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Gwadar

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ASTANA: Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz in a group photo with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Plus Summit, held in Astana.

Pakistan to pursue anti-terrorism, dispute resolution, multilateralism goals during UNSC term: PM

Demands Israel's accountability for war crimes in Palestine

ASTANA (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday while calling effective multilateralism a key to address regional and global challenges, reiterated Pakistan's commitment to just and peaceful resolution of outstanding and ongoing disputes, opposing unilateral and illegal use of threats or force, and combating terrorism. The prime minister, addressing the summit of SCO Plus format, said during its 2025-26 term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, "Pakistan remains committed to pursuing just and peaceful resolution of outstanding and ongoing disputes, opposing resort to unilateral and illegal use of threats or force, combating

terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and advancing SCO agenda in partnership with member states." The SCO Plus format meeting was held on the sidelines of the 24th Summit of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) at the Palace of Independence in the capital city of Kazakhstan. The prime minister told the gathering that complex global and regional challenges could be best addressed through effective multilateralism within the UN framework. He said Pakistan brought to the UNSC its rich experience and expertise, and strong legacy of contributions towards the maintenance of peace and secu-

ity. He congratulated President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev for holding the SCO summit and expressed the hope that the Astana Declaration and other documents adopted at the event would go a long way in strengthening efforts for the objectives of peace and prosperity. Highlighting the increased incitement to hatred and discrimination based on race and religion, in particular Islamophobia, climate-induced disasters and post-COVID-19 impacts on the countries, he said the challenges necessitated unity of thought and action, upholding the value of peaceful coexistence, resolving disputes, and reposing confidence in multilateralism.

Pakistan committed to strengthen SCO for peace: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to SCO objectives of peace and prosperity, urged the member states to put in their collective efforts against terrorism, poverty alleviation and dispute resolution, particularly the ongoing Israeli barbarism in Palestine. "I reaffirm Pakistan's commitment to working together to strengthen SCO as an active and integrated regional forum to achieve the common objective of peace and prosperity in line with the Shanghai spirit," the prime minister said addressing the 24th Summit of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which commenced here in the capital city of Kazakhstan. Titled "Strengthening Multilateral Dialogue - Striving Towards a Sustainable Peace and Prosperity", the summit is being attended by leaders from Pakistan, China, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkiye, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, India and others.

Extensive briefing conducted on initiatives of CM Sarfraz Bugti-led government:

Political process necessary till grassroots level for making Balochistan complete hub of peace, stresses Chairman PPP

Bilawal Batutto Zardari says narrative of terrorism has to be defeated to foil nefarious designs of terrorists; urges Balochistan government to expedite compensation process initiated for affectees of 2022 floods

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QUETTA: The Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has emphasized upon initiating political process up to grassroots level in order to make Balochistan complete hub of peace. He also stressed that the narrative of terrorism should have to be defeated for foiling the nefarious designs of terrorists. The Chairman PPP hailed the first Youth Policy and stressed to implement it fully so as to provide maximum opportunities to

youngsters. He directed to complete the projects of health in the province immediately. In addition to this, the Chairman Bilawal directed to expedite completion of the project of construction of homes for those affected in the floods of 2022 in the province. Similarly, he directed to take steps on emergent basis for improving the infrastructure all over Balochistan. The Chairman PPP expressed these views and issued directives during briefing conducted for him about the overall per-

formance of the provincial government in different sectors here on Thursday. The Chairman PPP arrived in the metropolis on Thursday. The Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti, Provincial Ministers Mir Zahoore Buledi, Mir Muhammad Sadiq Unrani, Ali Madad Jatak, Sardarzada Faisal Jamali, and Bakht Muhammad Kakar and Advisor to CM for Industries, Ali Hassan Zehri, parliamentary Secretary Mir Asghar Rind, spokesman of provincial government, Shahid Rind, Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan



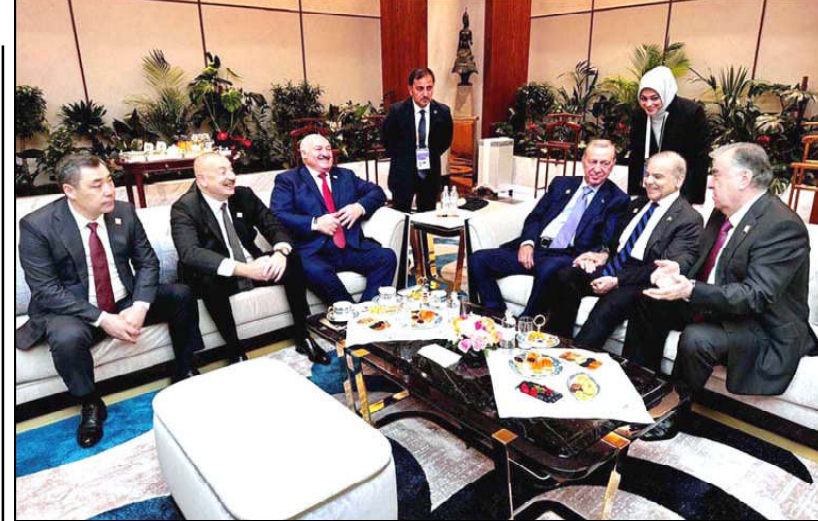
QUETTA: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti being briefed about law and order situation and development projects. Provincial Ministers and senior officials are also present

Maintaining balance between resources & issues big challenge: Governor

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has underlined the need to increase the gross national product, build capacity and strengthen tax recovery system further. The Governor pointed out that our natural resources are less, but social issues are more than them. He said that it is a challenge for the government to maintain balance between the limited resources and issues being faced by the people. However, the economic experts can provide guidance to meet the requirements of increasing population in the limited resources. The Governor was speaking to the Provincial Minister for Finance and Mines & Mineral Development, Mir Shoaib

Naushervani who called on him here at the Governor's House on Thursday. During the course of meeting, the overall political situation of the country and province as well as transfer of fruits of development and government's initiatives at the lower level and other matters of mutual interests were discussed. Speaking on the occasion, Governor stressed that we have to make serious decisions for stabilizing the country's economic system besides benefiting the general public from the fruits of development in the province. He was of the strong view that financial matters would be improved by reducing the non-development expenditures. He also said that we can secure our future with mutual consultation and combined efforts.



