than eight months of clashes between Hezbollah fighters and Israeli forces as war rages in Gaza, but the Lebanese village was shaken by an overnight strike that officials say killed two civilians. "We were sitting on the balcony at night, and we felt a rocket fly over our heads. Then the world started to shake," resident Khadija Hussein told AFP. On Friday morning, she found that her clothing store had been damaged in the strike which targeted a building about 200 metres (650 feet) away. "There was shattered glass everywhere" from the shop window, she said.

Lebanon's official National News Agency said a building was hit in Jannata, 20km from the Israeli border. The village's deputy mayor, Hassan Shur, told AFP that two civilians, both women, were killed in a nearby building. Rescuers said at least nine people were wounded in the strike on Jannata, including an infant and two children. An AFP photographer said a three-storey building had been completely destroyed.

The strike, which the Israeli military has not com-

mented on, comes on the heels of a major Hezbollah attack. Hezbollah launched barrages of rockets and drones on Wednesday and Thursday targeting Israeli military sites across the border, after an Israeli strike earlier this week killed a senior commander.

Israeli forces struck Gaza and battled Hamas fighters on Friday as truce efforts failed to make progress. Witnesses reported strikes on the southern city of Rafah and central areas of the Gaza Strip.

At Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the central city of Deir al-Balah, men gathered over the body of an 11-year-old boy who died during a bombardment of nearby Bureij refugee camp.



People offer Friday prayers in front of a destroyed mosque in Khan Younis.

G7 slams China over Russia ties, 'harmful' trade

Monitoring Desk
BARI: G7 leaders meeting in Italy hardened their tone against China, warning Beijing to stop sending weapons components to Russia and play by the rules on trade, according to a draft summit statement.

China has been a key focus of the Group of Seven talks in Puglia, amid souring trade relations between Beijing and the West and concerns that its supplies of equipment to Moscow are fuelling Russia's war in Ukraine. "We call on China to

cease the transfer of dual-use materials, including weapons components and equipment, that are inputs for Russia's defence sector," according to a draft statement seen by AFP.

The Group of Seven also took aim at what it called "dangerous" incursions by China in the South China Sea, where worries of a military escalation between Beijing and its neighbours are rising. "We oppose China's militarisation, and coercive and intimidation activities in the South China Sea," the statement read,

using stronger language than at last year's summit in Japan.

After a first day dominated by Ukraine, US President Joe Biden and the leaders of Japan, France, Germany, Canada, Britain and host country Italy turned their focus to the world's second-largest economy, a superpower whose oversized influence on geopolitics and global trade cannot be underestimated. "G7 countries are on the same page vis-a-vis China," a Japanese government source told AFP.

French left vows 'total break' with Macron's policies

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: France's left put up a united front on Friday, vowing a "total break" with President Emmanuel Macron's policies if it wins polls on June 30 and July 7 that could propel the far right to major gains in parliament.

Far-right figurehead Marine Le Pen, also making a pitch to voters, pledged a "national unity government" if her party takes power in the snap legislative elections.

Macron stunned France on Sunday by calling polls after Le Pen's far-

right National Rally (RN) scored more than double his centrist alliance's result in last week's European elections.

Left-wing outfits, including hard-left France Unbowed (LFI), the Socialist, Communist and Green parties, on Thursday agreed to an election alliance called the New Popular Front.

On Friday, they unveiled a joint manifesto, whose headline measures included jettisoning Macron's controversial immigration and pension reforms if they win the polls.

Thousands to march across France against far right

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: Demonstrations were expected in Paris and several other French cities on Saturday to protest against the far-right National Rally's (RN) surge in last Sunday's European elections.

Police said 350,000 people were expected to march and 21,000 officers had been mobilised after labour unions, student groups and rights groups called for rallies to oppose the anti-immigration, eurosceptic RN ahead of upcoming elections to the French parliament.



Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales, Prince George, Princess Charlotte and Prince Louis attend the Trooping the Colour parade to honour Britain's King Charles on his official birthday in London, Britain.

