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Govt greenlights army deployment across country for Muharram security

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government has granted the approval of army deployment across the country during Muharram to ensure security.

The federal government has approved deployment of Pakistan Army and civil armed forces in Islamabad, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan along with provinces, says a notification.

The notification mentions that details about army deployment will be discussed with relevant authorities. The deployment of army and civil armed forces has been allowed for an indefinite period.

The army as a quick response force is going to be deployed on request of provinces. The provinces will decide about the places and numbers of deployment of army troops.

Earlier, the Sindh government approved the deployment of army, rangers and FC personnel.

With the advent of Muharram on Monday (today), the Punjab police have finalised foolproof security arrangements to protect processions and

Majalis (gatherings) across the province.

As many as 10,700 processions and 38,000 Majalis will take place in the province. Over 215,000 officers and personnel will perform security duty, with over 28,000 officers and personnel will specifically be deployed in Lahore.

Rangers and the Pakistan Army, along with other govt security institutions, will help police for peaceful Muharram.

Over 66,000 community volunteers and 45,000 volunteers will perform security duty for Muharram processions.

Various field formations including CTD, special branch, traffic police, Dolphin Squad, and Peru, will perform their duties as part of the security plan.

Across the province, 633 points have been identified as flashpoints, with 283 in Lahore alone.

In Lahore, 54 locations are deemed extremely sensitive, and 229 sensitive, with additional personnel deployed accordingly.

Province-wide, 586 locations are classified as sensitive, and 146 as extremely sensitive.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal presiding 1st meeting of Disaster Response at NEOC, NDMA Headquarters.

Pakistan to stay in IMF cycle if taxes not hiked: Aurangzeb

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb warned that Pakistan will stay in the IMF cycle if taxes are not increased.

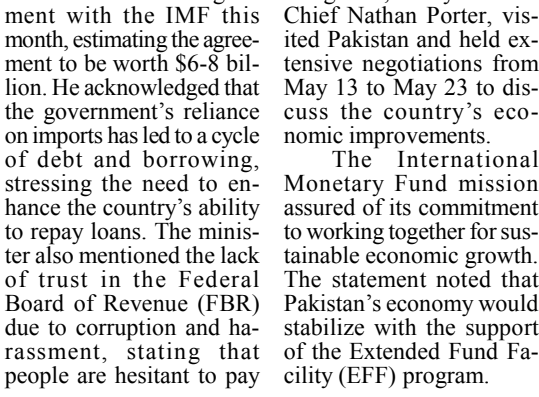
In an interview with Financial Times, he said that the "upcoming IMF program will not be our last fund programme if we don't bring our tax revenues up."

Aurangzeb maintained that he is hoping Pakistan will reach a staff-level agreement with the IMF this month, estimating the agreement to be worth \$6-8 billion. He acknowledged that the government's reliance on imports has led to a cycle of debt and borrowing, stressing the need to enhance the country's ability to repay loans. The minister also mentioned the lack of trust in the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) due to corruption and harassment, stating that people are hesitant to pay

taxes due to these issues.

Aurangzeb emphasized that the government must demonstrate positive performance in the next 2-3 months to address the country's financial challenges. Earlier, the International Monetary Fund appreciated Pakistan's tough economic decisions and efforts regarding hike in gas prices. It is pertinent to mention here that the fund's delegation, led by Mission Chief Nathan Porter, visited Pakistan and held extensive negotiations from May 13 to May 23 to discuss the country's economic improvements.

The International Monetary Fund mission assured of its commitment to working together for sustainable economic growth. The statement noted that Pakistan's economy would stabilize with the support of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) program.



MUZAFFRABAD: Members of Refugees Jammu Kashmir shouting slogans during protest against Indian army on the eve of death anniversary of Burhan Muzaffar Wani, in the city.

President approves Election (Amendment) Bill, 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday approved the Election (Amendment) Bill 2024. Through the Election Amendment Bill, the amendments were made in the section 140 of the Election Act 2017.

After the amendment, the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court will be consulted in case of appointment of a serving

judge in the Election Tribunal, a press release issued by the President House said. The president extended the approval of the bill under Article 75 of the Constitution. After the president's approval, the Election Bill has become an Act. The Election Amendment Bill was passed by the National Assembly on June 28 and by the Senate on July 4.



QUETTA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif talking to the media after the signing of agreement to solarise agricultural tubewells of Balochistan.

28,000 tube wells in Balochistan to be converted on solar power: PM

Says federal govt to provide 70%, Balochistan to contribute 30% in Rs55 bln solarization project

QUETTA (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that under an agreement reached between the Federal and Balochistan provincial governments, a total of 28,000 agricultural tube wells in the province would be shifted to solar system within three months.