ASTANA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif interacts with the world leaders on the sidelines of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit.

SC suspends LHC decision, ECP notifications on tribunals' formation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Thursday suspended the verdict of Lahore High Court (LHC) and the notification of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) regarding the establishment of election tribunals, and ordered to address the matter with consultation. A five-member larger bench, led by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and comprised on Justice Amin Ud Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan and Justice Aqeel Abbasi heard the appeal against the establishment of election tribunal. In its order regarding the hearing, the court said that the ECP's lawyer showed the letter dated June 27, to the registrar LHC. The ECP first wrote

letters to the high courts of four provinces for establishment of election tribunals. The first two tribunals were formed with collaboration of LHC which were insufficient, after that the names of six more judges were sent by the LHC as tribunals. It said that the ECP appointed only two judges out of six as tribunals. The dispute rises after the LHC formed more tribunals, it added. The top court said that the ECP is a constitutional institution while the Chief Justice LHC is also the head of a constitutional institution. The matter could have been resolved if a meeting of chief justice LHC and ECP convened, it said, adding that the top court respects the both institutions.

On SCO sidelines, PM interacts with world leaders

ASTANA (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday interacted with world leaders as they gathered here in the capital city of Kazakhstan to attend the 24th summit of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). On the sidelines of the summit, the prime minister interacted with the Secretary-General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres and discussed regional and international matters. He also had an interaction with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev, President Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan, Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov and President Aleksandr Lukashenko of Belarus, and discussed bilateral and other matters of mutual interest.

Bugti meets Bilawal, briefs about public welfare projects

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QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti had meeting with the Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari here at the CM secretariat on Thursday. During the course of meeting, Chairman PPP inquired about the public welfare projects being executed in Balochistan. The Chief Minister gave detail briefing about the budget of the province for new financial year. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari particularly asked about the projects of education and health sectors in the province. The Chief Minister told that the health centers of high standards would be completed soon in Balochistan on pattern of Sindh. Besides, Mir Sarfraz Bugti also informed the Chairman PPP about the political and administrative affairs besides the law and order situation in the province.

"We are ready to hold talks, but within framework of Pakistan": Terrorists' organizations killing common poor Balochs levelling allegations of spy to appease to lords, says Zia

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs, Mir Ziaullah Langove has stated that the terrorists' organizations are massacring the common poor Balochistan after levelling allegations of "spy" against them. In an official statement issued here on Thursday, the Provincial Minister Home said that at the time when Balochistan is progressing on path of development and prosperity today, the terrorism activities are being carried out in Pakistan especially

Balochistan on the behest of enemy country, India. He urged the human rights organizations to raise wholehearted voice against these terrorists organizations taking notice of their inhuman acts. He mentioned that the terrorists organizations are attacking the armless and innocent Balochs, security forces and national installations in Quetta and other rural areas of province for their nefarious designs. He inquired that whether the state or government can be silenced against those massacring the innocent Baloch peoples?



QUETTA: Provincial Finance Minister Mir Shoaib Naushervani meeting with Governor Balochistan Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail

Comprehensive strategy prepared to maintain law & order during Muharramul Haram, says IGP

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QUETTA: The Inspector General of Police Balochistan, Abdul Khaliq Sheikh has stated that a comprehensive strategy has been prepared to maintain law and order situation during the month of Muharramul Haram. The IGP was presiding over a high level meeting regarding security during Muharramul Haram in the province, here on Thursday. The meeting was attended by Commissioner Quetta Muhammad Hamza Shafaqat, senior police officers, representatives of the Balochistan Shia Conference, sunni ulemas, leaders of Anjuman Tajran besides other concerned.

During the meeting, matters about security and other related arrangements during Muharramul Haram were discussed. It was decided that police, levies, Frontier Corps and personnel of other security agencies would be responsible for security while monitoring the arrangements during Muharram. A comprehensive and joint strategy has been prepared by the police command along with other law enforcement agencies. Addressing the meeting, IGP said that the security plan would be implemented in collaboration with organizers of Muharram processions and gatherings.



