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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.



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



ISLAMABAD: Delegation of Member National Assembly belonging to Balochistan led by Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan in a meeting with Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq at Parliament House.

NA passes resolution condemning mob-lynching incidents countrywide

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly (NA) on Sunday passed a resolution vehemently condemning the recent horrific and tragic incidents of mob lynching in various parts of the country.

The resolution, moved by Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, emphasised that the right to life is the most cherished right enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan. "Every person is to be dealt with in accordance with the law and not otherwise," it stated.

The House expressed serious concern over the mob lynching of citizens accused of offences in Swat and Sargodha, noting with grave concern that such incidents have been on the rise. "Such actions cannot

be tolerated in any civilized society," it declared.

The NA urged both the federal and provincial governments to ensure the safety and security of all citizens, including religious minorities and other vulnerable segments of society. It called for the provincial governments of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab to take immediate and necessary measures to identify, investigate, and prosecute those involved in these incidents under the relevant laws.

Furthermore, the House expressed the expectation that the courts would ensure immediate and speedy justice in these cases, underscoring the need for swift legal action to prevent future occurrences of such tragic events.

BNP-Awami President rejects Balochistan's budget for next Financial Year

Mir Asadullah Baloch says budget prepared in CM's secretariat; schemes of Panjgur cut in current budget with no scheme included in next budget; demands equal schemes for all constituencies

QUETTA: The President of Balochistan National Party-Awami (BNP-A) and Member Provincial Assembly, Mir Asadullah Baloch has rejected the provincial budget for the next financial year saying that the budget was prepared in Chief Minister's secretariat instead of the Planning and Development Department.



The BNP-Awami chief said that the elite class has benefited in the budget and nothing else. He alleged that no administrative secretary of any department doesn't know as which schemes have been included in the public sector development programme.

He also alleged that the public development schemes of Panjgur amounting to Rs. 7 billion have been cut in the current financial year budget. The Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has cut the schemes of Panjgur, and the schemes of the district has also not been included in the next financial year budget, he charged further while addressing a press conference here at the Quetta Press club.

LEAs failed to recover 10 abducted persons from Shaban area of Harnai

Independent Report

QUETTA: The law enforcement agencies including Police and Levies force have not succeeded in recovering 10 persons abducted from Shaban area of Harnai district five days ago.

According to the sources, the police, Levies force and Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) are making endeavours for recovery of the abducted persons from Shaban area.

However, no headway has been made in the matter

as reports reaching here suggested. It may be recalled that 10 persons were kidnapped by some armed assailants from Shaban area where they had gone for picnic.

The reports suggested that the persons mostly young people were kidnapped after identification. They are included three real brothers and three their cousins belonging to Quetta and Multan. Two of them had come from Multan to Quetta on summer vacations.

Govt accepts all demands to woo PPP amid crucial budget session

LAHORE (INP)- The government on Sunday accepted all the demands of Pakistan Peoples Party regarding the concerns related to development funds and share in the governmental committees in Punjab.

In this regard, the power sharing formula between the PML-N and PPP has been made public.

According to sources, PPP would be given development funds while the party would also be accommodated at key administrative offices in Punjab.

The PML-N would get some power in all districts of Sindh obviously without becoming a part of the cabinet.

It should be noted that the demands of the PPP have also emerged in the agreement. The PPP have asked for a share in the governmental departments while also demanding representation in the market committees, zakat committees and bait-ul-maal committees.

Meanwhile, the PPP have also claimed share in the development fund and projects while also put forward its points to take the notice of its concerns regarding the transfer and posting in Punjab. The dialogue committees of both parties met in Islamabad. From the PPP, Raja Parvez Ashraf, Ali Haider Gillani and Hassan Murtaza participated while Malik Ahmed Khan, Rana Sanaulah and Khawaja Saad Rafique joined the session from the PML-N side.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman arrives in Quetta

Independent Report

QUETTA: The central Ameer of Jama'at-e-Islami (JI), Maulana Fazlur Rehman arrived in Quetta on Sunday. The leaders of JUI welcomed Maulana Fazlur Rehman on his arrival at the Quetta airport.

The JUI's Ameer went to Killa Saifullah where he offered feteiha for the departed soul of former Member National Assembly, Maulvi Asmatullah.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman would stay in Quetta during which he would be meeting the political leaders of different parties.

Legislators urge government to review taxes on salaried class

ISLAMABAD (APP): 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.

