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Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding law & order and security projects in Islamabad, in Lahore.

Citizens' protection, security top priority No tolerance for negligence in maintaining law & order: PM

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif affirmed the protection of Pakistani citizens and foreigners in Pakistan as a paramount state priority during a high-level meeting, held here on Sunday.

The session, which reviewed ongoing security and law-enforcement projects in Islamabad, underscored the government's unwavering commitment to maintaining law and order. The prime minister emphasised that any negligence in safeguarding citizens and upholding the law and order would not be tolerated.

He ordered an inquiry into the delays affecting completion of the Islamabad Model Jail and directed that the project be expedited to meet modern standards. Additionally, he mandated the establishment of a professional training institute and hospital within the jail premises.

In his directives, the prime minister called for consultations with Chinese experts to form the Special Protection Unit in the capital. He also stressed the need for a state-of-the-art forensic lab as part of the Islamabad Safe City initiative. He highlighted the importance of merit-based recruitment and the adoption of advanced technologies across all security projects in Islamabad to align with international standards.

The meeting featured comprehensive briefings on various aspects of Islamabad's security infrastructure, including the Islamabad Model Jail, Islamabad Safe City, the Federal Counter Terrorism Department, and the Special Protection Unit. Updates were also provided on the Islamabad National Facilitation Centres and the K-9 Unit, aimed at enhancing detection of narcotics and explosives.

Aseefa Bhutto criticises budget, calls for unity and relief for masses

PPP MNA slams current economic situation in Pakistan, highlighting record-high inflation and unemployment

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Aseefa Bhutto-Zardari took exception to Budget 2024-25, saying that the people of Pakistan deserved a better financial plan for the next fiscal year as she delivered her maiden speech in the National Assembly on Sunday.

Aseefa was recognised as the first lady earlier this year in March and was later elected as the member of parliament on the Shaheed Benazirabad seat, NA-207, which was vacated by her father, Asif Ali Zardari on becoming the president of Pakistan.

The lower house session convened to debate the budget was marred by ruckus as the government and opposition benches remained divided over a mili-

tary operation, Azm-e-Istehkam to root out terrorism from the country.

In her opening remarks, Aseefa said it was an emotional moment for her as she addressed the assembly for the first time.

"An emotional moment for me today, standing here addressing the house that both my grandparents, my parents and brothers had been part of. I bow my head before Almighty Allah," she said.

Voicing PPP's concerns regarding the federal budget, the lady MNA said that the country found itself in another challenging situation due to deteriorating economic indicators.

She said that the government had presented its budget at a time when the country was facing unprec-

edented employment, inflation, poverty, climate change and other catastrophes.

"We envisioned a budget that addressed the core needs of the people of Pakistan. A budget that did not wish to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. A budget that did not seek to benefit large corporations at the expense of vulnerable of our society," Aseefa added.

She asked if the federal budget met the expectations of masses, adding that the budget 2024-25 did not represent the people of Pakistan.

She said that the budget should have prioritised the welfare of farmers, labourers and the working class, and sought to lessen the gap of wealth and inequality.

APP adds: Legislators in the National Assembly on Sunday appreciated the government for announcing a balanced budget in a difficult economic situation and urged the government to review taxes on the salaried class.

While participating in the budget debate, Pakistan Peoples Party's Dr Mahesh Kumar Malani said that his party always worked for the uplift and welfare of the people.

He thanked his party for awarding him a ticket to contest the elections. He said that the PPP always worked for the protection and welfare of minorities and commended the government for presenting the best budget in a difficult economic situation.

He praised President Asif Ali Zardari, calling him

the king of reconciliation and credited him with the ability to bring the country out of difficult situations by uniting all institutions and political parties.

He also appreciated the government for not imposing taxes on medicines and supported the tax on luxury items.

He highlighted the issues of Tharparkar and urged the federal government to address these problems.

Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal Pakistan's Shahida Akhtar Ali said that the current budget cannot be called people-friendly. She alleged that the budget had been prepared under the directions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and claimed it did not reflect the will of the people.



ISLAMABAD: MNA Aseefa Bhutto-Zardari speaks during National Assembly session

Pakistan, Iran have brotherly relations since independence: Nasir Shah

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Minister for Energy Syed Nasir Hussain Shah has said Pakistan and Iran have brotherly relations and Iran was the first country who recognized Pakistan after the Independence.

He was taking to media persons after concluding an event on the 3rd conference of "Picturesque on Iran" here at a local hotel the other day.

Chairman Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Muhammad Zubair Motiwala, Iranian Consul General Hassan Nourian and others also spoke on the occasion.

The minister said that Pakistan and Iran were rich in culture, religious and health tourism and both countries can get benefits from each other. He also congratulated the Consul General of Iran for organizing a successful conference.

Consul General Hassan Nourian said that Iran and Pakistan, as the two neighbouring countries, held many aspects in common and enjoyed a high level of diplomatic ties, rich historical and cultural similarities and many other

commonalities which could be utilized for deepening the mutual ties.

The Iranian envoy said, in order to enhance tourism industry, it is not out of place to mention that while there was only one official land border between the two countries for more than

the land borders.

The Iranian Consul General said currently, three Iranian airlines, including Iran Air, Taban Air and Mahan Air, have established direct flights from Karachi and Lahore to the cities of Tehran and Mashhad and hoped that



seventy years which was located in Taftan-Mirjava, now with the efforts of the authorities of both countries, two more land borders in Rimdan and Phishin were inaugurated few years ago and as a result, Iran and Pakistan commonly initiated to facilitate the passage of our people by crossing

we will be witnessing an increase in the number of direct flights between the two countries.

He said the initial studies of the sea voyage between the two sides were also carried out by the private sectors and this issue is also in the stage of attracting the investors.



KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit, Excise Taxation and Narcotics Control, Sharjeel Inam Memon addresses to media persons during press conference, in Karachi.

KMC, K-Electric agree to collect MUCT: Mayor Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Sunday said that a fundamental agreement has been reached between the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and K-Electric in light of Municipal Utility Charges and Taxes (MUCT).

A resolution related to the collection of the said tax in accordance with the court's decision has also been approved by the City Council. According to the details, an agreement has been reached to collect the Municipal Utility Charges and Taxes (MUCT) through K-Electric. Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that a committee was formed in this regard, which held regular meetings, and a resolution was sent to the City Council based on the committee's recommendations.

Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab said



that according to the court's decision, it was necessary to provide maximum relief to low-income individuals. The committee suggested that consumers using up to 100 units of electricity would be exempted from this tax, and besides the municipal service charges, K-Electric would not make any direct deductions for any other payments. The City Council has formally approved the resolution regarding Municipal Utility Charges in light of the court orders and the committee's

recommendations. In the meeting with K-Electric, it was agreed to exempt poor or low-income domestic consumers using up to 100 units, while a charge of 20 rupees for 101 to 200 units, 40 rupees for 201 to 300 units, 100 rupees for 301 to 400 units, 125 rupees for 401 to 500 units, 150 rupees for 501 to 600 units, 175 rupees for 601 to 700 units, and 300 rupees for those consuming over 700 units would be applicable under the utility charges.

Swat lynching: Police arrest 23, JIT formed to unearth truth

SWAT/PESHAWAR (INP): Police have arrested 23 persons and shifted them to some undisclosed location for interrogation over the charges of setting a person on fire and torching a police station over the blasphemy accusations, just days after the gruesome murder shocked entire country. The police say raids are being conducted to arrest the other accused involved in the incident which occurred in Madyan—a picturesque town and tehsil headquarter in Swat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

It is located 50 kilometres north of Mingora—the main city of Swat, which is the third largest in the province.

The local police have registered two FIRs in connection with the episode: one covers those who attacked the Madyan Police Station and murdered the person who is nominated, in the second one over the blasphemy charges.