QUETTA: Inspector General of Police Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh talking with Ulema of different sects and leaders of Anjuman Tajran regarding security arrangement during Muharramul Haram. Commissioner Quetta Hamza Shafaqat is also present



QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti addressing dastarbandi ceremony of Nawab Arbab Umar Farooq Kasi

CM, tribal chieftains, elders participate: Senator Arbab Umar Farooq assumes responsibilities of chieftain of Kasis

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QUETTA: The eldest son of late Nawab Arbab Abdul Zahir Kasi, Senator Arbab Umar Farooq Kasi assumed the responsibilities of new Nawab (chieftain) of Kasi tribe here at a grand dastar bandi (turban wearing) ceremony held at the Arbab House here on Thursday. The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti as well as the tribal chieftains, elders and other dignitaries from different walks of life were in attendance at the dastar bandi ceremony. Prominent among them were the representative of Chief of Sarawan, Nawab Aslam Raisani, Nawabzada Lashkari Raisani, Sardar Kamal Khan Bangulzai, Nawab Muhammad Khan

Shahwani, Prince Musa Jan, former Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Kakar, besides others. The Chief Minister and other tribal elders and dignitaries wore the turban to new Nawab of Kasis, Arbab Umar Farooq Khan Kasi. They also congratulated and extended best wishes to Arbab Umar Farooq Kasi on becoming new Nawab of the tribe. Addressing the ceremony, the new Nawab of Kasis, Arbab Umar Farooq Kasi thanked all those participated in the dastar bandi ceremony. He said that it is the day of our tribal traditions and customs, and adding vowed to continue journey of brotherhood in his tribe.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Elusive justice

In Pakistan, justice of any form is, more often than not, difficult to come by. Recently, judges and prosecutors from across the country found themselves in agreement at a seminar in Karachi on the need to urgently reform the colonial-era Code of Criminal Procedure, which, it seemed from the discussion, was the biggest hurdle they faced in ensuring justice.

Several other proposals also came forth, among which were some to improve the investigation and prosecution of criminal activity through improved coordination and communication between investigators and prosecutors, with a view to preventing the collapse of cases due to insufficient or defective evidence.

Other recommendations included the introduction of deterrent measures to prevent frivolous and false litigation, a pervasive issue plaguing the legal system. Yet more changes were sought from the legislative branch, including depoliticisation of the police and proactive legislation on legal reforms from the political leadership.

One need only conduct a brief survey of those who have come into contact with the legal system to realise that it is fundamentally broken. From antediluvian laws to a corrupt enforcement apparatus, from a perennially understaffed judicial system to inept prosecution and perverse penal systems — none work towards ensuring justice, one of the most basic duties of any state towards its citizens.

These days, it is just as common for the accused to walk free in instances where it seems obvious that a crime has been committed as it is for a seemingly innocent citizen to be punished for an obviously fabricated crime for which there is no compelling evidence on the record. It is no wonder, then, that victims often run from the justice system, instead of turning to it: they would rather resign themselves to living with injustice than dare to hope for reparations from the state.

A similar sentiment was expressed by former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on the same day the Pakistan Prosecution Forum was discussing reforms. Perhaps exasperated by an accountability case which has, by Mr Abbasi's account, "been pending for five years without progress", the politician said the country "will not progress till NAB exists". NAB, the state's tool of choice for putting out-of-favour politicians out of commission, has provided some of the most prominent examples of how perverted our legal system can be.

However, as discussed earlier, the actual problem is much deeper. Till the Pakistani justice system institutionalises the fundamental principles of justice — fairness, equality and entitlement — it cannot fulfil its responsibilities. It also seems that the tools it is equipped with — ie, various laws and procedures — are insufficient for this purpose. Therefore, the legislature needs to step up and address the existing deficiencies in the legal system. This is one of the most pressing issues of our time.

Mango diplomacy

F.S. Aijazuddin

It was a brave attempt. Our embassy in Washington, after having failed to stem the tsunami of the US Congressional vote on Resolution HR 901 (368 for, seven against) threw a mango party to influence Biden's faltering administration.

The last time this friendly fruit had been used in our diplomacy was in the 1950s, when some mangoes grown in the Chinese embassy (then in Karachi) were sent to Chairman Mao Zedong.

Later, president Ziaul Haq tried to sweeten Mrs Indira Gandhi's sourness with lychee juice. She remained unmoved. To her, it tasted of military blanco.

At the recent mango party in DC, the guest of honour — Elizabeth Horst, principal deputy assistant secretary in the State Department — spoke feelingly about the Pak-US "long-standing relationship" as being in "the best place it's been in years". She neglected to say that she was there out of official necessity, nor that she was on her way to Sri Lanka as the next US ambassador there.

Nor did she dilute the message by the bipartisan US House of Representatives, urging President Joe Biden "to collaborate with Pakistan in upholding democracy, human rights, and the rule of law". The House assumes that 81-year-old Biden is still composed and can remember where Pakistan is.

Biden has probably forgotten that he came to Lahore on Feb 18 to monitor the 2008 general election. He asked a minister in the interim Punjab cabinet what would be the outcome. He was told: "The parties have to accept its conduct, its consequences, and the novelty of a coalition government." The results came in. The PPP and PML-N had to form a coalition government. They fell

out. The PPP then allied itself with the MQM, ANP and JUI-F.

Sixteen years have passed since the time when the US felt Pakistan was important enough to send three senators there to report on its general elections. Now, if we appear on the State Department's screen, it is for the wrong reasons.

Resolution HR 901 should not have come as a surprise, either here or in the US. It had been gestating since November 2023, a bipartisan indictment, parented by a Republican from Georgia and a Democrat from Michigan. It emphasised "the importance of free and fair elections, calling for a thorough and independent investigation into any claims of interference or irregularities in Pakistan's 2024 elections".

It also "urged Pakistan to uphold democratic and electoral institutions, human rights, and the rule of law, and respect the fundamental guarantees of due process, freedom of press, of assembly, and of speech of the people of Pakistan". Contestants in Miss Universe pageants have made more convincing appeals for world peace and harmony.