PTI siding with terrorists after party opposes 'Azm-e-Istehkam' operation: Khawaja Asif

Ruckus mars NA session as treasury, opposition benches divided over anti-militancy operation; Defence minister says the operation was approved with PTI members on board during apex committee meeting; Gohar objects, says parliament not taken into confidence on "Azm-e-Istehkam"

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): A turbulent National Assembly session took place on Sunday as the government and opposition remained divided over a new military operation, Azm-e-Istehkam, to root out militancy. The lawmakers from the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) said that they weren't taken into confidence over the operation, while the government

assured them that their concerns would be addressed.

The lower house session, which is currently discussing the budget but went off track to exchange views over the operation, saw a ruckus ensued from the opposition benches.

The PTI staged a walk-out from the session for an hour and returned later, following which their leaders addressed the National As-

sembly, while they also chanted slogans, including "end the operation", and "we want peace".

The Shehbaz Sharif-led government had Saturday announced the fresh counter-terrorism operation, pledging to utilise the full strength of the country's resources, including military, diplomatic, and legislative, to turn the heat up on militants. The Central Apex

Committee on National Action Plan (NAP) gave the approval for the operation, in which top officials of all provinces were present, including PTI-backed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur.

The move comes as the country has witnessed a significant surge in terrorist attacks in recent months resulting in scores of both civilian and security forces' casualties. Defence Minister and senior PML-N leader Khawaja Asif on Sunday accused Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of siding with terrorists against the military. The development comes a day after the Apex Committee of National Action Plan, chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, approved "Operation Azm-e-Istehkam" to eliminate terrorism and extremism across the country.

Corps Commander Balochistan visits Sikh gurdwara in Quetta

QUETTA (INP): Corps Commander Balochistan Lt. General Rahat Naseem Ahmad Khan on Sunday visited a Sikh gurdwara in Quetta.

On arrival, he was welcomed by members of the Sikh community who presented him with a shawl called Saroocha.

The corps commander went inside the gurdwara and prayed there.

Later at a ceremony held in the honour of Lt General Rahat, the speakers, belonging to different religions, stressed the need for having inter-

faith harmony in the country.

Speaking on the occasion, the corps commander said that inter-faith harmony, tolerance and brotherhood between people belonging to different religious backgrounds was a must for the development and prosperity of the country. "We must respect each other religions' teachings so that a society based on tolerance could come into existence," he opined.

Later langar (food) was also distributed among the participants.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Chaudhary Anwar-ul-Haq.

Mohsin Naqvi meets AJK PM: approves deployment of FC in AJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi here on Sunday met with Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Chaudhary Anwar-ul-Haq at the Ministry of Interior.

Both the prime ministers discussed law & order and overall security situation of Azad Jammu and Kashmir during the meeting.

Moreover, both leaders also exchanged views on the political situation and the upcoming budget for the new financial year.

Mohsin Naqvi approved the deployment of Frontier Constabulary in Azad Kashmir on the re-

quest of the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir.

Speaking to the Prime Minister, Mohsin Naqvi said that all possible cooperation would be extended to maintain peace in Azad Kashmir and improve security situation in the area.

He reiterated that the promises made to the people of Azad Kashmir were being fulfilled.

He emphasized that the Government of Pakistan stands with the Government and people of Azad Kashmir adding that all possible cooperation would be extended for the progress and development of Azad Kashmir.

BA's budget session to resume today

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QUETTA: The budget session of Balochistan Assembly is scheduled to resume today (Monday) here.

The Speaker Balochistan Assembly, Abdul Khaliq Achakzai is likely to preside over the budget session of assembly.

According to the schedule shared by the Provincial Assembly's secretariat, there would be general debate on the provincial budget for the next financial year 2024-25 in today's sitting.

The debate on the next financial year's budget would remain continued till June 26. The financial draft law for year 2024 would also be tabled on June 26, as mentioned in the schedule of assembly's session.

Besides, the debate would be on the supplementary budget for the current financial year on June 27.

The ongoing session would remain continued till June 29.

Ji initiates nationwide 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 Naeem 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.



QUETTA: Activists of Jamaat-e-Islami shouting slogans during protest against inflated electricity bills

Govt ready to incorporate positive, constructive suggestions in budget: Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Sunday that the government was ready to incorporate positive and constructive suggestions from the Opposition in the budget for 2024-25.