The government has notified formation of joint investigation team (JIT) to unearth the facts related to the incident. It comprises nine-member and is headed by the SP investigation.

People's Bus Service to start in Nawabshah next week; Sharjeel Memon

NAWABSHAH (APP): Sindh Senior Minister for Information, Transport and Excise, Sharjeel Inam Memon has announced the commencement of Peoples Bus Service at Nawabshah from the coming week.

Talking to media here Sunday, the minister said that in order to provide better transport facilities for the people of Sindh, the

service of Peoples Bus Service was being started at Karachi, Larkana, Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas and Shaheed Benazirabad (Nawabshah) from the next week, which would soon be inaugurated.

The people of Nawabshah has expressed their pleasure over the decision of the Sindh Government.

Karachi's 'feels like' temperature reaches 44°C

KARACHI (INP): As hot and humid weather continues to grip various parts of Sindh, Karachiites have been left sweltering after the city's "feels like" temperature reached 44 degrees Celsius on Sunday.

According to the MET Office, the city's temperature was recorded at 37 around 1:30pm. Currently, sea breeze is suspended in the port city. 30pc humidity was recorded in the air.

The Met Office has forecast light rain with thunderstorm in Karachi's outskirts on this evening and today (Sunday).

The weather department has also predicted rainfall in Jamshoro, Sukkur, Larkana,

Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Kashmore and Ghotki districts of Sindh, Sibi and Khuzdar, Barkhan and Zhob in Balochistan, Rawalpindi, Chakwal, Jhelum, Multan in Punjab, Peshawar, Kohat, Mardan and Swat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan regions. The weather officials have forecast the onset of the monsoon season this year in Punjab and Kashmir by June 29 or 30. In Sindh the monsoon is expected to begin in the first week of July.

It is to be mentioned here that the weather experts have predicted above-normal rainfall in Sindh this year.

Rana calls on PM

LAHORE (APP): Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashood Ahmed Sunday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

In the meeting they discussed the progress of the ongoing projects aimed at empowering youth of the country.

They also discussed the overall political situation.

They discussed the progress of ongoing projects aimed at empowering Pakistani youth. The overall political situation of the country was also discussed in the meeting.

Provide much-needed relief to people in budget: Shazia Marri

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader and MNA Shazia Marri has said don't facilitate the PPP in the budget but provide the much needed relief to the people.

Speaking in the National Assembly, she said there were hopes that the people would be provided relief. "We were not taken on-board in budget-making," she said.

The provinces were doing good and they should be allowed to discharge their duties, she added, saying issues would never be resolved if everyone would

be saying that all was good. She highlighted the opposition was silent on the incidents in Sargodha and Swat which was worrisome.

Marri stated the PPP had reservations on budget, especially on developmental projects. The MNA stated the finance minister should be corrected and the salaried class should not be removed.

"The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) should go after the non-taxpayers. Increasing petroleum levy is increasing burden on commoners," Marri concluded.

Ji holds protests against rising electricity costs, budget

LAHORE (PR): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) organized nationwide protest demonstrations on Sunday against the high cost of electricity, prolonged load shedding, and an anti-people budget.

These protests, held at the call of JI Emir Hafiz Naem ur Rehman, marked the commencement of the first phase of a peaceful national resistance movement. Large number of people participated in the rallies across major cities including Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi-Islamabad,

Peshawar, Quetta, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Faisalabad, and Multan, as well as numerous small cities. The demonstrators voiced their discontent with the IMF-imposed budget and rising utility bills, demanding immediate relief. According to reports, JI vice-emir Liaqat Baloch led the protest in Rawalpindi. Speakers at these events criticized the government for what they termed a complete capitulation to the IMF, resulting in a harsh and anti-poor budget.



KARACHI: Activists of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) are holding protest demonstration against prolong electricity load shedding and high inflated electricity bills, at Mehmoodabad area in Karachi

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China's concerns

Rumours had been swirling that China was less than enthusiastic about forging ahead with new CPEC schemes, primarily due to concerns about the security of its people and assets in Pakistan. Some media reports had hinted that little of substance was achieved during the prime minister's tour of China earlier this month, particularly where the CPEC file was concerned, even if official statements from both sides reflected an air of normalcy.

Yet even in official handouts, China's security concerns were unambiguous. For example, in his meeting with Shehbaz Sharif, President Xi Jinping expressed the hope that Pakistan would "create a safe, stable and predictable business environment" that would "guarantee the safety of Chinese" personnel and projects. This same message was delivered to our civil and military elite on Friday in Islamabad by a Chinese official, though in an uncharacteristically direct manner. Liu Jianchao, who heads the International Department of the Communist Party of China, told a forum attended by representatives of Pakistan's mainstream parties that the security situation here was "shaking the confidence of Chinese investors". He also called for improving the business environment, reiterated the necessity for political stability, and stressed a "CPEC-friendly media environment".

Though the message may have been delivered by a relatively mid-level official, in the Chinese system where the Communist Party is the state, it is safe to assume that the contents of the statement were endorsed by the highest authorities in Beijing. Moreover, the fact that China chose a public forum to air its concerns speaks of the seriousness Beijing attaches to security. China's concerns should not be taken lightly by Pakistan's ruling elite, especially at a time when the country needs all the foreign investment it can get. Regarding the official's observation about a "CPEC-friendly media environment", more transparency about the long-term plans for the project can clear the air. Both governments should let the media and the people know the facts about the economic corridor, as opacity will only fuel rumours.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has no option but to neutralise the militant threat to Chinese and all other foreign projects in the country. The prime minister hinted at this during Saturday's apex committee meeting. If foreign workers are killed in terrorist attacks, and multimillion-dollar projects targeted, no overseas party will want to invest in this country. Regarding Chinese concerns about a conducive business environment and political stability, again Pakistan has little choice but to improve its performance in both areas. Foreign investors need to be facilitated and bottlenecks have to be eliminated. Furthermore, all local stakeholders must pledge to honour commitments with foreign parties, and not derail them when governments change. It is only in Pakistan's interest to heed most of China's advice.

Muhammad Amir Rana

Pakistan is unable to follow the path of Saudi Arabia or Indonesia, which are progressing slowly and steadily with religious reforms. Both countries present contrasting visions of religious reform but are ultimately opening up their respective societies, enhancing governance, and improving their international image.

In both countries, the leadership promotes religious reforms. In Saudi Arabia, the reform process is slower than the one in Indonesia, primarily because Indonesian civil society supports the state's efforts in this direction.

In contrast, the Pakistani leadership needs to be more aware of the importance of religious reforms in navigating a changing world. Instead, it aligns itself with extremist forces, gaining ideological and political power while empowering these groups to use violence against communal and sectarian minorities.

The nexus between the power or ruling elite and the establishment in

Pakistan is not new. It has been studied extensively by local and international scholars. However, what remains constant is the elite's appeasement of extremists and their inclination to use them for political purposes. While social factors have contributed to the extremist mindset in Pakistan, the power elite's actions are often criminal, eroding the societal fabric.

Incidents like the one in Madyan, Swat, lynchings in Punjab, and vandalism against the Ahmadi community during Eid indicate that extremism in society is reaching dangerous levels. Taking the law into one's own hands has become standard practice for charged mobs and activists of radical religious groups. The administration hardly attempts to restrain them, and simply registers cases against the suspects.

People with clout then come forward and help the suspects and their families financially and with legal aid. Once they are released, they become heroes in their communities. This has become the norm after every blasphemy-related tragedy that involves lynchings and mob violence.

A majoritarian mindset is at play, with the state a mere spectator. In Punjab and urban Sindh, the Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan is fanning the flames of extremism. Although other religiously motivated actors have acted in a similar fashion in the past, the TLP's rhetoric is now so powerful that they cannot compete.