Kate says she is making good progress with cancer treatment

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: Kate, Britain's Princess of Wales, said on Friday she is making good progress as she undergoes preventative chemotherapy, but is "not out of the woods" ahead of her first public appearance since surgery revealed the presence of cancer. In a personal written message, Kate said she had been "blown away" by the thousands of kind messages from across the globe which followed her cancer announcement in March.

She said they had made a world of difference to her and her husband, heir

to the throne Prince William. "I am making good progress, but as anyone going through chemotherapy will know, there are good days and bad days," her statement said. "On those bad days you feel weak, tired and you have to give in to your body resting. But on the good days, when you feel stronger, you want to make the most of feeling well." Her improved health means she will be able to appear in public for the first time since December when she joined other senior royals for an annual Christmas Day church service.

Italian teacher held in Hungary for alleged assault released after being elected MEP

Monitoring Desk
BUDAPEST: Italian anti-fascist activist Ilaria Salis was released from house arrest in Budapest after she was elected a member of the European Parliament (MEP) at the weekend, her lawyer Gyorgy Magyar told Reuters on Friday.

Members of the European Parliament hold strong legal immunity from prosecution, even if the allegations relate to offences allegedly committed before their election.

The 39-year-old teacher was charged last

year in Hungary with taking part in an anti-fascist group's assaults on people they viewed as far-right activists. Salis and her family have said she is innocent.

The Budapest-Capital Regional Court will ask the European Parliament to suspend Salis' immunity as she is accused of violent crimes and her case is ongoing, the court said in a statement on Friday.

Police have removed the electronic bracelet from Salis' ankle, her lawyer said. Salis' father was expected to arrive in Budapest later on Friday to take her back to Italy, Magyar added.

Putin's peace conditions are Hitler-like, Zelensky says

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Russian President Vladimir Putin promised Friday to "immediately" order a ceasefire in Ukraine and begin negotiations if Kyiv started withdrawing troops from the four regions annexed by Moscow in 2022 and renounced plans to join NATO. Ukraine responded by calling Putin's proposal "manipulative" and "absurd".

Putin's remarks came as Switzerland prepared to host scores of world leaders - but not from Moscow - this weekend to try to

map out first steps toward peace in Ukraine. They also coincided with a meeting of leaders of the Group of Seven leading industrialised nations in Italy and after the US and Ukraine this week also signed a 10-year security agreement that Russian officials, including Putin, denounced as "null and void". Putin blasted the Switzerland conference as "just another ploy to divert everyone's attention, reverse the cause and effect of the Ukrainian crisis (and) set the discussion on the wrong track".

ICC probes cyberattacks in Ukraine as possible war crimes

Monitoring Desk
THE HAGUE: Prosecutors at the International Criminal Court are investigating alleged Russian cyberattacks on Ukrainian civilian infrastructure as possible war crimes, four sources familiar with the case have told Reuters.

It is the first confirmation that attacks in cyberspace are being investigated by international prosecutors, which could lead to arrest warrants if enough evidence is gathered.

The probe is examining attacks on infrastructure that endangered lives by disrupting power and water supplies, cutting connections to emergency responders or knocking out mobile data services that transmit air raid warnings, one official said.

ICC prosecutors are working alongside Ukrainian teams to investigate "cyberattacks committed from the beginning of the full-scale invasion" in February 2022, said the official, who declined to be named because the probe is not finished.

Two other sources close to the ICC prosecutor's office confirmed they were looking into cyberattacks in Ukraine

and said they could go back as far as 2015, the year after Russia's seizure and unilateral annexation of the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine.

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Moscow has previously denied that it carries out cyberattacks, and officials have cast such accusations as attempts to incite anti-Russian sentiment.

Ukraine is collecting evidence to support the ICC prosecutor's investigation.