Participating in the budget debate, he mentioned that it had been a tradition for the Opposition parties to present a shadow budget for decades. "When we and the PPP were in the Opposition in the past, we used to bring shadow budgets. We proposed how we could improve the budget presented by the government," he added.

In the shadow budget, he added that both parties suggested ways to reduce taxes and subsidies and provided more relief to poor people. The minister criticized the Opposition members for "making judgments" without thoroughly reviewing the budget document. Highlighting the budgetary proposals, he said that the government had increased the salaries of government employees by 20 to 25 percent and raised the minimum wage.

He said that there was coalition government in Balochistan and the Pakistan People's Party led government had presented a people-friendly budget on the instructions of the central leadership of the Party and its positive results would reach to the people soon.

In a statement issued here Sunday, Sardar Sarfraz Chakar Khan Domki said the budget for the fiscal year 2024-25 as the development-oriented and people-friendly budget in the history of Balochistan. He said the 70 percent of the approved development projects have been included in the provincial public sector development program to initiate public interest project purely on merit and provide relief to maximum number of people.

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Sarfraz Domki terms budget 2024-25 as people-friendly

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Minister for Local Government Sardar Sarfraz Chakar Khan Domki has termed the budget for the fiscal year 2024-25 as the development-oriented and people-friendly budget in the history of Balochistan. He said the 70 percent of the approved development projects have been included in the provincial public sector development program to initiate public interest project purely on merit and provide relief to maximum number of people.

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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 lighted, 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 unmoved 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, i.e. my response to a period of time, can prove dangerous when it is framed as a collective experience. The right-wing longs for good old '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

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

War in Ukraine

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 competition with 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\$1.500 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.

SCCI president Online payment introduced for membership renewal

SIALKOT (APP): The Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) president said that online payment had been introduced for chamber membership renewal.

Talking to APP, SCCI President Abdul Ghafoor Malik said that now instead of visiting the Sialkot chamber for the renewal of their firms, members can renew their firms from home. He said that the chamber had always endeavored to ensure the provision of best services to its members and businessmen.

Malik said that he and his team had rendered valuable services to solve the problems of members. "Being the SCCI president, I would continue to play my role in the betterment of members and concrete steps are being taken in this regard," he added.

He assured SCCI members and the business community of Sialkot that other facilities of the chamber would also be digitized soon. He also expressed his determination for promotion of exports.

Punjab govt enacts new law to control inflation

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has launched the Price Control Council (PCC) to determine the prices of 49 commodities.

Official sources in City District government told APP that the government has enacted a new law to control the prices of essential commodities, whereas in this regard a Price Control Council has also been established under the 'Punjab Price Control Essential Commodities Act'.

Punjab Governor Saleem Haider signed the bill after the approval of the Punjab Assembly.



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 Ifthikhar 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, Ifthikhar 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) 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.

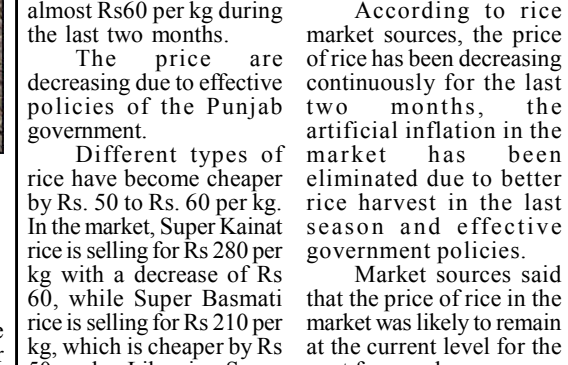
The price are decreasing due to effective policies of the Punjab government.

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.



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



QUETTA: View of city gives desert look due to hot weather of summer season, in Quetta.

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 been 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, Huawei, 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 up-graded 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 socioeconomic 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, we 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 and make Pakistan more reliable and self-sufficient in this sector.

The other corridor, he spoke was 'corridor of the green economy' in which we would tackle the challenges imposed by the environment and climate change. He also said we had to find a way to shift our energy sector from 'fossil fuel' to green energy, i.e., renewable resources.

In the last but not least, he said, the fifth corridor is the 'corridor of regional development' in which we would increase our regional cooperation and share the fruits of CPEC with other countries in the region by including them in the CPEC program, bringing prosperity and stability.

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 immolating 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.