The TLP has transformed itself into an extensive phenomenon, reflecting a mindset shared by perhaps most of society. This majority is religiously and politically disillusioned, falling into the trap of political populism and growing increasingly resentful of the power elites. Paradoxically, state institutions endorse this majority mindset and side with the extremists when issues of religious sentiment arise.

The common man cannot fully comprehend the dichotomy of the state, and his anger against the latter is increasing. However, the TLP and other religious parties have their constituencies in the semi-urban areas, and among low-income groups, while a significant portion of the middle class, too, exhibits the same

mindset. While the middle class tends to avoid direct involvement in violence, they fully support the actions of the fanatics. These radical religious groups draw their core strength from middle-class youth, who serve as keyboard warriors, developing political strategies and evolving organisational tactics.

The power elites do not feel much threat from the core leadership of extremist groups because they maintain open communication channels and often interact with them. They are more concerned about the keyboard warriors and seek to regulate virtual spaces. They have similar fears about social media activists from populist political parties and nationalist political parties in the peripheries.

The power elites believe that more control over social media, building firewalls, and tightening legal regulations will eliminate dissent in all forms. Social media is merely a medium, but despite reviewing its policies and practices vis-à-vis extremism and extremist parties, the establishment is more interested in controlling it.

Apart from controlling social media spaces, the state has taken cosmetic policy measures to deal with extremism. Until the power elites do not end their appeasement approach and address the core issue and encourage religious reforms as Saudi Arabia and Indonesia are doing, extremism will continue to shape an ugly majoritarian mindset.

The whole system seems paralysed once it encounters the challenge of religiously motivated mob violence. The federal and provincial governments avoid even commenting on such incidents and leave it to the establishment and local administrations to deal with such cases on their own. The governments are scared that their involvement in such cases would divert the public's anger towards them. This attitude encourages the extremists.

The police and lower judiciary deal with such cases carelessly and, in many cases, leave loopholes in their decisions that ultimately benefit the culprits. The higher judiciary has taken such issues more seriously, but its reviews and decisions have failed to trigger any major change in society. The state

institutions need to break the support system of the extremists. Apart from the power elites' appeasement policy and the system's flaws in dealing with the menace, two major sources of support are encouraging the people to take the law into their own hands.

First is the influential class. Mostly, they are local businessmen and lawyers who provide financial and legal aid to the criminals on behalf of the rest of the community. Second are the mosque imams, who are directly or indirectly affiliated with the extremist groups; once such incidents happen, they invite these groups for their help. The extremist groups take this as an opportunity to increase their influence and take command of matters ranging from negotiating with the administration to dealing with legal matters. The extremist groups have lawyers' wings, influencing the courts during the proceedings. In such a society, where the state and society nurture and protect an infrastructure of extremism, who can hope for change? Religious reforms in Pakistan will remain a dream for a long time. --

Courtesy Dawn

Extremism gathering pace

tolerant, equal opportunity vision/mission.

Just look at the state of the minorities in our blighted, albeit beloved, land. We have attacked, maimed, murdered/lynched Christians at will, often, as investigations show, on the flimsiest of pretexts, mostly fabricated, and torched their hearths and homes and bombed and burnt their churches.

We have witnessed unprovoked as one after another, young Hindu girls have been kidnapped and then forcibly converted and married to their abductor. We have seen the cries of the families and the victims themselves falling on deaf ears.

We have not been content with constitutionally declaring a particular community not part of our faith, and a minority, but continue to target its members. Assassinations of this community's members, destruction of its properties and a bar on its practice of its beliefs and rituals even within its own four walls are routine.

Let alone minorities, who have virtually no

rights in practical terms here, even numerically smaller Muslim sects have not been spared and continue to see their members murdered or locked up again on highly suspect charges.

The blasphemy law has been weaponised and is enforced by mobs and not police and/or the courts of law. An allegation is more than enough reason for mobs of a particular bent of mind to take the law into their own hands and act as judge, jury, and executioner.

The second part of the Quaid's speech said: "You may belong to any religion, caste or creed — that has nothing to do with the business of the State." But from the Objectives Resolution on, there are many examples of the state making faith its business.

When the state makes your faith and mine its business, groups representing vested interests take it upon themselves to decide the interpretation of the faith. Not just this, enforcement of their interpretation of the law (basically mob rule)

becomes the order of the day.

The state is culpable in more ways than one. Over the years, it has weaponised faith as a force multiplier to be used to meet external challenges — in other words, to fight wars which weren't of any benefit to us but brought riches and immense powers to those at the helm. For example, the establishment is often rightly cited for its role in fomenting extremism for its foreign policy goals, which it has also called 'national security imperatives'. It is for all to judge what national security has gained from these policies. The policies continue to draw the blood of our civilians and soldiers.

The heartache is indescribable. Former dictator Gen Ziaul Haq may have been the worst culprit in promoting extremism and intolerance for narrow personal gains but, tragically, he isn't the only one. Since he was killed 36 years ago, which military leader has tried to stem the rot in any meaningful manner? None, if I am honest.

You would be right in asking about the role of the civilian leaders. Well, the mention of 'national security' and any Pakistani will instinctively tell you that the civilian leadership is wholly marginal to decision-making in the area. We saw what Nawaz Sharif had to face when he raised the issue of militant surrogates with the establishment leaders.

Perhaps, having learnt a lesson from Mr Sharif's fate, his son-in-law is openly promoting intolerance and is involved in the beatification of a convicted murderer who was executed when his own father-in-law was in government. Oh yes, hypocrisy is an integral part of those who use faith for their political ends.

Pakistani authorities have failed repeatedly to implement the judgements of our own superior courts. One need only see two judgements. The first was authored by chief justice Tassaduq Husain Jilani in 2014 after the church bombing in Peshawar and the second by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah just two years ago.

You can google both and read the details but they quite categorically spell out the rights of the minorities and how to safeguard their freedoms from bigoted behaviour. Tragically, the fate of these two judgements, as has been repeatedly evidenced in our country, has been no different to the fate of the so-called National Action Plan.

The 20-point NAP, which was approved by the widest consensus possible as parliament and the military leader both signed off on it has been largely gathering dust somewhere, while the scourge of terrorism is once again exacting a heavy toll of life of our civilians and young soldiers.

We are a nuclear power and have often declared our desire to be among the leading economies of the region in the future. But let's not be delusional. Extremism is eating away at our very roots. If we remain helpless in tackling it head-on, our fate will be no different to that of other basket cases around the world.

Past lives

Muna Khan

In the mid-1980s, our English teacher at school in Kuwait got us to read *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton. It's set in rural America in the 1960s and tells the story about two rival gangs, the Greasers and the Socs, and a murder that causes fissures in their town. It is told by a teenage boy who sees himself as an outsider, and although it is about a time none of us private school children had any connection to, nor were we familiar with the topics in the book — financial hardship, class divide, violence — the book had a significant impact on us. We all felt like outsiders in some way or the other; in between children and adults, not in charge of our lives, and most importantly, not understood.

And then our teacher showed us the movie. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola in 1983, the cast featured Tom Cruise, Patrick Swayze, Matt Dillon, Emilio Estevez, C. Thomas Howell, Ralph Macchio, Diane Lane and even Hinton in a cameo. This is before any of the aforementioned were household names. The film resonated just as much, and we would watch it, and a host of other movies by filmmakers like John Hughes — described by a film critic as "the philosopher of adolescence" — on VHS tapes, on repeat. It did not matter that the cast of *The Breakfast Club* or *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, for example, was white and set exclusively in the US but the stories they told resonated with teenagers around the world. I'd watch these films maybe a year or two after they were released but it was

a different time; we had no choice but to wait, there were no spoiler-style reviews, no social media posts, no influencers.