The ICC prosecutor's office declined to comment on Friday, but has previously said it has jurisdiction to investigate cybercrimes. It has also said it cannot comment on matters related to ongoing investigations. The court has issued four arrest warrants against senior Russian suspects since the beginning of the invasion. These include President Vladimir Putin, suspected of a war crime over the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia. Russia, which is not a member of the ICC, dismissed that decision as "null and void". Ukraine is also not a member, but has granted the ICC jurisdiction to prosecute crimes committed on its territory.

European stocks fall on French political risks

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: European stock indexes dropped on Friday as French assets took a battering from political turmoil, and the cautious mood looked set to continue on Wall Street as investors weighed up the U.S. rates outlook after a week of mixed signals.

President Emmanuel Macron's grip on power weakened after European Parliament elections last weekend. He called a snap election on Sunday, leaving market participants worried that the far right, led by Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National (RN), could win and push a high-spending agenda.

France's finance minister said the country faces the risk of a financial crisis if the far right were to win.

The risk premium on French government bonds surged to its highest since 2017, and the spread between French and German 10-year government bond yields was at 81.5 basis points. "It is justified that some political risk is priced into French assets. Markets

are weighing the risks of an RN government, assuming more fiscal slippage, nationalisation risks, etc.," said Amelie Derambure, Senior Multi-Asset Portfolio Manager at Amundi in Paris.

But Derambure added that the risks are "very different from 2017" because the RN is not talking about taking France out of the European Union.

"That is a major difference," she said. The euro was down 0.4% on the day at \$1.068725, having earlier hit its lowest in more than six weeks. Analysts said the move was due to the risk premium on European markets, following gains by far-right parties in various countries.

World stocks were down 0.2% on the day, having fallen since they hit an all-time high earlier in the week.

Wall Street futures were down, as investors focused on the outlook for US rate cuts. S&P 500 futures were down 0.5% while Nasdaq futures were down 0.3%.

South African foes unite in uneasy coalition

Monitoring Desk
JOHANNESBURG: For the first time since Nelson Mandela negotiated an end to white minority rule, former sworn enemies are coming together in South Africa under a pledge to overcome ideological differences for the good of the nation.

President Cyril Ramaphosa has said the seismic political shift is a response to voters' demands for solutions to deepening woes - from sky-high unemployment and economic torpor to corruption and failing infrastructure.

But the prospect of the African National Congress - the liberation movement that freed the country from apartheid - governing alongside the white-led Democratic Alliance (DA), does not sit well with many Black South Africans.

"The ANC is siding with the enemy of progress," said 25-year-old ANC voter Nathi Mboniswa, who worried his party risked compro-

mising its values in a partnership with the DA.

In a disastrous showing in elections last month, angry voters dismantled the ANC's 30-year-old majority. With little choice but to share power, Ramaphosa announced he would form a government of national unity open to parties across South Africa's diverse political landscape.

But the electoral maths dictated the ANC would need to bring in at least one of its biggest rivals - the business-friendly DA, the radical left Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) or populist uMkhonto we Sizwe.

The latter two refused to participate in a government that included the DA. Following Ramaphosa's re-election by lawmakers on Friday, EFF leader Julius Malema used his allotted time for congratulations to instead blast the tie-up with the DA. "History will judge you and judge you harshly," he said. "This is not a government of national unity."



Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and President-elect Claudia Sheinbaum attend an event with relatives of the more than 60 miners who lost their lives in the Pasta de Conchos coal mine tragedy in February 2006, in Nueva Rosita, Mexico.

US court overturns ban on gun 'bump stocks'

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The US Supreme Court on Friday declared unlawful a federal ban on "bump stock" devices that enable semi-automatic weapons to fire rapidly like machine guns, rejecting yet another firearms restriction - this time one enacted under Republican former president Donald Trump.

The justices, in a 6-3 ruling authored by conservative Justice Clarence Thomas, upheld a lower court's decision siding with Michael Cargill, a gun shop owner and gun rights advocate from Austin, Texas, who challenged the ban by claiming that a US agency improperly interpreted a federal law banning machine guns as extending to bump stocks. The conservative justices were in the majority, with the liberal justices dissenting.