Going further, "the resolution condemned efforts to suppress democratic participation in Pakistan. It specifically denounced harassment, intimidation, violence, arbitrary detention, and restrictions on internet access, as well as any violations of human, civil, or political rights". Every-thing, except the stinking kitchen sink.

Our missions in Washington and the UN had enough notice of HR 901 to sandbag against its impact. Our government, awakened from a cipher-induced stupor, reacted by shooting its messengers. It removed our representatives in Washington and New York.

Their replacements

have a difficult task ahead. They have to develop a strategy that must anticipate Biden's funeral without sporting black armbands. They must prepare themselves for the probable (inevitable?) coronation of Donald Trump.

A hurricane of change is blowing through the world's democracies. Great Britain is likely to have a Labour government after 14 years of continuous Conservatism. In France, Macron watches helplessly as its electorate oscillates between the far right and far left. Iran's voters are being asked to choose between hardliner Saeed Jalili and the relatively less conservative Masoud Pezeshkian. The low turnout of Iranian voters reflected their diminished interest.

In such a volatile environment, the natural question is whether our Foreign Office is equipped to do its job. Gone are the days when India's MEA envied Pakistan's nimble diplomacy. They begrudged that we got more of a bang for our buck.

Today, our foreign ministry is in the hands of a former chartered accountant. He divides his time between part-time responsibilities as deputy prime minister and his enduring love, the finance ministry.

Some in the foreign ministry think we should not take Resolution HR 901 seriously. Others apprehend that the massive endorsement of it is a warning to our government that we are losing friends faster than a politician sheds principles. The Chinese, the Saudis, the UAE, and now the US are palpably inching away from us. Isolation, to paraphrase Paul Cezanne, may temper the strong; it is the stumbling block of the uncertain. - Courtesy Dawn

Peace or weapons?

Naem Sadiq

On Feb 28, 2013, the then interior minister Rehman Malik, in a written reply, informed the National Assembly (NA) that his ministry issued 11,776 prohibited bore arms licences in 2008; 27,551 in 2009; 5,789 in 2010; 8,369 in 2011; and 15,988 in 2012, thus empowering parliament with 69,473 prohibited bore weapon licences. A simple calculation suggests that on average every MNA got 203 prohibited bore weapon licences over a period of five years. This must be the world's most well-armed parliament, whose assets could spark envy in any member of the National Rifle Association (NRA).

On Aug 21, 2019, the government issued SRO (1)/2019, lifting the ban on issuance of prohibited bore weapon licences for nine categories of individuals — the president, prime minister, Senate chairman, NA Speaker, governors, chief ministers, federal ministers, Supreme Court and high court judges. They were now free to purchase or receive as gifts lethal weapons of "prohibited" bore category. The notification was objected to by a Supreme Court judge who wrote, "the judges' code of conduct did not permit receiving such gifts. What moral authority will the government exercise in tackling the spread of weapons by encouraging the spread of yet more lethal prohibited bore weapons?"

On Sept 25, 2021, the government announced a yet more crazy and classist notification extending the list of beneficiaries of prohibited bore weapons licences to include all members of the Senate, the national and provincial assemblies, and all Grade 21 and 22 officers. Generously, it clarified that they were all entitled to

not one but two prohibited bore arms licences.

In 2024, information received under the right to information law revealed that KP had issued 68,9510 arms licences in the last 10 years, while Sindh blessed its citizens with 115,467 in the same period.

It is beyond comprehension that a nation in such dire need of peace and tolerance would engage in such proliferation of the instruments of crime, violence and militancy. One can safely assume that every gun licence in Pakistan was issued without mandatory verification, training, background check or written test. They were either issued as an act of appeasement or through political clout, status, power or bribe. Perhaps, Pakistan could have had greater success in combating terrorism if, instead of the wishy-washy "20-point National Action Plan", it had chosen just a single-point agenda of eliminating all weapons. Here is how it could still be accomplished.

The government must understand that crime and militancy in Pakistan stems from its own flawed arms-promoting policies, its legal and illegal gun-licensing facilities and its failure to monitor the sale, smuggling and spread of weapons. Arms possession must be declared as the exclusive domain of the state; no citizen, regardless of his or her status, wealth, influence or political clout, should be allowed to possess, carry, store, buy, sell or display a weapon — licensed or otherwise.

In compliance with Article 256 of the Constitution, private militias operated by militants in urban, riverine and mountain areas, regardless of their size and patrons, must be dis-

banded via the full might of the state. The import, sale, purchase, transportation, delivery and possession of all kinds of weapons — except those in use by law-enforcement agencies — must be banned. Issuance of all types of gun licences be banned; those already issued must be declared null and void. The discriminatory and discretionary Arms Ordinance should be struck down. Starting with unlicensed weapons, all citizens must be made to surrender their weapons through an incentivised buy-back scheme.

Private weapons manufacturing in areas like Darra Adam Khel ought to be regulated and directed towards export rather than home consumption. The Small Arms Survey (Switzerland), in its 2018 report Estimating Global Civilian-Held Firearms Numbers, estimates 43.9 million guns held by civilians in Pakistan — far more than the combined number held by all the law-enforcing organisations of the country. We could learn much about gun control from Australia, the UK, New Zealand, Japan, China and Vietnam, which have successfully and smartly tackled this menace. On the other hand, successive Pakistani governments have contributed actively to violence and militancy via the issuance of uncontrolled gun licences, creating special provisions for prohibited bore arms for its militant elite (violative of Articles 25 and 256), using weapons as an instrument of political bribe and neglecting the rampant smuggling and sale of illegal arms. It has two choices: pursue peace and progress or remain embroiled in the world of militancy and armed militias. It would do well to log out of its NRA mindset. — Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Privatization Commission asked for ensuring cooperation with companies

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Privatization, Investment Board and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Thursday directed that all stakeholders should be taken on board for the privatization of national institutions and the Privatization Commission should ensure its full cooperation to the companies coming forward with serious offers.