Govt to arrange in-camera briefing for lawmakers: Minister for Law

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Law and Justice, Azam Nazeer Tarar on Sunday informed the National Assembly that the government would arrange an in-camera briefing in the parliament for the lawmakers.

Speaking on the floor of the House, referring to the leadership of the Sunni Ittehad Council, he said, "Your Prime Minister has not attended the in-camera briefing on security issues in the parliament, but my Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, along with the cabinet, will attend the in-camera briefing."

The minister said that the government will call an in-camera session to take all the political parties into confidence on the country's security issues. He said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and the entire cabinet will also participate in the in-camera briefing. Azam Nazeer Tarar said that in the past the prime minister was refusing to sit with the opposition, but Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif wants to take all the political parties into confidence and work together on the issue. He said that the resolution and legislation presented in the Parliament are significant for national security and defence which is not only an issue of the government.

The minister said that the sanctity of the house is very important which all the stakeholders want to take care of, and the government wants to take all the political parties along with it.

On this occasion, MQM MNA, Khawaja Izzatullah Hassan urged the house to run according to the constitution and said that the opposition must show responsibility.

Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said that the Parliament is the supreme institution and no one can supersede the Parliament.



LAHORE: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmed calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

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. The systems enhance efficiency, and transparency and promptly provide key data for decision making.

At the signing ceremony Chairman HEC Dr Mukhtar Ahmed, Executive Director HEC Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum, MD TMC Abdul Haseeb, and Partner Director SAP Amir Shah were present among other senior officials of HEC, HEDP, TMC and SAP.

Speaking at the occasion, Dr Mukhtar Ahmed said, "We are now one team and it's a great collaboration that will increase the quality of education for all in Pakistan.

There are 260 plus HEIs in line to be digitized and this signing ceremony is the starting point of a fully digitized education system in Pakistan. Collaboration and commitment of HEIs, however, remain highly important since this is a seed and will start the process to inspire other HEIs of Pakistan."



LAHORE: Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council, Allama Tahir Ashrafi is addressing a press conference at the Press Club.

Rana calls on PM

LAHORE (APP): Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood 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.

PPP defends Operation Azm-e-Istehkam

LAHORE (APP): Raja Pervaiz 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."

He affirmed the PPP's commitment to its parliamentary role, ensuring active participation in addressing every national issue through constructive dialogue and responsible governance.

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.

Haque pressed for an increase in EOI compensation to Rs 12,000 and urged the removal of 10% GST on newsprint, citing the media industry's decline and rising journalist unemployment.

Additionally, he advocated for amendments to the PECA Act.

Pakistani internet influencer showcases talent at 'Chinese Bridge Competition'

BEIJING (APP): In a global showcase of linguistic prowess and cultural understanding, Usman, a Pakistani internet influencer and a student at Beijing Language and Culture University, participated in the Chinese Bridge - Chinese Proficiency Competition for Foreigners Around the Globe - Storytelling Contest, held in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province.

The contest, which gathered 49 contestants from 37 countries last week, provided a platform for participants to showcase their proficiency in the Chinese language and share their unique stories of connections with China, local media reported.

Usman struck a chord with the audience with his fluent Chinese and heartfelt storytelling themed "My First Time with China", expressing his profound love for the Chinese language and culture. "My participation in this competition has motivated me more than ever to continue my studies in Chinese."

Usman added, "I have realised that language is a powerful tool for understanding and connecting with people from different backgrounds. My plans include furthering my Chinese studies and expanding my influencer career to promote cultural exchanges between Pakistan and China."



QUETTA: Tokhi Foundation Chairman, Haji Sharif Khan Khilji addresses during the ceremony on the occasion of 7th foundation day, in Quetta

MNA Zair Khan Wazir takes over Waziristan grid station

SARAROOGH (INP): In a dramatic turn of events, Member of National Assembly (MNA) Zair Khan Waziristan, accompanied by his supporters, stormed the Jandula Grid Station and forcibly restored power to the Sararough area of Upper Waziristan.

The region had been experiencing 22 hours of load shedding, prompting the MNA to take action. He entered the grid station, pressed a button, and restored power to Upper Waziristan for 12 hours.

MNA Waziristan stated that power will now be restored for 12 hours each in both FR Jandula and Upper Waziristan. He further announced that his men will be stationed at the Jandula Grid Station to ensure the power supply alternates accordingly.