The rule was imposed in 2019 by the Trump administration after the devices were used during a 2017 mass shooting, the

worst in US history, which killed 58 people and left over 500 injured, at a Las Vegas country music festival.

Democratic President Joe Biden, whose administration defended the rule in court, said the decision "strikes down an important gun safety regulation".

"Americans should not have to live in fear of this mass devastation," Biden added, saying he has "used every tool in my administration to stamp out gun violence".

"I call on Congress to ban bump stocks, pass an assault weapon ban and take additional action to save lives - send me a bill and I will sign it immediately," Biden said.

The case centred on how the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), a Justice Department agency, interpreted a law called the National Firearms Act, which defined machine guns as weapons that can "automatically" fire more than

Philippines files UN claim to extended continental shelf in South China Sea

Monitoring Desk
MANILA: The Philippines filed a claim with the U.N. on Saturday to an extended continental shelf (ECS) in the South China Sea, a waterway where it has had increasingly confrontational maritime disputes with China. "Today we secure our future by making a manifestation of our exclusive right to explore and exploit natural resources in our ECS entitlement," Marshall Louis Alferoz, foreign ministry assistant secretary for maritime and ocean affairs, said in a statement. China claims almost the entire South China Sea, including parts claimed by the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia.

Honduras rolls out widespread gang crackdown

Monitoring Desk
TEGUCIGALPA: Honduran authorities announced a slate of measures on Friday intended to cut down on organized crime, including the construction of a new prison, collective trials and terrorist designations for gang members.

President Xiomara Castro said in a late-night television address that security forces should be deployed to "urgently execute interventions across parts of the country with the highest incidences of gang crimes, such as murders for hire, drug and firearm trafficking, extortion, kidnapping and money laundering."

The measures echo the mass trials and "mega-prison" pioneered by President Nayib Bukele in neighboring El Salvador, measures that have drawn ire from rights groups alleging abuses but which have lowered the country's murder rates and won him widespread popularity.

The Dutchman who gets Nike and Lego into wartime Russia's stores

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: Nike stopped selling its sportswear to Russia soon after Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine over two years ago. But that hasn't stopped footballstore.ru, an online sports retailer owned by Russia's Zenit soccer club.

Among the dozens of Nike-branded items the site offers are the U.S. sportswear maker's Phantom GT2 Elite soccer boots, for 29,999 roubles, or around \$330.

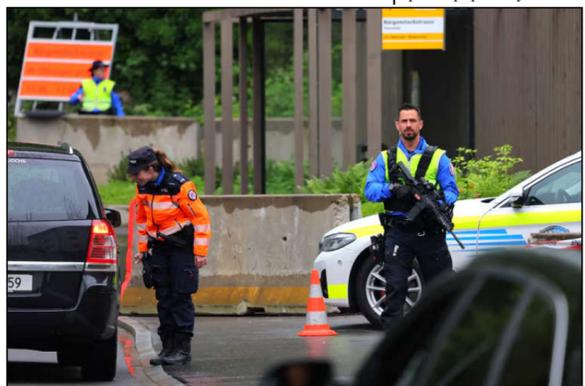
The man who got these shoes to Russia is Wijnand Herinckx, a 40-year-old Dutch citizen who lives in Moscow. Since the conflict began, Herinckx has built a thriving

business that provides Russian consumers with Western goods whose makers have pulled out of Russia.

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"Nike does not want their products to be shipped to Russia," Herinckx told Reuters in a video call from his office on the outskirts of Moscow, where shelves are stacked with boxes of Western branded footwear. But he added: "They are also not telling us not to do it."

Both Nike(NKE.N), opens new tab and Lego told Reuters they have not authorized Herinckx's imports of their goods to Russia.



Police officers stand at a checkpoint to access the Buergenstock Resort ahead of the Summit on Peace in Ukraine, in Stansstad near Lucerne, Switzerland.