The minister was chairing a high-level meeting of the Board of Privatization Commission to finalize the privatization

of various institutions and regarding important issues related to it, said a press release.

Abdul Aleem Khan said the Prime Minister wants the privatization of PIA as soon as possible so there should be no further delay while completing the remaining process in this regard. He said that Privatization Commission should attain financial autonomy by reducing its dependence on the Federal Government and ensure increase in its own resources. Moreover, Federal Minister

Privatization Abdul Aleem Khan, Minister of Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb and Minister of Law Azam Nazir Tarrar held a meeting to review the progress on privatization of House Building Finance Corporation. In this meeting, it was agreed that the protection of the employees of the institution will be kept in view during its privatization. The technical and legal aspects of the privatization of the House Building Finance Corporation (HBFC) were also discussed in the

meeting and a negotiation session was held with business group interested in purchase of the HBFC along with the officers of the Privatization Commission. Minister for Privatization Abdul Aleem Khan directed that all proposals for privatization should be opened in front of cameras in the presence of the media so that there should be no question on its transparency. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarrar also emphasized on the privatization.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Privatisation / Chairman Privatisation Commission, Abdul Aleem Khan chairing 220th meeting of the Privatisation Commission Board.



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, and Country Director of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Mr. Yong Ye, met at BISP Headquarters, Islamabad to discuss empowering BISP beneficiaries through innovative skill development and global job market integration.

Shaza advocates for enhancing technological exchanges between Pakistan, China

ISLAMABAD (APP): State Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja has advocated for enhancing technological exchanges and cooperation between Pakistan and China, aiming towards a more robust digital future together.

In an interview with China.com.cn, she highlighted China's transformative digital economic development as nothing short of a miracle and expressed her anticipation for

strengthened technological collaboration between the two nations. Currently in China to attend the 2024 Global Digital Economy Conference at the Beijing National Convention Center, Shaza Fatima Khawaja believes the conference will catalyze meaningful cooperation. It offers a platform for companies from both countries to explore joint ventures, share best practices, and engage in knowledge exchange.

She said that China has established its leading

position in global technology and innovation. China's progress in artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing and 5G technology is particularly remarkable, she added. The Minister said, the Belt and Road Initiative and the Digital Silk Road project demonstrate that China is committed to building an interconnected and technologically advanced world. In recent years, the global economic landscape has witnessed a digital revolution.

NY State Assembly Deputy Speaker meets Minister for Commerce

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-level delegation led by Deputy Speaker New York State Assembly Phil Ramos on Thursday met with Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan to explore the avenues for enhancing mutual trade interests between the two regions.

The meeting emphasized several key areas of collaboration, including the establishment of a Sister State relationship between New York and various Pakistani provinces, which would

NA Committee for ensuring resource mobilization for farmers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly Standing Committee on Food Security and Research on Thursday emphasized the need to ensure farmers support with resources mobilization such as high-quality seeds, fertilizers and access to credit for sustainable agriculture development in the country.

Chaired by Syed Hussain Tariq as its Chairman, the Committee

also stressed the need to focus on expanding research initiatives to develop climate-resilient crop varieties to maintain national food safety and security, said a press release. The Committee underscored the importance of investing in agricultural research and development (R&D). They proposed increasing funding for agricultural universities and research institutions to develop new farming techniques and seed varieties.

Speaking on the occasion, Jam Kamal highlighted the importance of multi-level connectivity, people to people, business to business and government to government to enhance bilateral relations.

EuroAsia Pak Digital Forum to forge new digitalized CPEC

BEIJING (APP): Minister of State for IT and Telecommunications, Shaza Fatima Khawaja said that in the next stage, the collaboration between Pakistan and China would extend from traditional to new or upgraded economic corridors such as transportation, circulation and exchange of data.

"Pakistan's human resources could not be underestimated in the world. 60% of our population is under the age of 35, which is both an opportunity and a challenge. By working

closely with China to provide systematic sci-tech training to such a huge talent pool, we are going to maximize the role of our valuable resources in such a digital age," she said at the EuroAsia Pakistan Digital Economy Forum held in Beijing.

The Minister gave a detailed introduction to the experience gained by Prime Minister Sharif after his recent visit to China with a delegation, repeatedly emphasizing that the Pakistani government has regarded the digital field as a top priority for current

governance, CEN reported on Thursday.

Dr. Zhao Baige, recipient of the "Medal of Excellence Crescent" National Honorary Medal of Pakistan, echoed by a series of specific suggestions. "Training of all types and levels badly need to be a top priority. Training at not only the government level, but also non-governmental and corporate levels should be included in the entire system, due to the cross-border connections are the key to the success of the entire digital economy revolution."

S.Arabia wins Presidency of ACAO Executive Council

RIYADH (SPA/APP): The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia unanimously won the presidency of the Executive Council of the Arab Civil Aviation Organization (ACAO) during the 28th Ordinary General Assembly meeting in Rabat, Morocco. Minister of Transport and Logistic Services, Eng. Saleh Al-Jasser, stated that this victory reflects the Kingdom's high status in international and regional organizations.