I was reminded of this while watching *Brats*, a documentary by actor Andrew McCarthy, a member of the *Brat Pack*, a term coined by a New York Magazine writer who reported on a new crop of Hollywood actors that were making films for a new teenage audience going to the cinema. However, the term would haunt this group who felt it impacted their careers as it portrayed them in a negative light. This is what McCarthy attempts to reconcile in this documentary, which proved a walk down memory lane. It was also a reminder of the age-old question: why does nostalgia hit so hard?

These films in the mid-1980s tapped into a new audience by portraying friendship in a way we hadn't seen before; usually relationships were about romance, falling in or out of love. *The Breakfast Club*, for example, portrayed high school stereotypes but made it about unexpected alliances. These films explored what it meant to be young, not understood by elders, and the complexities of adolescence, a phenomenon I experienced in Kuwait as did friends in other cities. In today's parlance, we felt 'seen' in these movies.

"When they see the 1980s films they're thinking of their own youth," McCarthy tells Rob Lowe in *Brats*. "And we are the avatars of that moment in their life and that is a beautiful thing."

Nostalgia is a beautiful thing. One study showed that inducing nostalgia in a group saw

positive feelings, "including higher self-esteem and an increase in the feeling of being loved and protected by others". Another study showed that nostalgia can counteract the effects of loneliness. Nostalgia could provide a link "between our past and present selves" — that "it may provide us with a positive view of the past and this could help to give us a greater sense of continuity and meaning to our lives".

But nostalgia, which is personal, is, my response to a period of time, can prove dangerous when it is framed as a collective experience. The right-wing longs for good ole' times before immigrants caused all the problems they believe their country faces. Pakistanis, too, want to go back to the time of their favoured political/army leader when things were rosy. Pray tell when was that time? Our nostalgia for this mythical time has created more harm than good.

There is no going back because the world is different. These 1980s films can't be made today because audiences will not forgive racism, xenophobia, misogyny on screen. And that's a good thing. Every generation has a pack and I suspect that influencers play a bigger role than actors, but I don't think they command the staying power the *Brat Pack* does, 40 years on, wars and all.

The 1985 film *St Elmo's Fire* may still be able to speak to generations today because it tackles a subject that we can relate to: the challenge of navigating the real world — especially after college. And it is about friendship, about showing up for each other — something I hope endures the test of time. -- Courtesy Dawn

War in Ukraine

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

The leaders of G7, a grouping of seven highly industrialised countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and US), met in Apulia, Italy, on June 13-15, 2024. It was the 50th session of the group, which has been meeting regularly since 1975, essentially to preserve the existing world order predicated on multilateralism, universal human rights, liberal democracy, and free trade.

At Apulia, too, the G7 leaders called for strengthening the rules-based international order. They also decided to provide \$50 billion to Ukraine, support the two-state solution for Israel-Palestine, and bolster ties with nations in Africa and the Indo-Pacific. The summit also discussed food security, climate resilience, irregular migration, financial stability, and AI's benefits and risks.

The G7's emphasis on maintaining the rules-based world order seems to be a desperate attempt to preserve the West's dominance. However, realities are changing. The existing world order is in disarray. New power centres have emerged, including several major economies in Asia, which would have to be accommodated in the evolving multipolar world order. A rising China, re-surgent Russia, and groupings like BRICS and SCO have changed the complexion of the West-dominated international order.

Several other challenges are also impacting our world. Firstly, a growing trend towards unilateralism has replaced the spirit of globalism and multilateralism in addressing issues of global concern. Ironically, it was US military action in Iraq in 2003, in disregard of the UN Security Council, that

initiated the weakening of the rules-based international order. This was followed by Russia's unilateral invasion of Crimea and India's unprovoked strike on Balakot. Secondly, the UN has been sidelined in major international conflicts. Thirdly, universal human rights have been politicised, and double standards are in full display.

China, the world's second largest economy, was not invited to the summit even though it has been at the forefront of defending the rules-based international order. The geopolitics of major power competition trumps the spirit of working together even as China repeatedly calls for reviving the spirit of globalism to address conflict and underdevelopment.

The G7 has often been criticised for trying to impose its will on the rest of the world. This concern was partly addressed by the formation of G20, a group of 19 leading economies, as well as the EU and African Union. However, the two groups have not only further marginalised the UN-led universally accepted multilateralism but also given rise to the trend towards multi-alignment.

The Apulia summit announced \$50bn for Ukraine by leveraging immobilised Russian sovereign assets. This was G7's response to President Vladimir Putin, who had recently set terms for starting peace talks: Ukraine to withdraw from the regions partially occupied by Russia (Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia) and give up its efforts to join Nato. Putin denounced the G7 decision to use Russian assets to finance the Ukraine war, and remarked that "... theft is still theft and will not go unpunished".

In the Ukraine peace summit in Switzerland,

that followed the G7 meeting, several important countries including India, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia and the UAE chose not to sign the joint communiqué. Most of them felt that peace in Ukraine required the presence of all stakeholders, especially Russia, for meaningful negotiations. South Africa noted with surprise that Israel, which has just been accused of war crimes by a UN-backed commission, had been invited to the summit. China did not attend, nor did Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the crisis in Ukraine remains stale-mated. Legally, Ukraine is right because its territorial integrity has been violated. Politically, Russia has a point that it was provoked by Nato's constant expansion eastwards, despite the assurances given to it earlier. What argument is more relevant for Pakistan and what consideration should guide its policy on Ukraine?

Indeed, Ukraine is a victim of foreign aggression and, therefore, deserves Pakistan's support. Pakistan should never accept such aggression, having itself faced it when India intervened militarily in East Pakistan.

It must uphold the principle of territorial integrity for Ukraine. However, global geopolitics has pushed Russia towards China, Pakistan's close friend. This places Pakistan in an awkward position: legally it must support Ukraine, whose territorial integrity was violated. Politically, it should stay neutral given that Russia was provoked by Nato, and is now leaning towards China, which itself is fighting strategic coercion by the US-led West.

As ever, it is principles versus geopolitics. -- Courtesy Dawn

Qaiser Sheikh says: Pakistan's economy experiencing significant growth, positioning as burgeoning land of opportunities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh on Sunday said that Pakistan's economy was experiencing significant growth, positioning it as a burgeoning land of opportunities.

Addressing the National Assembly on an optimistic outlook of Pakistan's economic trajectory during the budget debate, the minister credited the incumbent government's prudent economic policies for a notable reduction in the inflation rate. He emphasized that these policies had fostered economic stability, contributing to a more favourable environment for both local and international

investors. Highlighting another economic triumph, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh pointed out the stabilization of Pakistani Rupee. This achievement, he said, is pivotal in bolstering economic confidence and reducing import costs, supporting broader economic growth.

Qaiser proposed enhanced support for Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs), advocating their critical role in fostering economic stability nationwide. He said SMEs are the backbone of economy, driving innovation, employment, and inclusive growth.

On national security, the federal minister stressed the necessity of a

well-funded defence budget. "It is necessary to allocate a good portion of funds keeping in view the critical condition on the borders," he added.

Qaiser also shed light on the positive developments in the agriculture sector and said that the agricultural advancements were vital for food security, rural development and export potential, making this sector a cornerstone of economic policy.

In his concluding remarks, Qaiser urged the government to intensify its focus on information technology and agriculture as both sectors have great potential to meet the demands of modern-day life.



ISLAMABAD: Vendors selling vegetables at Sector G-10 Sunday Bazaar in the Federal Capital.

PFC demands strict action against timber mafia

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) has urged the government to take decisive action against the timber mafia to protect the wealth of country's forests.

Highlighting the rampant illegal cutting of trees and logging, the PFC Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq told media men here Sunday that the timber mafia is a threat to Pakistan's ecological balance and emphasised the urgent need for strict enforcement of forestry laws and the implementation of sustainable practices. He urged the government to strengthen the legal framework governing forestry and enhance the capacity of enforcement agencies to effectively combat illegal logging.