We want off-grid solution for electricity supply to zamindars: CM urges federal Govt. to release desired funds for resolving issues of zamindars of Balochistan immediately

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti has categorically stated that we want to give off-grid solution for supply of electricity to zamindars of the province.

He urged the federation to release the desired funds for resolving the issues of zamindars of the province immediately.

He announced that the connections of Quetta Electricity Supply Company

(QESCO) would be disconnected on the feeders after shifting the agricultural tube wells on the solar energy.

The Chief Minister was speaking at the video link meeting with the Federal Minister for Energy, Awaiz Leghari, The Minister of State for Energy Ali Pervez Malik, Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan and other federal and provincial authorities on Saturday.

The meeting was held on the matter of solariza-

tion of agricultural tube wells of the province.

The Provincial Ministers as well as Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan and other concerned high ups of the federal and provincial governments were in attendance at the meeting presided over by the Chief Minister Balochistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister believed that there would be marked reduction in the power theft with conver-

sion of agricultural tube wells on the solar energy.

The expenditures on account of subsidy on agricultural tube wells would also be decreased remarkably besides prevention of electricity theft in the power system after the solarization, he added.

The Chief Minister assured that it would be ensured by the Provincial government that the feeders shifting on the solar energy may not use electricity of QESCO.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti presiding over a meeting through video link regarding shifting of agriculture tubewells on solar energy



GILGIT BALTIKISTAN: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit Baltistan and SAFRON Engr Amir Muqam laying floral wreath at Martyred Subedar Major Muhammad Nazir grave at Skardu, Gilgit Baltistan.

Govt taking measures for welfare of lawyers: Azam Nazir Tarar

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Law, Justice, and Human Rights Senator Azam Nazir Tarar has said that the government is taking revolutionary steps for the welfare of lawyers, emphasizing a heartfelt connection with the bar.

Addressing a check distribution ceremony at the Punjab Bar Council here on Saturday, he highlighted that, in addition to federal government assistance, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has also approved a grant of one billion rupees for the bar.

Azam Nazir Tarar announced the dismissal of cases against lawyers involved in protests, acknowledging their significant role in national politics. He condemned the Attock incident, affirming that the culprits are in custody and

that the federal government would provide all possible financial and legal support to the families of the victims. "Law is a noble profession, and those who uphold the Constitution and law should not engage in vandalism," he said, adding that his bond with the bar is profound and he feels at home among fellow lawyers.

He noted that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has given clear directives for the welfare of the legal community, and the government is committed to implementing revolutionary measures in this regard.

The law minister shared that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has instructed the provision of state-of-the-art facilities and a conducive environment for women lawyers, including

amenities for mothers with young children. Clean seating areas and cafeterias for male lawyers would also be provided to ensure their comfort. He said, "While the government is implementing revolutionary measures for your benefit, you, as legal professionals, also have certain responsibilities." He mentioned that, on the directives of the Chief Minister of Punjab, the 780 cases filed against lawyers during protests have been dismissed.

He praised the legal community's pivotal role in national politics, stressing that those who don the black coat must uphold the dignity of their noble profession and avoid destructive actions. He called for unity within their ranks to ensure justice and strengthen democracy.

E-Office to provide better public services, ensure transparency: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that the main objective behind usage of E-Office system in the federal government's run ministries and departments would provide better services to the public, besides ensuring transparency in the government system.

The prime minister chaired an important review meeting on shifting of federal government's run ministries and departments on E-Office.

The meeting was at-

tended by Minister for Economic Affairs Ahmad Khan Cheema, Minister of State for Information and Technology Shaza Fatima Khawaja, PM's Coordinator Rana Ahsan Afzal and other relevant senior officials, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

During the meeting, the prime minister observed that with this system, billions of rupees in the national exchequer could be saved and the lesser use of paper would also cast positive effects upon environment.