A video of the incident went viral on social media, showing the MNA entering the grid station with his supporters and pressing the button to initiate power supply to Sararough.

In the video, MNA Waziristan can be heard saying, "I am here today, standing at the Jandula Grid Station.

The power supply for FR Jandula and Upper Waziristan originates from here. However, we have decided to implement a 12-hour load shedding schedule, with 12 hours of uninterrupted power supply."

GoB releases Rs861 mln in FY 2023-24 to expedite Mangi Dam construction

QUETTA (APP): The incumbent Balochistan government has released Rs861 million in the current financial year 2023-24 to expedite the construction work on Mangi Dam to provide clean water to the residents of Quetta. The provincial government soon after taking the charge has released the funds for the construction of Mangi Dam to ensure the provision of safe drinking water to the masses of Quetta city.

Mangi Dam being constructed with the cost of Rs 19 billion would provide 80 million gallons of water daily to Quetta city and surrounding areas, an official of Balochistan government said. He said Mangi Dam would be completed soon as per the schedule as the development work on Mangi Dam had been accelerated.

He said that the construction of the Mangi Dam would help overcome the shortfall of water in the area where rain water is the only source of filling the dams. With the completion of Mangi Dam the water shortage issue would be resolved in the provincial capital, he added. He said resolving water issue was the top priority of the incumbent government. He added that steps were being taken to achieve the target and to ensure availability of safe drinking water to the people of the province. The Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti lead government has also released Rs351 million to shift 493 water supply schemes to solar energy in different districts.

447 Sikh pilgrims reach Gurdwara Panja Sahib

LAHORE (APP): As many as 447 Indian Sikh pilgrims have arrived at Gurdwara Panja Sahib in Hassanabdal to participate in rituals in connection with the 185th death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Upon arrival, the pilgrims were welcomed by officials of the Evacuee Trust Property Board and the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

The Sikh yatrees expressed satisfaction over arrangements made by the government of Punjab. Group leader Sardar Khushwant Singh thanked the Pakistani especially Punjab government for allowing a large number of pilgrims to visit their religious places in Pakistan.



QUETTA: Lango Tribal Leaders, Mir Attaullah Lango Advocate, Tikri Agha Muhammad Lango and others addressing a press conference.

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.

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.

On Saturday, a report prepared by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) which had described shifting the accused to the police station as the biggest mistake after his arrest from a local hotel where he was staying. It added that the area SHO neither sought guidance from the local top officials nor ensured the safety of the accused by transporting him to some undisclosed place.

All victims of laptop burst incident die, death toll rises to 9

FAISALABAD (APP): The death toll of laptop burst incident has risen to 9 with the expiry of all victims while receiving treatment at Burns Unit of Allied Hospital-I.

According to police, some children were using laptop in a house situated at Satianna Road Mohallah Sharifpura, Batala Colony police precincts, when it reportedly caught fire all of sudden on Wednesday, June 19.

The fire engulfed the entire surroundings and caused death of two children including 9-year-old Talha, son of Muhammad Ahmad, and his sister Dua Fatima, six-year-old, on-the-spot.

GoB allocates Rs 35 billion for LG in budget 2024-25

QUETTA (APP): The Balochistan government has enhanced the grant of local government and allocated Rs 35 billion for local government in the budget for the year 2024-25 to strengthen the local government system in the province.

The incumbent government has increased the grant of local government by 108 percent from Rs 16.8 billion allocated in previous year to Rs 35 billion in the next fiscal year 2024-25 which will make the Local Council Finance Commission more powerful and stable.

Talking to APP, an official of Balochistan government said a strong and empowered local government system would contribute to work on ground level. He assured government's full support for providing the basic framework which was pre-requisite for the success of local governments.

He said that the government was committed to further strengthening the local bodies which will transform the development landscape in Balochistan. He added that the role of local bodies is vital in resolving the basic problems of the people.

In order to strengthen the local government system, the provincial government has committed to formalize effective implementation and transformation of the real power at grassroots level.

The incumbent government in the current financial year 2023-24 has released Rs 4.7 billion to resolve the financial crisis of the local councils.



QUETTA: A delegation led by Senior politician and former Senator Nawabzada Haji Mir Lashkari Khan Raisani, Mir Humayun Aziz Kurd condoling with Senator Nawabzada Umar Farooq Kasi on sad demise of Nawab Abdul Zahir Kasi