This includes

deploying more forest rangers, utilizing modern surveillance technology; and imposing major penalties on those found guilty of illegal timber activities, he added. Moreover, the council called for the promotion of reforestation and afforestation initiatives to restore degraded areas and improve forest cover. He said through concerted efforts and strong policy interventions, Pakistan can protect its natural heritage and promote sustainable development.

The furniture sector, which relies heavily on timber, is also affected by the activities of the timber mafia. Illegal logging disrupts the supply chain, inflates raw material costs, and undermines the efforts of businesses committed to sustainable practices.

Pakistan earns \$2.593b from IT services' export in 10 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned US\$2.593 billion by providing different Information Technology (IT) services to various countries during the first ten months of the current fiscal year 2023-24.

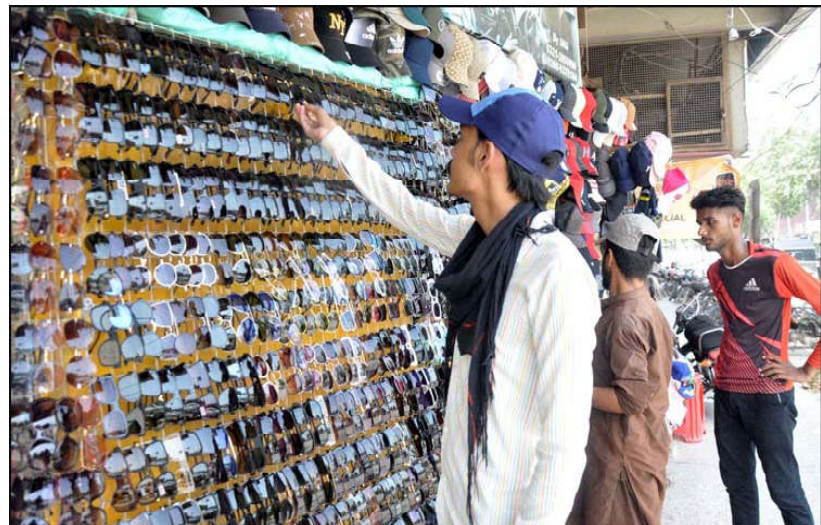
This shows a growth of 20.41 per cent as compared with the US\$2.135 billion earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the last fiscal year 2022-23, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

During the months under review, the export of computer services grew by 24.55 per cent as it surged from US\$1.729 billion last year to US\$2.153 billion during July-April 2023-24. Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed an increase of 10.80 per cent, from US\$633.107 million to US\$701.456 million this

year while the export of hardware consultancy services also surged by 19.24 per cent, from US\$4.793 million to US\$5.715 million. The export of repair and maintenance services however decreased by 45.69 per cent from US\$2.762 million to US\$1.502 million whereas the export and imports of computer software services surged by 6.77 per cent, from \$489.737 million to \$522.909 million.

Meanwhile, the export of information services during the months under review witnessed an increase of 105.90 per cent from US\$4.240 million to US\$8.730 million.

Among the information services, the exports of news agency services surged by 167.58 per cent, from US\$2.505 million to US\$6.730 million whereas the exports of other information-related services increased by 16.83 per cent.



HYDERABAD: People are busy in buying sunglasses to protect themselves from scorching sun during hot weather in city, at a shop in Hyderabad.



KARACHI: Jamat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi Chief, Munam Zafar addresses during the protest demonstration against prolong electricity load shedding and high inflated electricity bills, at Mehmoodabad area in Karachi.

Malik for enhanced connectivity among SAARC countries

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former president Iftekhar Ali Malik said here Sunday that South Asia, a region of two billion people, has great potentials to emerge like the EU (European Union) and ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations).

He added that South Asia countries must also capitalise their proximity that would definitely gear up overall socio-economic development in the region. He expressed these views while talking to a delegation of leading industrialists led by Engineer Mian Sultan Mahmood Arain, Secretary General of the Federation of Engineering Institutions

of South and Central Asia.

Malik said Pakistan has much to offer, especially to smaller countries and even making inroads through the use of drone technology in agriculture. If Pak made footballs are used in World Cup matches then why not in South Asia, he argued and said that trade among SAARC countries can reduce abject poverty in the region. Setting aside mistrust, businesses need to be less cumbersome and transport and digital connectivity must be improved.

He cited that Pakistan has yet another advantage of CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) which can offer regional economic

connectivity to all South Asia with Central Asian countries via Pakistan. There is an emerging trend in parts of South Asia to forge ties without Pakistan and Afghanistan which must be averted in the larger interests of the region, he added.

The former SAARC-CCI president said, this region can progress and grow significantly if the policy of "non-interference and non-hegemonic" is strictly adhered to. He emphasized for regional connectivity and economic integration in South Asia as world becomes increasingly interconnected, fostering collaboration among neighboring nations.

Efforts underway to launch Seed balls experiment converts Khanpur forest into dense plantation

PESHAWAR (APP): The experiment of throwing seed balls in unattended reserve forests of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has helped in rehabilitation of forest in Khanpur area, converting the area into dense plantation.

"The seed balls were thrown in reserved forests of Khan Pure area at Haripur district in September 2023 and results are very encouraging," informed

Tariq Shah, a high ranking official of Forest department here Sunday.

The Forest Department had distributed around 500,000 seed balls in unattended hilly forests of Haripur out of which majority of seeds grew into plants and finally as trees, Tariq shared with APP.

He said this is for the first time seed balls experiment was undertaken by Forest Department.



ISLAMABAD: Labours busy cutting sugarcane at fruit market.

Kisan Card to be issued soon: Saho

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Secretary Agriculture, Government of Punjab, Iftekhar Ali Saho has said that the provincial government was going to issue Kisan Card soon to facilitate farmers.

According to a press release issued here, he said that Chief Minister Punjab, Mariam Nawaz had vowed to make farmers of Punjab province prosperous.

He said that a huge fund of Rs 150 billion had been allocated for issuance of Kisan Card across Punjab province. "All is set to issue

Kisan Card after allocation of a huge sum of Rs 150 billion by the Punjab government," he said.

He said that under the scheme introduced by the Punjab government, 0.5 million farmers would get interest-free loans to purchase agricultural machinery and to use the money in agriculture field.

"A sum of Rs 30 billion had been earmarked for execution of the 'Green Tractor Scheme' as well as nine billion rupees for 'Agriculture Scheme', respectively," he said.

MEPCO nabs 109 electricity pilferers

MULTAN (APP): The Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO) claimed to have nabbed 109 electricity pilferers during a special campaign on Sunday.

According to official sources, the MEPCO administration got 70 cases registered against the pilferers. Similarly, fine amounting Rs 7.1 million was also imposed on the pilferers. The official sources added that the raids were conducted in DG Khan, Multan, Rahim Yar Khan, Sahiwal, Vehari, Bahawalnagar.

Ailing soil calls for chemicals-free farming practices

MULTAN (APP): Excessive and disproportionate use of chemical pesticides in agriculture damages the soil fertility, causes deficiency in essential nutrients resulting in decreased crop productivity and consequently affecting human health.

Since our farmers started using fertilizers in place of organic matter and pesticides to kill worms, insects and other harmful creatures, massive use of these chemicals showed to have adverse effects on our land as well as our health.

South Punjab is one of important regions in this respect being a food basket for the country where the agriculturalists have warned of fast decreasing

land fertility due to excessive use of chemicals and pesticides; and lack of nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, zinc and some other ingredients. Similarly, the use of organic matter is also than one percent. "Excessive use of pesticides is causing significant harm to soil fertility as pesticides reduce microbial diversity in the soil," stated Dr Muhammad Mubeen, Associate Professor of Biotechnology at COMSATS University Vehari. "The micro-organisms are of vital importance for nutrient cycle and decomposition of organic matter and its decline could affect soil's overall health."