Talking to media after the agreement signing ceremony, the prime minister said the federal government would provide 70 percent funds while 30 percent would be contributed by the provincial government for Rs 55 billion solarization project. The prime minister held the provincial cabinet in which the federal ministers

and Governor Balochistan Jafar Khan Mandokhel and Chief Minister Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti were present, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

Earlier, the prime minister witnessed an agreement signing ceremony between the federal and the provincial governments for shifting of electricity run tube wells to solar powered mechanism.

The prime minister tasked the chief minister to complete the solarization project within three months.

He opined that the completion of project would ensure prosperity of the farmers and bring a large area of cultivable land un-

der farming, adding that with functioning of the solar powered tube wells, the farmers would get uninterrupted power supply throughout the day.

During his address to the provincial cabinet, he termed the agreement as 'a deep structured change' firmly rooted in the government's conceived reforms agenda, he said that a huge sum of Rs500 billion would be saved from going down the drain.

The prime minister said that the federal government would be absolve of paying Rs80-90 billion burden which was provided as subsidy to the province due to non-payment of bills and still the farmers community

was getting 2 to 6 hours power supply.

With the solarization process, the issue would be resolved forever, he expressed the hope.

The prime minister said that throughout the world, the utilization of solar capacity was tapped for generation of environment friendly power which was considered as the inexpensive source of power.

He said that the government was taking steps on priority basis for the provision of solar power and assured that the federal government would work closely with the provincial government for the uplift of the province.

President directs completion of Kachhi Canal project within 18 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday directed the authorities concerned to ensure completion of the Kachhi Canal project within 1.5 years to irrigate around 713,000 acres of land in Balochistan province. The president, while chairing a meeting on the Green Pakistan Initiative (GPI), at Aiwan-e-Sadr, said that the federal government would provide funding for the project to ensure its timely completion on a priority basis, a President House press release said.

In the meeting, the president was briefed about the construction of six strategic canals for the Green Pakistan Initiative.

Minister for Interior, Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, and senior military officials attended the

meeting. President Zardari was informed that the construction of six strategic canals, viz. Chashma Right Bank Canal, Kachhi Canal, Raine Canal, Greater Thal Canal, Cholistan Canal, and Thar Canal, would help enhance the agricultural potential of Pakistan by increasing the cultivable area as well as the livestock and fisheries potential of the country.

He directed to kickstart work on strategic canals for GPI and ensure their early completion, besides lining them with concrete to prevent seepage and wastage of water.

He urged the need to develop Pakistan's irrigation sector along modern lines to conserve water, reduce water losses, and enhance water availability.



PESHAWAR: Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing a press conference along with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Faisal Karim Kundi at Governor House, in the Provincial Capital.

Bilawal says: Security linked with economic situation; PPP to attend Govt called APC

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that security was linked with the country's economic situation and his party has principally decided to participate in the Govt's called all parties conference (APC) for a broad-based political consensus on issues related to national security besides ensuring durable peace in the country. Addressing a press conference at Governor House here Monday, Bilawal Bhutto said that an inclusive and across the board political consensus was inevitable on all issues related to national security and the decisions once taken at APC would get support of the political forces and the entire nation. He hailed the Prime Minister's decision to invite the PTI in APC. He said that we stand with our brave security forces in their fight against menace of terrorism and demanded strong action against facilitators of terrorists.

Bilawal said that collective decisions against scourge of terrorism were imperative for durable progress and prosperity of the country.

He said that major problems of the country were unemployment and price hike and these issues could be addressed only through better economic and monetary policies.

Bilawal said that it would have been better if consultation was made with PPP before the budget, saying that his party would continue to support the government to take decisions in the country and people's interests.

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QUETTA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets Governor Balochistan Jafar Khan Mandokhel during his one day visit to Quetta.

Kenyan court declares Pak journalist Arshad's murder illegal, unconstitutional

Court orders Kenya to pay family of Pak journalist 21.7m as compensation

ISLAMABAD (INP): Kenya High Court judge declared the murder of the Pakistani journalist Arshad Sharif in Kenya as illegal and unconstitutional penalized the Kenyan police officer involved in the planned target killing. Kenya's Kajado High Court has awarded Rs21.7 million to the family of slain Pakistani Journalist Arshad Sharif who was shot dead by Kenyan police officers in October 2022.

While delivering her judgement, Justice Stella

Mutuku said the use of lethal force against Sharif by shooting him in the head was unlawful and unconstitutional. She faulted the Attorney General, the DPP and other investigating agencies for their laxity in concluding the probe and charging police officers behind Arshad's death. Kenya's Kajado High Court has awarded Rs21.7 million to the family of slain Pakistani Journalist Arshad Sharif who was shot dead by Kenyan police officers in October 2022.

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UN HC for Refugees calls on Deputy PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi Monday called on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar.

In a meeting, they discussed wide range of issues pertaining to the global refugee situation with a particular focus on Afghan refugees. Views were also exchanged on the longstanding cooperation between Pakistan and the UNHCR.

High Commissioner Grandi appreciated Pakistan's efforts and contributions in hosting millions of Afghan refugees for decades and termed it as a remarkable example of the country's hospitality.