BISP-ADB to connect beneficiaries with global job markets and skill programs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Mr. Yong Ye. Speaking on the occasion, Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized the need for ADB's assistance in developing skill enhancement initiatives and connecting beneficiaries to international job markets. "ADB's support in designing these programs will be instrumental in breaking the cycle of poverty."

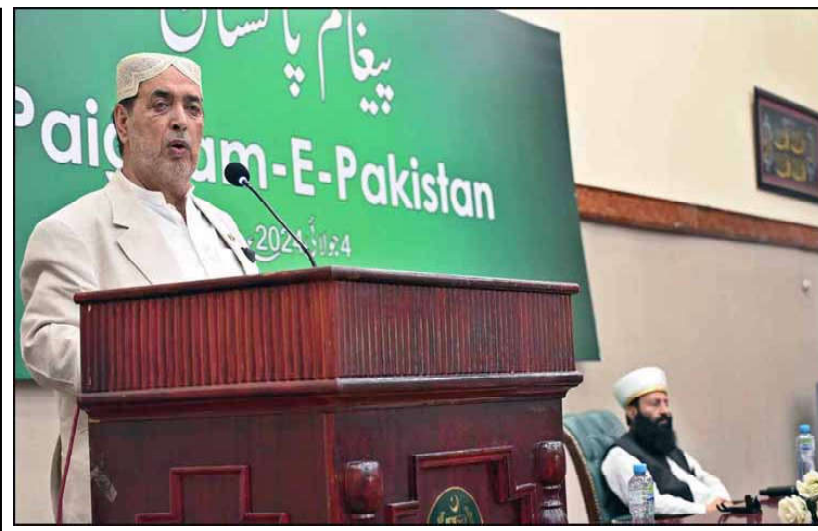
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CM chairs meeting to finalize Muharram security plans

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, chaired a meeting to review the arrangements for Muharram ul Haraam. The meeting was attended by the Chief Secretary, IG Police, Additional Chief Secretary Home, and other senior officials. The meeting discussed the security plan for Muharram, which includes the deployment of 40,000 security personnel, including FC and Pakistan Army troops, to ensure the safety of processions and majalis. A central control room will be established to monitor the security situation, and CCTV

cameras will be installed to oversee the processions. Special arrangements have been made for sensitive areas, including additional security forces and the establishment of special check posts. Mobile services will be suspended in these areas, and social media will be monitored to prevent the spread of hate speech. Health and rescue services will be on high alert during Muharram, with special teams deployed to handle any emergencies. Chief Minister directed officials to ensure a peaceful Muharram, emphasizing the importance of maintaining law and order and preventing any untoward

incidents. He also appealed to the public to cooperate with the government in maintaining peace and harmony during the month. Religious scholars and public figures will be engaged to promote peace and harmony and to prevent the spread of hate speech. Tents will be set up along procession routes to provide shade for participants, and electricity arrangements will be made to ensure an uninterrupted power supply. A coordination system has been established among all relevant departments and agencies to ensure the smooth observance of Muharram.



GILGIT: Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah addressing during the Paigham-e-Pakistan Conference, an initiative to maintain peace and harmony in Gilgit-Baltistan organized by Govt of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Government to uplift marginalised segments of society: Arora

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Minorities Ramesh Singh Arora attended a consultative session of the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) on Thursday and said that the Punjab government wanted to uplift all marginalised sections of society. Addressing the session, he said that initially formed with the support of Nawaz Sharif, the PPAF had been a cornerstone institution in Pakistan for over 25 years,

delivering impactful projects across various sectors, including health, education, flood relief, and the Benazir Income Support Programme. Minister Arora highlighted his involvement with the PPAF from 2003 to 2008 and praised its significant contributions towards its mission and vision. He emphasised the upcoming projects focusing on providing skills training to minority students, ensuring their inclusion and empowerment.

15 dead, 1342 injured in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least fifteen people died while 1342 were injured in 1238 road accidents in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours. Out of whom, 615 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 727 people with minor injuries were treated on the spot by Rescue Medical Teams. Analysis show 746 drivers, 52 underage drivers, 136 pedestrians, and 475 passengers were among the victims of road crashes.

LHC orders police to ensure recovery of brother of Gill

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) while ordering police to ensure recovery of brother of Dr Shahbaz Gill adjourned the hearing of the case till July 18. Justice Amjad Rafiq of LHC heard the petition Thursday. Home secretary Punjab Noor ul Amin Mengal, DIG operations Faisal Kamran and other officers appeared in the court. The state council told during the hearing data of geo fencing was obtained on Monday under the orders of the court.

Punjab to set up Polio Counters at entry points of province

LAHORE (APP): On the directions of the Chief Minister Punjab, the provincial government has stepped up its efforts to ensure the complete eradication of polio and has decided to establish polio counters at all 14 entry and exit points of the province. The decision was taken during a meeting of the Provincial Taskforce on Polio Eradication held at the Civil Secretariat. Provincial ministers Khawaja Salman Rafique, Khawaja Imran

Nazir, Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman, Secretary Health Ali Jan, Punjab Polio Prevention Program head Khizar Afzal and officers concerned attended the meeting. The participants agreed to raise the target of routine immunization to 95 percent for prevention of polio and other diseases. Khawaja Salman Rafique said that during the next anti-polio campaign, all the provincial ministers would be present.