The total cultivation land in Pakistan is about 79.61 million hectare, out of which 20.63 million hectare is in Punjab. But, in recent decades, the dilemma of housing societies and use of harmful ingredients has badly affected our agricultural land.

"Chemical residue in soil changes its pH value and excessive pesticides break down soil aggregates, lead to compaction and reduces aeration and water infiltration," informed Dr Alamgir Khan, Coordinator Faculty of Biosystem, Engineering and Technology at Nawaz Sharif University of Agriculture, Multan.

"Nutrient imbalance caused by pesticide is another challenge for farmers as pesticides interfere with nutrient

SCO launches software technology parks in AJK

MUZAFFARABAD (APP): The Special Communication Organization (SCO), a telecom company working in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), is taking cutting edge initiatives in the region to facilitate people besides providing modern telecommunication facilities. Under the program, two software technology parks have been established at Muzaffarabad and Rawalakot while a freelancing hub has been launched at Haveli district.

The initiative introduces cutting-edge technologies to local youth for development of niche skills and promotion of business enabling environment in IT domain. Major General Umar Ahmad Shah HI (M), DG SCO, officiated the opening, emphasizing SCO's resolve to transform region's IT landscape.

The newly established IT setup at Haveli joins six other

Freelancing Hubs in AJK, located in Kel, Kamhora Ghanbir along the Line of Control (LoC), Hattian, Goharabad, Khairawal, and Koniyan. All these hubs aim at harnessing IT potential of youth and are connected with major / district level IT hubs for mutual sharing of expertise, skill development and mentoring.

During the inauguration on Sunday, Director General SCO Major General Umar Ahmad Shah HI (M), DG SCO, officiated the inauguration. He remarked, "The launch of Freelancing Hub in Haveli demonstrates SCO's commitment to empower local youth. It provides state-of-the-art IT facilities in a very conducive environment, with an objective to unlock youth potential."

The purpose is to promote a digitally inclusive society. I anticipate that these facilities will contribute towards fostering IT skills and boosting local economy."

Secretary General of SAARC meets Secretary General of ACD

KATHMANDU (PR): His Excellency the Secretary General of SAARC Ambassador Md. Golam Sarwar held a meeting today with the Secretary General of Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) H.E. Dr. Pornchai

Organization was created with a vision of promoting the welfare of nearly two billion people in the region and improving their quality of life through collective actions and joint initiatives. South Asia being the most populous region in Asia



Danvivathana on the sidelines of the Nineteenth Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Member States of Asia Cooperation Dialogue being held in Tehran, Iran. During the meeting, the Dignitaries exchanged views on enhancing cooperation and collaboration between the two regional Organizations in the areas of mutual interests and priorities.

Sharing about the SAARC, the Secretary General stated that the

and in the world, any advancement in the living standard of the people there would contribute significantly to the success of larger global development initiatives, the Secretary General stated. He further added that since most of the SAARC Member States are also the ACD Members and the priorities areas of the two Organizations coincide, there is an ample scope for working together.

After wheat and flour, price of rice also drops

LAHORE (APP): After wheat and flour, the price of rice has also dropped by almost Rs60 per kg during the last two months.

The price are decreasing due to effective policies of the Punjab government.

Different types of rice have become cheaper by Rs. 50 to Rs. 60 per kg. In the market, Super Kainat rice is selling for Rs 280 per kg with a decrease of Rs 60, while Super Basmati rice is selling for Rs 210 per kg, which is cheaper by Rs 50 per kg. Likewise, Super

Kernal rice is available for Rs 270 per kg with a decrease of Rs 50.

According to rice market sources, the price of rice has been decreasing continuously for the last two months, the artificial inflation in the market has been eliminated due to better rice harvest in the last season and effective government policies.

Market sources said that the price of rice in the market was likely to remain at the current level for the next few weeks.



MULTAN: Farmers are preparing land for the next crop using the old method.

availability and leads to deficiencies or toxicities," he said. "Water retention capacity and soil structure degradation due to chemicals usage are other major factors impacting plant growth."

Progressive Farmer Laique Shiekhna of Nawabpur, a mangoes rich area, was also critical of using chemical pesticide. "Pesticides not only damage crops, soil health and environment but also affect lives of farmers."

Urging the government to limit use of chemical pesticides, he said, the world was shifting to organic farming by using bio-pesticides. "Therefore, we also need to promote bio-pesticides for killing harmful insects and pests as well as

safeguarding our labor and land from harmful effects of poisonous insecticides and pesticides and cut farming expenses to benefit farmers economically."

Laiq said the farmers can themselves prepare bio-pesticides by soaking leaves of "neem tree, aak, Kortuma, tobacco and moringa" in five-liter water for 10 hours and then boil. After boiling, about 120-liter water should be mixed in the solution and then sprayed. Secretary Agriculture South Punjab Saqib Ateel has mentioned to efforts for improving organic farming in the region. "We are working on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) model for last three years and the department has achieved satisfactory results."

Investigation committee formed over Sukkur barrage's damage doors

Agriculture Department establishes Water Emergency Cell in Hyderabad to guide farmers

Independent Report
SUKKUR: The construction of a dam at gates 47 and 44 of the Sukkur Barrage is progressing rapidly as large sandbags are being used to stop the water flow and restore the canal system. The swift action follows the washing away of gate 47 and the damage to gate 44 four days ago. The Irrigation authorities have accelerated the work, employing heavy lifting to place the sandbags effectively. Once the dam construction is complete, the canal system is expected to be fully restored, ensuring the continued functionality of the barrage, said irrigation authorities on Sunday. Meanwhile, Sindh Irrigation Minister, Jam Khan

Shoro has formed a five member investigation committee on the damage of Sukkur Barrage doors. The committee will submit a report to Irrigation Minister and the Provincial Secretary Irrigation within a month. The Irrigation Department said the committee should explain the reasons for the incident and assign responsible officers. It is mentioned over here that Sukkur Barrage have seven off-taking canals, out of which three - Dadu Canal, Rice Canal and Northwestern Canal (Kirthar), are situated on the right bank of the river, and four, Khairpur Feeder West, Rohri Canal, Khairpur Feeder East and Nara Canal, are at the left bank. Meanwhile on the instructions of Minister of

Agriculture Sardar Muhammad Bux Mahar, the Agriculture Department has established a Water Emergency Cell in Hyderabad to guide farmers. Focal persons have been appointed in all six divisions of Sindh to report on water scarcity, crop damage, and other issues. A total of 32 focal persons have been appointed at various levels. Sukkur Barrage irrigates about 70% of Sindh's agricultural land. Farmers can contact the Water Emergency Cell's focal person, Rasool Bux Khaskheli, at 0229200968 for guidance. Focal persons have also been appointed for Lower Sindh, Upper Sindh, Hyderabad, Shaheed Benazirabad, Karachi, Larkana, and Mirpur Khas."



SUKKUR: Repair work of Sukkur Barrage Gate No. 47 and 44 is in progress, these gates have been severely damaged by water flow, in Sukkur

PPP defends Operation Azm-e-Istehkam

LAHORE (APP): Raja Pervaz Ashraf, former speaker National Assembly and President of Pakistan People's Party Central Punjab, declared on Sunday that the PPP would thwart any attempts to make the 'Operation Azm-e-Istehkam' controversial. Addressing a press conference here, he emphasised that Parliament remains the supreme institution and called on

the opposition to respect its sanctity. He criticised the opposition for what he described as an undemocratic stance on key national issues. He reiterated the importance of Operation Azm-e-Istehkam in the fight against extremism and terrorism, underscoring its necessity for national security. He noted, "Parliament is a forum for positive debate, not for personal attacks and slander."