He briefed the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister on UNHCR's ongoing projects and emphasized on the importance of sustained engagement and cooperation between Pakistan and the UNHCR.

Deputy Prime Minister Dar also shared Pakistan's perspective and priorities with regard to Afghan refugees. He underscored that the new humanitarian situations emerging around the world must not divert the global.

FC Balochistan foils major sugar smuggling attempt to Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Frontier Corps (FC) Balochistan (South) has successfully foiled an attempt to smuggle sugar from Pakistan to Afghanistan. The operation took place in Killi Gharibabad, Nok Kundi, where a large cache of illegally stored sugar was discovered in a warehouse. During the raid, authorities seized 1,368 bags of sugar, weighing approximately 70 tons. The confiscated sugar is estimated to be worth 10 million rupees at current market rates. Following the operation, the warehouse was sealed, and an FIR was registered against the smugglers. The seized sugar and those involved in the smuggling attempt have been handed over to customs.



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chairing a meeting regarding maintenance of law and order during Muharram.

NDMA convenes DRC meeting to strengthen coordination for Monsoon Season 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): The first meeting of the Disaster Response Committee (DRC), constituted by the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, was held here on Monday at National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Headquarters. The committee was established to ensure effective coordination between the Federal and Provincial Governments in the context of national disaster response efforts, especially during the monsoon season and its associated hazards and risks.

The meeting was aimed to discuss and streamline strategies for proactive response plans to mitigate the impacts of potential monsoon-related

emergencies. Discussions encompassed a range of topics, including the current state of preparedness, resource allocation, early warning systems, and community engagement strategies, a news release said.

The committee members also reviewed contingency plans including inter-agency communication, conducting joint training exercises and deploying resources to vulnerable regions to ensure a swift and coordinated response.

Chairman NDMA, Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik briefed attendees about the projection by NDMA's NEOC about monsoon season and said that the establishment of the Disaster Response

Committee was a pivotal step towards strengthening our national disaster management framework.

"As we approach the monsoon season, it is imperative that we are well-prepared to address any potential emergency, he said and underlined the significance of reviewing stock positions for monsoon contingencies which was essential to undertake tangible actions before disasters strike. Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Ehsan Iqbal Chaudhry, (convener of the committee) presided the meeting and emphasized the critical importance of a cohesive and integrated approach to disaster management.

Nikah during iddat case: Orders of IHC important, I cannot even think of violating it: Judge Afzal

ISLAMABAD (Online): During the hearing of Nikah during iddat case of former Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi, Judge Afzal Majoka of District and Sessions Court Islamabad has remarked order of Islamabad High Court (IHC) holds importance and "I cannot even think of violating it."

The district court resorted to IHC for directives in connection with adjournment of hearing.

Additional Sessions judge Afzal Majoka heard

the case. Suleman Safdar, Usman Gul and Khalid Yousuf Chaudhry counsels for Bushra Bibi appeared in the court. They said that Suleman Safdar gave arguments that Suleman Akram Raja has given arguments on the duration of iddat. I adopt the arguments of Suleman Akram Raja on duration of iddat. The assistant lawyer to Zahid Asif counsel for Khawar Manika appeared before the court and requested on behalf of the senior counsel for adjournment of hearing.

Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani paid glowing tributes to the great humanitarian and philanthropist Abdul Sattar Edhi on the occasion of his 8th death anniversary.

Gilani eulogized Edhi's services for humanity, highlighting his dedication to the destitute and underprivileged, said a news release issued on Monday.

He remarked that Abdul Sattar Edhi was a great human being who served people without any discrimination.

Gilani pays tributes to late Abdul Sattar Edhi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani paid glowing tributes to the great humanitarian and philanthropist Abdul Sattar Edhi on the occasion of his 8th death anniversary.

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Taxing targets

After setting a massive revenue target for the Federal Board of Revenue for the next fiscal year, the government seems to be building pressure on the tax authority to perform. It is just as well that this may lead to a tightening of the net around those who have so far managed to evade the taxman.

A day after another massive shakeup in the FBR, which reportedly saw the transfer of dozens of officers of the Inland Revenue Service and Customs Groups, and with more transfers and postings of senior officers expected over the weekend, the tax authority was told to immediately go after the around 4.5m citizens it had identified, which it thinks are liable to pay taxes but do not. The prime minister is also reportedly overseeing an accelerated action plan to digitise and reform the FBR, along with a review of its existing and required resources. These are all positive signs. Reportedly, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is serious about cracking down on corruption within the FBR, introducing a merit-based culture, and reforming the institution. Worryingly, however, he has involved two intelligence agencies, according to a report in local media, to 'assist' him in the task of identifying and penalising FBR officials.