Secretary for action against transporters charging high fares on Eid-ul Azah

QUETTA (APP): Secretary Regional Transport Authority (RTA) said that action would be taken against those transporters charging high fares on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha. He said that on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha, many people would travel to different cities to celebrate Eid with their families and meanwhile some transporter owners would charge high fares from passengers which needed to be rectified.

The Secretary said that the transport hire were being reviewed in view of public convenience and in this regard it was also im-

portant to know the public opinion and if there would be any complaint then it would be acted upon immediately. He said that it has been observed that transporter owners kept unnecessary seats in their vehicles in the temptation of taking more passengers, like minibuses, stick seats were a common practice and this was a very dangerous practice that must be prevented.

The secretary further said that the transport fares were being reviewed under the leadership of police and levies force and if there was any such action which caused inconvenience to the passengers.

No attempt made to pressurise Sindh judiciary: SHC CJ

KARACHI (INP): Commenting on alleged "interference and pressure" on the judiciary, Sindh High Court (SHC) Chief Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi on Saturday "categorically" stated that nobody pressurised him about any case.

"Some attempts were made, but, by the grace of God, no one coerced me," said the SHC chief justice while talking to the media in Karachi. He said this in response to a question posed by a journalist to him.

The chief justice's comments came after six Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges in the recent past wrote a letter to the Supreme Court on March 25, accusing spy agencies of meddling in judicial affairs.

The IHC judges had demanded Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa to convene the judicial convention to consider the mat-

ter of alleged interference of intelligence operatives in the judicial functions or "intimidation" of judges in a manner that undermined the independence of the judiciary. However, Justice Abbasi clarified that a couple of times such efforts were made which were right away dispelled and later they turned out to be a misunderstanding. He said no attempt had been made to pressurise the Sindh's judiciary in any case.

He said the judiciary's independence was reflected through its judgments. He believed that a judge could not be dishonest or corrupt, he said.

The SHC CJ said the transfer of the election tribunal's judge was a normal procedure. The system of judges' transfer was extremely complex, he said.

The SHC CJ statement comes a day after Lahore High Court (LHC)

Chief Justice Malik Shehzad Ahmed Khan said he believed that interference of the establishment in the matters of the judiciary will end soon.

"Interference in the judiciary will have to be fought with faith that it will come to an end," said the LHC chief justice while addressing the opening ceremony of the judicial complex e-courts in Rawalpindi.

Justice Khan said there was an issue of establishment's interference in the judiciary's matters, adding that they receive letters claiming involvement in the judicial affairs.

"The establishment's interference in judiciary will end and my experience [tells me] that it will come to an end," said the judge, assuring that these difficulties will end if there is fear of God.

DC visits areas of Bela Tehsil expected to be effected due to flood

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Deputy Commissioner Lasbela, Ms. Humaira Baloch visited the areas of Bela Tehsil which are expected to be effected due to possible flood.

She reviewed the situation in the areas.

Also present on the occasion were the Additional Deputy Commissioner (General), Siraj Ahmed Baloch, Assistant Commissioner Bela, Ali Shah Abbasi, Tehsildar

Bela, Habibullah Khosa, Naib Tehsildar Bela as well as the representatives of MMD and Building and Roads.

Deputy Commissioner Lasbela directed the Assistant Commissioner Bela to prepare the combined report indicating the flood hit areas in Tehsil Bela.

She also directed to propose the safety measures for protection of the areas from the heavy rains and floods.



QUETTA: People busy in Eid shopping as they are preparing for Eid-ul-Azha coming ahead, at local market in Quetta.

Federal Minister visits residence of Shaheed Asadullah

MULTAN (APP): Federal Minister for Housing and Works Riaz Hussain Pirzada Saturday visited the house of martyr Asadullah, who sacrificed his life for the homeland in Lakki Marwat on June 9, and expressed heartfelt condolences to his father and brother.

Federal Minister informed that he was instructed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to visit the home of Shaheed Asadullah.

He added that PM Shehbaz Sharif himself wanted to visit but due to budget he could not visit.