Ashrafi condemns Swat incident, calls for speedy trial of similar cases

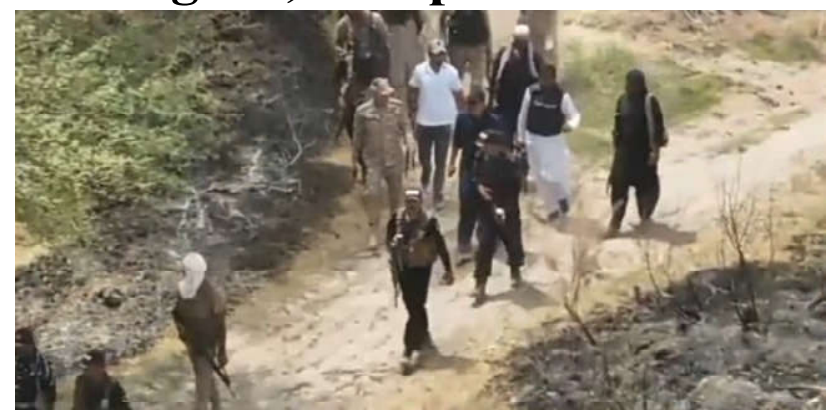
LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) Chairman Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi has called for joint efforts to eliminate extremism from the country and to educate society. Addressing a press conference at Lahore Press Club here on Sunday, he strongly condemned the tragic incident of Swat, emphasising that neither Islamic laws nor the Constitution and laws of Pakistan permit the killing or immolation of any human being. Ashrafi expressed his deep regret over the increasing frequency of such incidents, highlighting that the measures taken against the perpetrators have been insufficient. It is responsibility of the state and judiciary to administer punishment to an accused of blasphemy acts or desecration of the holy book, he said. He also condemned the ongoing trend of individuals taking the law into their own hands, acting as judge, jury, and executioner, as wholly unacceptable. He stressed that cases of blasphemy, religious disrespect, and holy books' desecration should be resolved within three months, calling on the chief justice to prioritise these cases over political and other matters. In a passionate call for unity and mutual cooperation, he urged local religious and political leaders and authorities to have an effective collaboration and liaison to usher in positive changes.

JSQM leaders protested against UC chairman Yardiro

By Allahdad Chaudhry
LARKANA: Last day, Jai Sindh Quami Mahaz (JSQM) protested in Waggan city against the Chairman Union Council Yardero of District Kamber Shahdadkot, Kaleem Tunio, against the work of favored people in corruption and ongoing schemes and where to digest the monthly budget. The traffic coming to different cities was completely stopped. Addressing the protesters on this occasion, Jasmam unit officials Kamran Phanur, GM Vaghan, Mokhtiar Phanur and others said that the incompetent chairman of Union Council Yaro Dero is not responsible for any development. He is tired of doing the work while he is in various villages of his union council, Jalal Khan Mugheri village, Yardiro village, Phoro Lakha village,

Bhara Buledi village, Khudabakhsh Mugheri village, Ubedani Tunio, all the villages are deprived of basic facilities, but the chairman of Union Council yardero is engaged in corruption. Because he is a big man and his brother-in-law partners are also his old associates, that's why Chairman Yardiro replied to everyone that whoever wants to do something, protest, burn yourself, you are nothing to me. They have requested Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Chief Justice of Sindh High Court, and Director General Anti-Corruption Sindh to investigate the funds received by Chairman of Union Council Yaro Dero Kalim Tunio. For the sake of service, facilities should be provided in the villages, otherwise the scope of the protest will be increased in sindh basis

Joint operation in Kacha area by Larkana range Police & Rangers, 5 suspects arrested



Independent Report
LARKANA: On the last day, under the strict instructions of Deputy Inspector General of Police Larkana Range Nasir Aftab Pathan, under the leadership of Larkana Range Police Senior Superintendent of Police Irfan Ahmed Simon and Wing Commander of Rangers, on a received secret information about the presence of bandits was received in Garhi Teghu Kache area of Kashmir at Kandakot district. But after closing all the roads leading to Kacha, the operation was started by the police and the Rangers force. On this occasion, five (05) suspected persons associated with the Teghu gang were arrested while searching the residences of the robbers. ID wires were also recovered from the hideouts of the robbers while there was a vigorous exchange of fire between the robbers and the Rangers and the policemen. After arresting 05 suspects during the search operation, they were shifted to a specific place for further investigation, on the other hand, DG Police Larkana Range congratulated SSP Shikarpur and his team for the successful operation against the police dacoits. Orders have also been issued to give certificates of appreciation.

MQM-P demands tax abolition for salaried class

ISLAMABAD (INP): MQM-Pakistan leader Aminul Haque has called for the elimination of taxes on the salaried class earning up to Rs 12 lakh annually, highlighting crucial budget reforms in the National Assembly. Addressing parliament, Aminul Haq emphasized that the current budget heavily prioritizes interest payments on loans, underscoring the need for financial prudence in light of regional economic challenges. He praised the allocation of 2100 billion for defense as essential for national security, emphasizing the sacrifice and vigilance of Pakistan's armed forces in safeguarding the nation's borders.



KARACHI: View of city gives desert look due to hot weather of summer season, at Shahrah-e-Faisal road in Karachi

PM's recent visit to China highly significant in Pak-China friendly relationship: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal said that the recent visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to China was termed highly significant in the context of Pak-China friendly relationship. He expressed these words while talking in a programme aired on a private news channel the other day. He said he had participated along with the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in all meetings there in China. He said that Chinese leadership was very enthusiastic and committed to help Pakistan in different ventures. He said that it was Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's wish to enhance Industrial-level contacts with China to promote industrialization between the two states. Minister said that we had focused on enhancing business-to-business relationships to promote the industries. He said that China's leading telecom company,

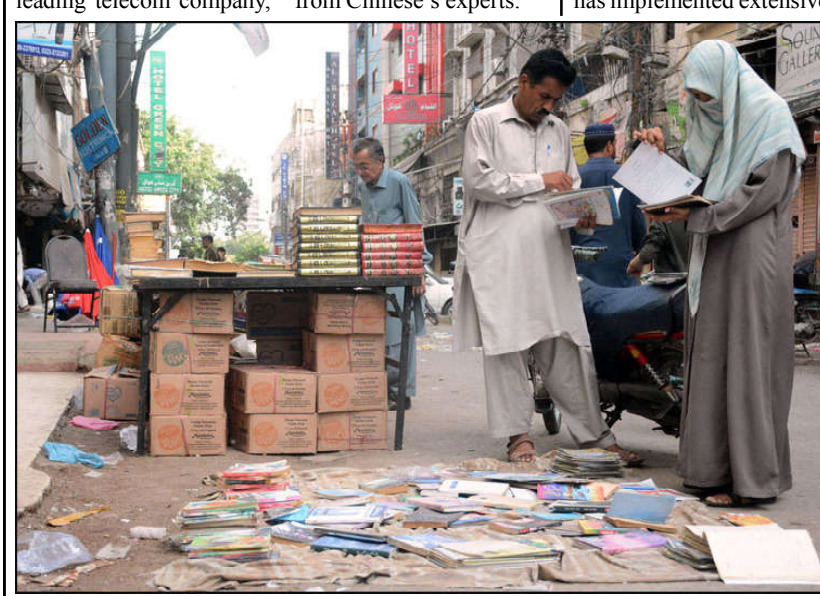
Hawaii, would become a strategic partner of Pakistan in the transformation of the Pakistani economy to a digital economy. He was also optimistic that the company would provide IT training to 0.3 million Pakistani youth. While talking about the gains in the larger context of CPEC he said China was committed to starting five corridors in the upgraded version of CPEC in Pakistan. He said that the first corridor would be a 'corridor of growth' bringing rapid economic growth to Pakistan, and the second corridor would be a 'corridor of livelihood' under which socio-economic programs would be developed, poverty would be eradicated, and jobs would be created. Speaking about the third corridor, which he called the "corridor of innovation," he had a special focus on artificial intelligence (AI) and as everyone knows that the world was far away in this sector and China was also competing with the world, we would take advantage from Chinese's experts.