Salman Rafique visits PDMA to review monsoon arrangement

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Health and Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Disaster Management, Khawaja Salman Rafique on Thursday reached Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Headquarters to review monsoon rains preparations and river conditions. He toured the PDMA control room where Director General PDMA Irfan Ali Kathia briefed him in detail about the status of monsoon rains

and water levels in rivers and working of the department to meet the challenges. Minister Rafique also reviewed the safety measures in place across the province regarding the monsoon rains. On the occasion, Khawaja Salman Rafique said that preparations were complete to tackle the torrential rains and potential floods in Punjab and an awareness campaign was being conducted regarding precautionary measures.



RAWALPINDI: Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) establish Flood Response Unit at Guwalmandi near Nullah Lai as pre-monsoon spell is expected to start from Thursday to Sunday and assured that all necessary arrangements have been made in this regard by Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA).

Qasim visits Medical Complex to inaugurate welfare initiatives

Independent Report PESHAWAR: Health Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Syed Qasim Ali Shah, visited Hayatabad Medical Complex today for the inauguration of important public welfare projects. He was received and welcomed by the President of IDF-HMC, Dr. Nazeef Ullah. The Health Minister was briefed on the launch of the Free Drugs Bank for underprivileged cardiac patients at Heart Linq, Cardiology

Department by Chairman Cardiology Dr. Shah Sawar. This initiative will ensure needy individuals receive lifesaving medicines without cost burden. Dr. Shah Sawar also briefed the Minister on the newly launched Executive Clinic that utilizes cutting-edge technologies to expand access to specialized cardiac care. Mr. Faisal Khan, briefed the Minister on how the new Telemedicine Services leverage technology to provide remote care.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Information and Broadcasting Azma Bukhari and Provincial Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani talking to the media in a press conference in DGPR of the provincial capital.

KP Govt to utilize receipts from oil, gas on concerned districts

Independent Report PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to further improve the production bonus guidelines issued for the better utilization of the receipts in the districts with oil and gas production capacity and to involve the district administrations of the respective districts in the consultation process for the purpose. Work has been started on forming committees for the utilization of using the income

from oil and gas reserves discovered in Dera Ismail Khan and North Waziristan in the development process in the respective districts so that the population related to the natural resources of oil and gas could be benefited to maximum extent. In this connection, the Energy and Power Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in light of the instructions of the KP Chief Minister organized a one-day consultative seminar was organized in a local hotel.

BISP-KP DG directs for more BISP centers in DI Khan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Director General (DG), Zohra Aslam on Thursday directed the authorities concerned to open more centers to benefit maximum women. She stated this during his visit to different BISP centers in Dera Ismail Khan wherein she also inspected the arrangements and distribution process of the stipend amount among the beneficiaries. The director general expressed her satisfaction over the arrangements. However, she directed the BISP staff to further improve their behaviour towards the beneficiaries. Speaking on this occasion, Zohra Aslam informed that about 130,000 families were being benefitted through BISP. Similarly, she said, the educational stipends were being provided to the children of BISP's beneficiaries under 'Waseela-e-Taleem' program. Besides, she added, the 'Benazir Nashonuma Centres' were also established for children's malnutrition.

International News

Israel approves biggest West Bank land seizure in decades

Monitoring Desk JERUSALEM: Israel has approved its biggest land seizure in the occupied West Bank in more than three decades, a move criticised by activists on Wednesday as detrimental to Palestinian peace hopes. The 12.7-square-kilometre of land in the Jordan Valley was officially declared "state property" in June, according to an official declaration revealed by the Peace Now group. "The size of the area designated for declaration is the largest since the (1993) Oslo Accords, and the year 2024 marks a peak in the extent of declarations of state land," Peace Now said. The Israeli government has seized a total of 23.7 square kilometres in the West Bank since the start of the year, it said. When land is declared "state property", Palestinians lose private ownership rights and are barred from using it, Peace Now said. Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem

and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Since then, it has constructed dozens of settlements across the West Bank, home to more than 490,000 Israelis, which are illegal under the international law. About three million Palestinians reside in the West Bank. In the 1980s, Israel seized hundreds of square kilometres of land, halting seizures in 1992. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's first government resumed them in 1996. Israel's hard-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich announced one earlier seizure in March, when he slammed those "in Israel and the world who seek to undermine our right over" the West Bank. Peace Now criticised Netanyahu and Smotrich, accusing them of prioritising "a handful of settlers" over resolving the political conflict or ending the war. Israeli forces carried out new military strikes in the southern city of Rafah

amid fierce fighting with Palestinian militants overnight, residents said. At least 12 people were killed in new strikes in central and northern Gaza, health officials said. Israeli leaders have said they are winding down the phase of intense fighting and would soon shift to more targeted operations in the nearly nine-month-war. But fighting continued overnight in two locations at the centre of Rafah, where tanks have seized several districts and advanced further west and north of the city in recent days, and concerns about the plight of hundreds of thousands of displaced people are growing. In Maghazi refugee camp in central Gaza, two Israeli airstrikes killed five Palestinians, health officials said. In Shejaia an airstrike killed four and wounded 17, medics said. Another airstrike hit a car in the southern city of Deir Al-Balah, killing three people, officials said.



Palestinians react, following an Israeli strike near a UN-run school sheltering displaced people, in Khan Younis.

More than 136,000 displaced by spread of war in southeast Sudan, UN says

Monitoring Desk CAIRO: More than 136,000 people have fled Sudan's southeastern Sennar state since the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces began a series of attacks on towns, the United Nations said on Wednesday, the latest wave of displacement caused by Sudan's almost 15-month long war. They join nearly 10 million people driven from their homes since war broke out between the RSF and the regular army. The war has sparked

accusations of "ethnic cleansing" and warnings of famine, mainly in RSF-controlled areas across the country. The RSF on June 24 began a campaign to seize the city of Sennar, a trading hub, but quickly turned to the smaller towns of Sinjah and al-Dinder, prompting an exodus of civilians from all three, mainly to neighbouring al-Gedaref and Blue Nile states. Images on social media showed people of all ages wading across the Blue Nile.