Time will tell how successful this strategy will prove. The FBR has generally proven to be a difficult nut to crack for most past governments, with efforts to reform it invariably encountering resistance as soon as certain thresholds begin to be crossed. That said, it is clear to all and sundry that Pakistan's economic viability depends on the Board's ability to extract revenue in line with government policies and that the room for failure is no longer there. With the ongoing economic crisis, the need for a diligent tax authority has become an existential necessity for Islamabad.

The FBR's operational competencies aside, the fiscal policies, as outlined in the budget, have set it up for another huge challenge. It can expect to be reminded very soon that taxation is just as much a political issue as it is a fiscal concern. The FBR may begin executing the tax directives more diligently than before, but how will the government react when the various 'protected' classes once again begin agitating against its tax drives?

Not only that, the salaried classes, usually a lot easier to control, also seem to be in a black mood. Discussions on various social forums these days are increasingly turning to questions about why they should pay so much in taxes and if it isn't more sensible to be operating off the books. This is a dangerous sign for a government battling a crisis of legitimacy. How delicately and firmly it handles discontent will make or break its tax plans.

Maleeha Lodhi

The Shehbaz Sharif government faces multiple challenges — from the opposition, its political allies and from growing public discontent with a dire economic situation as people struggle with a cost-of-living crisis and the punishing burden of taxes. It also confronts a surge in security threats. How has the government managed so far to deal with these multiple fronts? Does it have a firm grip on the political, economic and security situation?

Dealing with PTI was never going to be easy. But it was a test of the government's political management skills to engage the opposition's parliamentary members in a way that minimised frequent disruptions of proceedings. However, with the party continuing to be the target of coercive actions by the authorities and their leader and activists in jail, PTI lawmakers have been in no mood to cease their protests in parliament and outside.

Despite a fleeting pause when the prime minister offered talks to the opposition — a move that was dead on arrival in the

current fraught climate — there have been unending, bitter government-opposition clashes in the National Assembly. It has involved rejection by PTI lawmakers of the budget — as "anti-people" — as well as the government's other policy measures including its latest counterterrorism plan. Government ministers have also been lashing out at PTI in and out of the House. But neither has secured the upper hand in this confrontation. Instead, both have reached a virtual dead end in trying to prevail on the other. A tense and disorderly stalemate persists.

A 'normalised' relationship between the federal government and the PTI-run provincial government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is especially consequential for national stability. Issues concerning allocation of financial resources from the centre, adequate power supply and postings of officials remain a bone of contention between them. They need to be resolved for a proper working relationship to be established. Smooth working relations are also necessary for the robust execu-

tion of the federal government's counterterrorism campaign as its main theatre of operations is obviously in KP.

Governments always have more to lose from confrontational politics. Certainly, it has distracted the PML-N-led coalition from greater focus on governance. It has laid bare a style of leadership evidenced by the prime minister's dealings with allies, in which political engagement or negotiations are left to others. This reinforces his long-standing image as someone more comfortable being an administrator rather than a political leader; more at ease with bureaucrats than with politicians who he has to negotiate with. His not-so-frequent appearances in parliament also testify to this, which discourages ministers from showing up. This once prompted the elder Sharif, president of PML-N, to say the Shehbaz government should free itself from "bureaucratic influence".

Lack of consultation has emerged as a major grievance with the government by its principal political ally, the PPP. Although this complaint sur-

passed publicly at budget time, PPP leaders say it extends to the government's overall functioning and lack of structured and sustained consultation. It prompted PPP legislators to sharply criticise the budget and call it "directionless". Initially, the PPP threatened to boycott the budget session. Its lawmakers only agreed to participate after assurances by senior government leaders. Even so, PPP MNAs did not pull any punches in assailing budget proposals.

The Senate Standing Committee on Finance, chaired by a PPP senator, went so far as to call the budget against the national interest and in its report to the House called for withdrawal of several proposed measures. In his speech, PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari also took aim at budget proposals. Significantly he claimed the government had not fulfilled its commitment under the PML-N-PPP agreement, forged at the time of government formation, to consult his party on the budget and related decisions.

Despite its misgivings, the PPP voted for the budget. But not before some changes to the finance bill,

although this was also in response to demands by the business community. In any case, the whole episode underlined fiftful management by the government of its relations with an ally without whose support it cannot survive in office. Of course, some of the PPP's complaints reflect political posturing to bargain for more from the government, such as its power-sharing demands in the Punjab government. Nevertheless, it suggests this would remain an uneasy and unpredictable relationship, especially as the government has preferred an ad hoc approach to managing it rather than an institutionalised one.

The budget was the first major test for the Shehbaz government. It evoked criticism across the board, from political parties, business community, media and the public at large. Having to meet IMF conditionalities to qualify for a new larger Fund loan programme provided the government no choice but to take painful adjustment measures. But the budget was an example of how to reward the elite and punish everyone else.

The Pakistan Busi-

ness Council had this to say: "Sacred cows will graze freely while the golden geese will be cooked." Certainly, placing the burden of additional taxation on the salaried middle class marked a failure to equitably distribute the pain of adjustment, especially in view of the budget's pro-elite measures including salary increases for civil servants. This deepened public discontent at a time of mounting economic hardship, especially as increasing disruptions in power supply worsened people's plight at the peak of summer.