On behalf of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the Federal Minister also presented a letter to the father of Shaheed Asadullah.

Riaz Hussain Pirzada paid rich tribute to Shaheed Asadullah and stated that our army-men were offering sacrifices at borders to provide a peaceful environment to the nation.

"Due to their supreme services, the masses are able to sleep peacefully at night," said Pirzada.

He strongly criticized the elements who were propagating against the country's institutions.

Salik urges patience, fraternity in Mina

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, extended heartfelt wishes and prayers to Hajj pilgrims worldwide, including Pakistan, urging them to uphold dignity, observe the sanctity of Hajj rituals, practice patience, and foster fraternity upon reaching Mina's tents.

In his message to the hajj pilgrims, he assured them that the ministry and Pakistan Hajj Mission are committed to promptly addressing all issues related to hujjaj/mashair facilities at their tents in Mina, ensuring complete cooperation with your complaints and concerns.

The minister noted that the majority of Pakistani pilgrims are residing peacefully and in an orderly manner.

LHC orders for suspension of SP, ASP for not recovering brother of PTI leader

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) ordered to suspend SP and ASP police for not recovering brother of PTI leader Shahbaz Gill.

Justice Amjad Rafiq has issued 2-page written order in respect of the petition filed against not recovering Ghulam Shabbir brother of Shahbaz Gill.

According to written decision the court ordered on June 10 to recover brother of Shahbaz Gill. ASP could not satisfy the court about recovery of abducted person.

SP Ikhlaq appeared in the court on court's order and showed cold attitude.

Secretary for action against transporters charging high fares on Eid-ul Azah

QUETTA (APP): Secretary Regional Transport Authority (RTA) said that action would be taken against those transporters charging high fares on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha. He said that on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha, many people would travel to different cities to celebrate Eid with their families and meanwhile some transporter owners would charge high fares from passengers which needed to be rectified.

The Secretary said that the transport hire were being reviewed in view of public convenience and in this regard it was also im-

WB okays \$150m for primary education in Punjab

ISLAMABAD (INP): The World Bank has approved \$150 million in funding to enhance education facilities in Pakistan's Punjab province with aim to benefit five million children currently out of school. A spokesperson for the World Bank noted that the funds will specifically address the needs of the seven million children in Punjab who lack access to education. By improving primary educational infrastructure and resources, the World Bank aims to significantly reduce the number of out-of-school children in the province. This development comes on the heels of the World Bank's recent approval of a \$1 billion loan.

Four killed as truck hits rickshaw in Dadu

ISLAMABAD (APP): A speeding truck hits a rickshaw killing four persons and nine were injured including children on Saturday.

According to private news channel, the local police said that the road accident took place near Murad Khoso village of Khairpur Nathanshah at Indus Highway.

"The victims of the traffic mishap were returning to home after visiting a shrine," police officials said.

CS directs Commissioners and Dy. Commissioners to ensure presence in respective areas

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan has directed all the Divisional Directors and Deputy Commissioners to ensure their presence in their respective divisions and districts.

According to an official handout issued here on Saturday, the Chief Secretary directed to remain present in their respective divisions and districts of the province.

It may be mentioned here that the Provincial government has announced public holidays from June 17 to 19, on account of the Eidul Azha.

All the government offices would remain closed in the province.

Arafah Day teaches universal lesson of collectivity, brotherhood, unity to Muslims: Senator Qadir

QUETTA (APP): Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Petroleum, Senator Muhammad Abdul Qadir said that the main message of Hajj, Arafah Day teaches the universal lesson of collectivity, brotherhood and unity to Muslims. In statement issued here on Saturday, he said that the universal message of coexistence was conveyed on Arafah Day.

Senator Muhammad Abdul Qadir said that more than two million pilgrims from all over the world paid Hajj to Waqoof-e-Arafat, Arafah Day teaches the universal lesson of community, brotherhood and unity, Arafah Day instills a sense of empathy among Muslims all over the world.