White House says Biden not pulling out of race

Monitoring Desk WASHINGTON: Joe Biden is "absolutely not" pulling out of the White House race, his spokeswoman said on Wednesday, as pressure mounted on the veteran Democrat following his disastrous debate performance against Donald Trump. The 81-year-old Biden has told a key ally he must convince the public quickly that he can do the job, the New York Times and CNN reported, raising the stakes for Biden's first post-debate TV interview, scheduled for Friday.

Five Palestinians killed in Israeli raids in West Bank

Monitoring Desk RAMALLAH: Israeli forces killed five Palestinians in two military operations in the occupied West Bank where tensions have risen because of the Gaza war, Palestinian and Israeli sources said Wednesday. One night-time air strike killed four men at a refugee camp near the town of Tulkam, which has seen a surge in violence as Israel has intensified raids. The Palestinian Authority health ministry said the four were "killed as a result of the occupation's bombing of Nur Shams camp".

UN rights chief warns about rise of far-right in Europe

Monitoring Desk GENEVA: The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Wednesday called for vigilance in the face of far-right political gains in Europe, citing narratives that dehumanise migrants and asylum seekers. "We need to be very vigilant because especially history tells us, in particular in Europe, that the vilification of the other, the denigration

of the other, is a harbinger for what's to come," Volker Turk told reporters at a press conference in Geneva. "It's an alarm bell we need to ring." Far-right parties made gains in the European Parliament last month and France is holding a run-off election this weekend where opponents of its far-right, anti-immigrant National Rally are seeking to block them from power.

China's Xi urges regional security bloc to resist 'external interference'

Monitoring Desk BEIJING: China's President Xi Jinping told a regional economic, defence and security bloc that includes Russia and its latest member Belarus that member-nations must work together to resist "external interference" and firmly support one another. "In the face of the real risks of small yards with high fences, we must safeguard the right to development," Xi was quoted by Chinese state television CCTV as saying in Astana at the 24th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The 10-member bloc must handle "inter-

nal difference" with peace, seek common ground, and resolve co-operation difficulties, Xi added. The Chinese president also stressed the need to jointly promote scientific and technological innovation, and to maintain the stability and smoothness of industrial and supply chains. Since its inception in Shanghai in 2001, the SCO has expanded from a regional organisation with six members into a trans-regional bloc with 10 full members, including Belarus, which officially joined on Thursday. Other members of the bloc include India, Iran and Kazakhstan.

Iran candidates hold final rallies before presidential run-off on Friday

Monitoring Desk TEHRAN: In a bustling Tehran prayer hall, ultra-conservative Saeed Jalili has rallied fervent supporters ahead of Friday's runoff presidential vote, while his reformist rival Masoud Pezeshkian stirred up a crowd in a nearby stadium. The two candidates held their final campaign rallies late on Wednesday night, after leading the first-round vote in snap elections to succeed president Ebrahim Raisi who died in a helicopter crash in May. Chants of "All Iran says Jalili" echoed as thousands of supporters of the hardline former nuclear negotiator gathered at the Grand Mosalla mosque in central Tehran, buzzing with excitement. Jalili promised "strength and progress" if elected, as posters of the late ultraconservative Raisi adorned the walls, bearing the slogan: "A world of opportunities, Iran leaps forward." At an open-air sta-

dium elsewhere in the capital, Pezeshkian made the case for "unity and cohesion", his supporters' chants invoking another former president — the reformist Mohammad Khatami who has endorsed their candidate. "Long live Khatami, long live Pezeshkian!" called the spirited crowd, waving green flags adorned with the reformist candidate's "For Iran" slogan. At the prayer hall, women draped in black sat in a designated section, separated from the men. But all burst into rapturous applause as Jalili made his entrance. "We are at a historical moment," he told the cheering crowd, urging voters to head to the polls on Friday. Only 40 per cent of Iran's 61 million eligible voters turned up at the polls last week — representing the lowest turnout in any presidential election since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Hurricane Beryl steams towards Cayman Islands, Mexico after striking Jamaica

Monitoring Desk KINGSTON: Hurricane Beryl steamed towards the Cayman Islands and Mexico on Thursday, after thrashing Jamaica with intense wind and rain, causing floods and power outages after forging a destructive path across smaller Caribbean islands over the past couple of days. The death toll from the powerful Category 4 hurricane climbed to at least 10 across the region, and is widely expected to rise further as communications return on islands damaged by flooding and deadly winds. As Beryl moved away from Jamaica early on Thursday, the island discontinued its hurricane warning but kept a flash flood watch, the Meteorological Service of Jamaica said on X.

By late Wednesday, the storm's eye was about 100 miles (161 km) west of Kingston, according to the US National Hurricane Center (NHC), as its core headed toward the Cayman Islands. Packing maximum sustained winds of 130 miles per hour (209 kph), Beryl was expected to dump 4-6 inches (10-15 cm) of rain on the Cayman Islands into Thursday, where a hurricane warning was in effect and life-threatening surf and rip currents were possible, NHC said. A hurricane warning was also in force for the eastern coast of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula. Around 0900 GMT, the Category 3 hurricane was just 55 miles from Grand Cayman and about 440 miles off Tulum Mexico, NHC said.