The government's lack of a communication strategy to explain budget measures and how they would extricate the country from the economic crisis contributed to public frustration. In fact, the government's weak communication on other counts too has denuded it of the ability to demonstrate it is running the affairs of state purposefully. Its response to the deteriorating security situation came on the heels of the public expression of concern by a senior Chinese official visiting Pakistan. -- Courtesy Dawn

Death and taxes

Umair Javed

The recently passed budget reveals three aspects about the present ruling regime. The first one is the external constraint of getting an IMF deal. It is clear that securing a new agreement, by any means necessary, is the primary motivation of decision-makers. The entire budget exercise seems to be working backwards from whatever targets have been communicated by the lender.

The second aspect is a hard domestic constraint. The ruling parties at the centre, especially PML-N, are fully aware of their nearly non-existent electoral legitimacy. Their uncertain position in power is thus far more reliant on the civil bureaucracy and the military establishment.

The third and final aspect is that the PML-N has made a decision that there is no need or urgency in the current moment to seek greater support among different groups in society, such as salaried individuals. Therefore, its primary impulse for whatever

little space is left in the budget after the first two constraints is to reward the few narrow segments that may still be supporting them in some way. This primarily includes businesses working in the wholesale retail and other undocumented sectors.

It is worth exploring these three aspects turn by turn. While some of the economic mess is self-inflicted by the present regime, a large part of it is down to structural deficiencies in Pakistan's economy. A lack of productivity and the consequent inability to earn enough dollars means every government has a forex borrowing requirement, one which makes the IMF more or less indispensable in the current framework. Any government in this situation, at least one unwilling to take any radical steps, would have had to appease the external lender.

The external lender, in turn, makes a set of demands in terms of raising domestic revenue. In recent programmes, the demands have been specific when it comes to re-

moving electricity price distortions and various forms of tax exemptions. This budget is mostly an outcome of these revenue-related demands.

If that external constraint informs the overall thrust of the budget, some of its internal workings reflect domestic realities. An increase in pensions and government officer salaries shows the entrenched control of the civil and military bureaucracy on financial decision-making. It is clear that the 'overdeveloped state', theorised by Hamza Alavi nearly 50 years ago, is still a valid way to describe the country. The 'permanent' state bequeathed by colonial rule is first and foremost interested in feeding itself rather than catering to any group in society.

The same reality is visible in the exemption offered in advance taxes on the sale of immovable property by civil and military officers, as well as in the numerous regulations showing government officers sanctioning perks and privileges for themselves. I am sure there are a few state offi-

cial who are doing their jobs for a range of pro-social and service-oriented objectives. But it is hard to ignore the fact that the vast majority now see the state as a means of securing upward mobility, greater social status, and generational wealth, even when it comes at the cost of greater immiseration for the rest.

This insatiable appetite is being catered to by a hybrid regime that is sustained by the (coercive) actions of state officials, rather than by the votes of citizens. Even if the regime politicians wanted to resist, and it is far from clear that they want to, they barely have any legs to stand on.

Finally, after the IMF's conditions and the state officials' own self-serving appetite, there is very little space left in the budget for anyone else's concerns. The first to be sacrificed is the white-collar salaried class in the formal sector. Recent estimates place the total number of this group, to which I too belong, at around two million individuals. Our un-

fortunate status as fully documented taxpayers serves as a convenient way to squeeze out more revenue, whenever required. This budget has taken full advantage of this, and will further contribute to downward mobility and decreasing living standards that have been the norm for the past few years. It is no wonder that every other conversation within this demographic is about foreign migration.

On the other hand, there are those who continue to operate in the informal sector, such as large swathes of the wholesale and retail sector and others engaged in real estate. Initial claims that the noose is being tightened around these groups as well turn out to be fairly hollow. All that was done is a further segmentation between filer, non-filer categories. Most businesses can get away with this by filing nil/null sales and income tax returns, or by turning to even more cash-based transactions. The number of wholesale-retail businesses is around 2.5m. Among these, a couple of hundred thousand are the larger ones,

who hide turnovers and earn large returns. As former finance minister Miftah Ismail attempted, and a recent piece by economist Ammar Khan argued, it would have been relatively efficient to implement a fixed income tax regime through commercial electricity connections. That could have then been used as the first step towards greater documentation. Instead, the ruling party has made an explicit choice to protect its core support base, while subjecting every other group to greater taxation.

The budget has since passed and is now in force. An IMF deal will likely go through, which means more 'stabilisation' in the coming years, with anaemic growth. Barring some great challenge from the judiciary, the political landscape is expected to stay the same, with a regime held in place by force of the state rather than through popular support. It is then likely that the next few budgets will look the same as this one. No respite for the weary, with both economic death and taxes for the salaried class.