The main day of Hajj is the Day of Arafah and this day teaches peace and harmony, during Hajj, no Muslim can kill even a fly or a mosquito. Day of Arafah conveys the universal message of coexistence, he said. He said that the act of sacrifice on the occasion of Hajj was actually following Sunnah Ibrahimiyah saying that following Sunnah Ibrahimiyah actually creates a sense of pain for Muslims around the world.

More than 45 thousand Palestinians have been martyred and more than 100,000 have been seriously injured as a result of brutal Israeli bombardment for more than 9 months, he said. He said that all global efforts to stop Israeli attacks were still fail. Muslims around the world need to show a collective protest against Israel's brutality, he said and added, on this blessed occasion of the Day of Arafah, the rulers and people of all the Muslim countries of the world have to register a strong protest, he said.

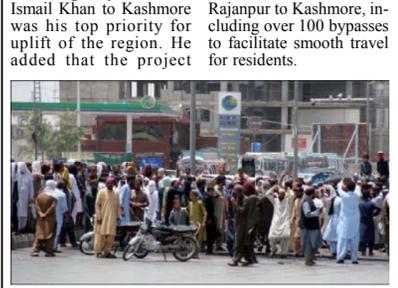
He said that all Muslims must have a diplomatic boycott of Israel and a permanent boycott of all Israeli products adding that this time too, during his sermon, Imam Sahib has made special prayers for the freedom of Palestine and the peace of the lives of the Palestinians.

Govt striving hard to steer country out of crises: Awaiz Leghari

DG KHAN (APP): Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari said on Saturday that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government was making sincere efforts to steer the country out of crises.

He said this while speaking to journalists during the inauguration of an uplift project. Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari stated that there was a zero tolerance policy towards electricity theft. He affirmed the government's commitment to providing maximum relief to the public. He stated that the dualization of Indus Highway from Dera Ismail Khan through Dera Ghaazi Khan and Rajanpur to Kashmir, including over 100 bypasses to facilitate smooth travel for residents.

He stated that road construction for public welfare had always been a PML-N priority. Work on dualization of N-55 Indus Highway will commence in September this year and is expected to be completed by October 2027. This project will stretch from Dera Ismail Khan through Dera Ghaazi Khan and Rajanpur to Kashmir, including over 100 bypasses to facilitate smooth travel for residents.



QUETTA: Residents of Hanna-Urak blocked road and burn tyres as they are holding protest demonstration against the deportation of the former minister's brother to Afghanistan, at Airport road.

Mohsin Naqvi visits FC Fort in Shabqadar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the historic Fort of the Frontier Constabulary in Shabqadar and conducted a detailed inspection of the said fort which was built in 1837.

The minister showed keen interest in the ancient parts of the fort and the chained gates. Apart from this, the minister also saw the statue of former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the rest house which was built in 1837.

It is worth mentioning that Winston Churchill stayed in that rest house in September 1897.

During the reign of Ranjit Singh, the fort was built by Toota Ram, a skilled architect, and named Shankar Garh. In 1839, the Mahmood tribe attacked Shankar Garh Fort and entered the fort by breaking the gates. Ranjit Singh's son,

Sher Singh, conducted an inquiry about the broken gates which was headed by a French general. As a result of the inquiry, the gates were sentenced to be chained for 100 years in 1840. Even after 184 years, the gates remain chained.

Mohsin Naqvi praised the historical significance of the fort and commended it.

He highlighted that FC has rendered invaluable services towards maintaining peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that FC has written stories of bravery in the war against terrorism and the nation is proud of its brave soldiers.

Commandant FC Moazzam Jah Ansari briefed the interior minister about the historical background of the fort and chained gates. Later, Minister Mohsin Naqvi recorded his comments in the visitors' book.



QUETTA: Nawabzada Haji Lashkari Raisani meeting with President Quetta Press Club Abdul Khaliq Rind and General Secretary Banaras Khan