Rebuttal to incorrect media reports on HIV cases in Sindh during 2024

Independent Report
KARACHI: The Sindh health department would like to respond to incorrect media reports on hiv prevalence across the province and specifically in district Mirpur Khas. First we would bring your attention to an article published in 'the daily news' on June 23, 2024, which has misreported a number of facts. The accurate number of new HIV cases in Sindh from January to June 2024 is 1,453. This includes a total of 169 children (102 male and 67 female). Children account for 11.6% of the total number of HIV cases reported in sindh in 2024. The article however incorrectly claims that 10-15% new cases of HIV reported every month are in children, this figure in reality is 2%. The claim that the government has not taken effective steps is misleading. The government of Sindh has implemented extensive

HIV screening, resulting in the identification and treatment of more cases. New HIV treatment centers have been inaugurated, and existing centers have been upgraded and digitalized. All achievements are verified by the global fund. Similarly there has been misreporting on news channels on cases of HIV in Mirpur Khas. The actual number of positive cases is in Mirpur Khas is 24, not 29 as erroneously communicated in an earlier PPHI letter. All 24 cases have been registered between December 2023 and June 2024 with the CDC wing at DGHSS. The affected age groups are from 0-1 year and 2-5 years. Notably, the parents of all positive cases have tested negative for HIV. Furthermore 18 of these cases are actively receiving treatment at the art center while 4 cases are untraceable due to incomplete addresses; efforts are ongoing to locate these individuals through national iden-

tity card (NIC) numbers and other available data. 1 case was found to be HIV negative upon further testing, 1 case has unfortunately passed away. There is no clustering of cases, they are dispersed across different locations, preventing the formation of any clusters. In efforts to mitigate the spread of HIV, 3,072 individuals have been screened in Mirpur Khas, resulting in 5 new positive cases, yielding a positivity rate of 0.16%. The directorate of communicable disease control-CDC HIV/aids Sindh urges all media outlets to avoid manipulations, biased presentations, exaggerations, and sensationalism when reporting on such critical public health issues. Accurate information and responsible reporting are essential to support ongoing efforts to combat HIV in Sindh. Further to that please see attached transparent HIV data for cases and their breakdown in Sindh.



KARACHI: People selecting used books at Reagal Chowk.

1st human milk bank suspended after Dar-ul-Uloom fatwa

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan's pioneering Human Milk Bank, established at the Sindh Institute of Child Health and Neonatology (SICHN), has been suspended following a new fatwa issued by Dar-ul-Uloom Karachi. The suspension comes after the institute sought further guidance from the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) regarding the project. The milk bank, which was launched with an initial fatwa from Darul Uloom Karachi, was designed to provide breast milk to premature infants who lacked sufficient maternal nutrition. However, a revised fatwa dated June 16, 2024, has led to the suspension of the initiative. SICHN, in a statement, cited recent

religious decrees from prominent scholars and Madaris as the reason for the suspension, stating their commitment to respecting religious and cultural sensitivities. Dr. Jamal Raza, head of SICHN, emphasized the critical need for the milk bank explaining that breastfeeding is vital for premature infants who are often too weak and lack sufficient maternal milk supply. He stated that the aim was to save the lives of these vulnerable children. The project, inaugurated by Sindh Health Minister Dr. Azra Pechuho alongside officials from UNICEF and the Pakistan Pediatric Association (PPA), was Pakistan's first Shariah-compliant facility of its kind.

HEC signs contract to automate Pak universities with TMC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) via its Higher Education Development Programme in Pakistan (HEDP) held a contract signing ceremony where key personnel and leadership of HEC and Tally Marks Consulting (TMC) were present. The signing ceremony represents a significant milestone for Pakistan's higher education sector, said a press release. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) receiving state-of-the-art Student Lifecycle Systems (SLC) and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) will completely digitise their administrative, accounting operations, and end-to-end student lifecycle processes from admission to degree completion. All the leading universities of the world have already adopted these systems and this activity marks HEC's commitment as well as investment to implement the same in Pakistani HEIs.

21,457 complaints received by Chief Secretary's complaint cell since 2019

Independent Report
KARACHI: The Chief Secretary of Sindh's office has announced that its Complaint Cell has received a total of 21,457 complaints since 2019. Out of these, immediate action was taken on 9,788 complaints, providing relief to the complainants. According to the details, out of the received complaints, 10406 are currently under verification, and 1,263 complaints have been forwarded to various departments for necessary action. The majority of the complaints pertain to land disputes, inheritance records, water drainage and supply, agricultural water supply, and school rehabilitation issues. Specifically, the Home Department (including Police) received

3,486 complaints, the Local Government Department received 3,161 complaints, the Finance Department (including district account offices) received 1,618 complaints, the Education Department received 1,677 complaints, and the Works and Services Department received 423 complaints. Many of these have been resolved, while others are in the verification stages. Citizens can submit complaints to the Chief Secretary's Complaint Cell online or by mail. According to the spokesperson of the Chief Secretary of Sindh, the Complaint Cell has also received 330,000 complaints from the Prime Minister's Complaint Cell, out of which 295,387 have been resolved.

161st festival at Sadhu Bela temple underway

SUKKUR (APP): The 161st annual Baba Bankhandi Maharaj Melagot under way on Sunday at Sadhu Bela, a historically revered island in Hinduism situated between Rohri and Sukkur. Hindu community leaders jointly inaugurated the festival as several hundred Hindu devotees arrived on the island from all parts of the country, as well as abroad, to take part in rituals. The three-day festival started with the recitation from the Gita and the Guru Granth Sahib in the temple, surrounded by scores of food stalls, medical camps and outlets displaying religious souvenirs, literature and worship objects. The Sadhu Bela temple committee in coordination

with the Evacuee Trust Department, has made many boats available to the visiting devotees for their transportation from different points in Sukkur to the islet. The district administration has made stringent security arrangements for the devotees and their hosts by deploying police units at the temple and along the route of the pilgrimage in Sukkur. According to SSP Sukkur Amjad Ahmed Shaikh, the security arrangements had been made and all essential facilities were provided for the visiting devotees at the festival. Ex MPA Dewand Chand Chawla, Mukhi Aishwar Lal, Raj Kumar Wadhvani, Mukesh Kumar, Kishor Lal and other leaders of the Hindu community also spoke on the occasion.

50 donkey carts participate in Commissioner Karachi race

KARACHI (INP): As part of the mission to promote a traditional sport, Commissioner Karachi donkey cart race was held from ICI Bridge, Sultanabad to the Commissioner's Office in Karachi on Sunday. As many as 50 donkey carts participated in the completion. City Mayor Murtaza Wahab, who was the chief guest on the occasion, gave away prizes to those who came first, second and third in the race. Speaking on the occasion, Abdullah Khalid, whose donkey stood first, said he was extremely excited. "I thank the Almighty Allah for today's win," Abdullah added. He further said that he belonged to Lyari and had

named his donkey 'Bijli'. Informing about the diet given to the animal, he said he gave him milk and almonds to eat. Abdullah was given a cash prize of Rs25,000, while the owner of the donkey who finished as a runner-up in the race was given Rs20,000. Similarly, the owner of the donkey who came third was handed a cash prize of Rs15,000. Talking to the media on the occasion, the mayor said that traditional sports were always a part of a nation's culture. He said people had been playing the sport for a long time now. "Such kinds of events should be held so that the people could get an opportunity to entertain themselves," he opined.



THATTA: Large number of people enjoying & Bathing in Keenjhar Lake to get relief from hot weather.