A trusted space

Huma Yusuf

At a recent anti-corruption conference, I briefly chatted with a Bolivian gentleman who is both an activist fighting corruption and convener of a network of librarians. My first instinct was to dismiss his involvement with libraries as an interesting hobby. But shortly after our encounter, it clicked: public access to information is the bedrock of anti-corruption, so why wouldn't the activist wear both hats?

I am not alone in forgetting the democratic underpinning of libraries. Due to their growing rarity, we tend to consider them ends unto themselves. They are sometimes treated like artefacts rather than civic spaces, the books inside reframed as relics from a literate past that must be preserved rather than sources of information that should be consumed, considered, challenged.

Often, our public discourse curtails libraries to their educative role — quiet places, typically on campuses, where students can use reference books or work without interruption. This is a critical function, but it misses the wood for the trees.

In a democratic context, libraries are places where citizens can access information that helps them make informed decisions about who to vote for, and that empowers them to hold those elected representatives to account. This conception assumes that libraries are public access, funded by the government in the spirit of making the democratic system work. And at its best, the concept does work: in a world of misinformation and polarisation, public libraries remain trusted places.

The world was reminded of their power in November 2023 when the

Russians shelled the Kherson Regional Scientific Library in Ukraine. The library caught fire after the first rocket hit, and the Russians continued attacking it until it burned to the ground. The state-owned library boasted collections in 45 languages, many of which focused on the history and ethnography of southern Ukraine, including Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. The library's destruction was a political act, a strategic win in Russia's occupation effort; if information about Ukraine's history and society was unavailable, it was — literally and figuratively — up for grabs.

It is no wonder then that preserving and developing libraries is low on the priority list of the Pakistani state, which is more interested in suppressing inclusive politics and disempowering citizens. What hope can libraries have in a context where even social media musings are considered subversive and censored under any pretence? The information that public libraries offer, coupled with their ability to convene communities in real life, is a democratic force not to be taken lightly.

And so we have instead the proliferation of private libraries — those in the homes of the educated elite, in private clubs, private schools and universities, and those under the control of vested community groups.

Despite their private nature, this latter category continues to play a key democratic role, engaging local communities, providing access to otherwise obscured information, sparking debate through events, and, increasingly, providing digital access to world reference materials. But these spaces are dwindling and increasingly threatened.

This was evident in this paper's coverage of the Sayad Hashmi Reference Library, which is threatened by demolition as it falls on a proposed route for the Malir Expressway. Created and maintained through a communal effort, the library houses 16,000 books with a focus on Baloch literature and culture. Even as demolition day creeps closer, the authorities have yet to offer an alternative location for it. In a clear illustration of the political nature of libraries, its sponsors and supporters believe that this is due to its links to the Baloch community, with the razing of the library perceived as part of a broader effort to suppress that community's voice and access to information.

The idea of the library as a political battleground is not new in Pakistan. Some may recall the Western press's gushing coverage of a small library that popped up in Dara Adam Khel at the height of the TTP insurgency. A local graduate decided he did not want to join his father's gun shop and set up a small community library next door in the hope that reading would provide both understanding of and sanctuary from the region's collective trauma.

Such examples should not be one-offs. Given the mounting democratic challenges in our country, it is time for civil society to reprioritise the role of the library. And this may best be done by going back to basics and celebrating the joy of reading.

Reading, after all, engenders empathy, which is the starting point for all engagement, understanding and notions of fairness. And those qualities are the real fuel of functioning democracies. -- Courtesy Dawn

Poor livability

Dr Noman Ahmed

In a recent assessment of urban livability, the Economist Intelligence Unit rated Karachi as one of the world's least livable cities. The metropolis fared poorly in terms of stability, healthcare, education, culture, the environment and infrastructure. Karachi now compares with Lagos, Tripoli, Algiers and Damascus.

This is hardly surprising for Karachi residents, who are regularly subjected to power shutdowns, the absence of piped water, shortage of public transport, gas load-shedding, broken roads, street crime, toxic air quality, criminal tree-cutting, and other challenges. Despite these odds, the city remains the major contributor to national GDP and revenues from direct and indirect taxation.

Karachi has long been aspiring to a semi-autonomous governance model to address its issues. Barring the City District Government format under Gen Musharraf, this demand has not been realised. As a result of a controversial electoral process, 245 union committees, 25 town municipal corporations, and a metropolitan corporation came into existence about a year ago. All of them are still trying to find a visible role to play in managing Karachi's core affairs. With a limited financial base and executive capacity, people justifiably see these local government organs as mere cosmetic entities.

Karachi's political economy is complex. There are many overt and covert interest groups, who have their fingerprints all over the decisions pertaining to Karachi's development and management.

Local and international investors and devel-

opers attempt to safeguard everything that fuels their business. One observes endless land supply for investment, albeit at the cost of farmlands, fruit orchards, and indigenous settlements. The eviction of people in planned and unplanned localities is an ongoing nightmare. Whereas a few investors amass exponential profits, millions see their lives altered for the worse after forced dislocations. The realtors are abetted in their projects by the provincial authorities, the city administration, and high-flying engineers, architects, contractors and service providers.

Utility agencies bend the rules to extend their services to these schemes. The mystery of the status of the K-4 Bulk Water Supply Scheme for over a decade is an example. To benefit privileged localities, K-4's right of way has been changed. A resident in Bahria Town receives uninterrupted water supply while another in Federal B Area has to run from pillar to post to access water.

To promote costly and state-subsidised buses on a few routes, the authorities have closed operations on many ordinary bus routes where city transporters offered their services at affordable prices. The Bus Rapid Transit is a joke. Constructed at an astronomical cost and inconveniencing residents, the BRT has been Karachi's most financially and operationally unviable transport option ever. If and when all seven BRT lines are operational, they will cater to only nine per cent of the total passenger trips. BRT beneficiaries will be IFIs, government officials, consultants and contractors. The losers will be Karachites.

There is a visible housing need in the city that remains unmet due to

multiple reasons. For a very long time, the city has been functioning without a development plan with data on demographic trends at city scale, migrations, housing and infrastructure needs, and solutions to urban challenges. For the past many years, no public scheme for housing the urban poor has been announced, despite the fact that thousands of households are added to the existing tally every month.

Land in the peripheries, earmarked for housing low-income communities, has been given to a dubious mega realtor. As a result, existing low- and middle-income neighbourhoods are densifying fast. Single-storeyed yards on 80 or 120 square yards are being swiftly replaced with five- or six-storeyed structures. Most of these buildings are built without proper design and supervision. They are virtual death traps for the inhabitants. Many such buildings have already collapsed. Poor ventilation and lack of legal electricity connections make life miserable, especially for the elderly, women and children. Authorities only wake up in the event of an accident, conduct an inquiry and end up suspending a handful of officials.

To address all these concerns, the city's decision-making and governance mechanism must change. A broad-based steering committee under the Sindh chief minister and composed of representatives from stakeholder groups is needed. The body must be empowered to appraise city affairs and take appropriate decisions. Karachi's livability will not improve unless appropriate institutional arrangements are put in place to address the challenges faced by the residents. -- Courtesy Dawn



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chairing a meeting regarding over-billing of protected consumers.

Finance minister assures KE of resolving delayed payment issue

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Monday assured K-Electric of addressing its matters related to delayed payments.

According to press release issued by the finance ministry, the minister was talking to delegation of K-Electric that called on him here. The delegation members included Chief Executive Officer (CEO) K-Electric Syed Moonis Abdullah Alvi, CFO KE Muhammad Amir Ghaziani and Chief Regulatory Affairs Muhammad Imran Qureshi.

Philippine ambassador visits Dhodial Mansehra to foster trade relations

MANSEHRA (APP): Ambassador of the Philippines, Maria Agnes M Cervantes on Monday visited Dhodial Mansehra with her embassy staff to discuss and promote trade relations between the Philippines and Pakistan.

The ambassador visited at the invitation of former Vice President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry Hanif Gohar.

During her visit to Gohar House, the ambassador and her delegation met with key figures from the business community. They engaged in discussions about enhancing trade between the two nations and explored the economic landscape of Pakistan.

Former Federal Minister Azam Khan Swati was also present to participate in the discussions. The delegation extended their visit to include the Al-Mustafa Trust Gohar Campus Hospital in Dhodial and the Dadar Sanatorium Hospital. At Al-Mustafa Trust Hospital, the hospital administration provided a detailed briefing on the medical facilities and modern machinery available at the hospital.

Furthermore, the ambassador visited the SOS Village Dhodial, where she and her team interacted with the children residing there. They were informed about the residential and educational facilities provided to the children.

The children showcased their skills through impressive performances of judo, karate, and taekwondo, which were highly appreciated by the visitors.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication, Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja chairing first meeting of Functional Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunication.

Telenor launches Startup Mentors' Network to empower entrepreneurial ecosystem

ISLAMABAD (APP): Telenor Pakistan, a frontrunner in providing telecommunication services and digital solutions across the country, unveiled its latest initiative, the 'Startup Mentors' Network'.

As a natural extension of Telenor Pakistan's successful corporate accelerator program, Telenor Velocity, which has empowered startups to scale through access to expertise in product management, growth hacking, and digital assets, the Startup Mentors' Network aims to deliver an even more supportive entrepreneurial landscape across the nation, said a news release issued here Monday.

The Startup Mentors' Network features a distinguished panel of 31 seasoned professionals from Telenor Pakistan, each recognized for their profound expertise spanning critical domains such as communications, marketing, finance, strategy, and business models. These mentors, selected for their proven track records and dedication to innovation, will collaborate closely with startups embedded within various incubators and accelerators nationwide.

The primary objective of the network is to provide tailored guidance and strategic support to emerging ventures, enabling them to refine business concepts, devise robust strategies, optimize pricing models, and enhance their market positioning. By leveraging the extensive industry knowledge and network of Telenor Pakistan's mentors, startups will gain invaluable insights and actionable advice to accelerate their growth trajectory.

IT industry share to be increased up to 25 bln dollars; Chairman PMYP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of Prime Minister Youth Programme (PMYP) Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan on Monday expressed the resolve to increase the Information Technology (IT) industry share up to 25 billion dollars from the current 2.5 billion dollars in the next five years.

Addressing the "International Conference on Sustainability in Workforce" at a local hotel, he said that as many as 200,000 youths would be

trained in high-tech and Information technology programmes with the skills needed to thrive in the modern workplace.

"By equipping students with the latest tools and technologies, and fostering collaboration with industry leaders, we can prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow."

Mashhood said that the government was intensifying efforts under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz

Sharif towards enhancing skill development through strategic partnerships and targeted programs.

He added that the country's economy was moving towards the right direction under the leadership of PM Shehbaz Sharif and will succeed in overcoming the financial problems. Rana said due to the economic policies of the government during the last three months and the signing of multi-billion-dollar investment projects with China, Qatar, UAE.

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Saudi group to invest in retail Oil Sector in Pak

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a recent development, Saudi Group Asyad Holding through UAE-based Wafi Energy Holding Limited has acquired 77.42% shareholdings and control of Shell Pakistan Limited.

The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has approved the acquisition under Section 11 of the Competition Act, 2010, thus solidifying the said transaction to boost the retail oil sector in Pakistan, according to a press release issued here on Monday.

M/s Shell Pakistan Limited, listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange, maintains a substantial business footprint in the retail supply of motor fuels and lubricants across Pakistan. Whereas, M/s Wafi Energy LLC is a wholly-owned affiliate of Asyad Holding Group which specializes in the management and operation of fuel stations in Saudi Arabia. The Group has established M/s Wafi Energy Holding Limited to flex its wings for investment purposes in Pakistan.

The CCP's Phase I competition assessment identified 'Retail Fuel, Vehicle Lubricants, and Industrial Lubricants' as the relevant product markets. It was also revealed that Shell Pakistan has distinct shares in all three relevant markets but that will remain unchanged post-transaction.

The analysis further confirmed that Wafi Energy Holding Limited will not gain a dominant position in the relevant markets even after attaining direct control of Shell Pakistan. Therefore, the CCP has swiftly authorized the said acquisition under Section 31 of the Competition Act, 2010.

Chairman CCP, Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu, while signing the Order expressed that this development is expected to boost competition by elevating service standards in the retail fuel supply chain and thus, contribute immensely to flourishing Pakistani markets.

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ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb in a meeting with the CEO of K-Electric Syed Moonis Abdullah Alvi and other executives.

Jazz appoints Farrukh Khan as CFO and CEO of MFH

ISLAMABAD (APP): Jazz appointed Farrukh Khan, CEO & Managing Director of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX), as its new Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and CEO of Micro-Finance Holdings (MFH), effective September 15, 2024.

Farrukh will also join the board of Mobilink Microfinance Bank.

Gabor Koosis, the outgoing CFO, will remain with Jazz until the end of the year, focusing on strategic projects to facilitate a smooth transition and maintain momentum in ongoing initiatives said a news release.

Farrukh Khan brings over 30 years of leadership experience in major financial institutions, including roles as CEO of Acumen Fund, co-founder and CEO of BMA Capital Management, and CFO at American Express. His expertise in mergers and public offerings will enhance Jazz's financial strategy and innovation.

Amir Ibrahim, CEO of Jazz & Chairman MMBL, commented, "We welcomed Farrukh Khan to our leadership team. His rich expertise and leadership in capital markets are crucial as we evolve into a ServiceCo."

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Pak-China Joint Lab for AI to intelligitize Pakistan's agriculture

BEIJING (APP): In May, the Pakistan China Joint Lab for Artificial Intelligence and Smart Agriculture (AI&SA) has been established at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF).

Punjab Province, as Pakistan's main agricultural production area, its annual grain output accounts for about 76% of the country's total annual grain output.

Both parties agreed that it has unique advantages to carry out pilot applications of high-throughput crop monitoring projects here. In this province, about 600 farmers have joined the pilot application.

Dr. Iqar Ahmad Khan, Vice Chancellor UAF, noted lately that in the 25,000 villages across Punjab, if drone spraying technology could be adopted on a large scale, it will help increase productivity, reduce costs and greatly promote the development of intelligent agriculture. "We use drones equipped with visual recognition equipment to fly around the fields to

achieve intelligent management of crop monitoring, cultivation management, pest and disease analysis, and agricultural production, including growth determination, crop health monitoring, water requirement analysis, fertilization, as well as pesticide application," Dr Wu Jun, the Chinese Director of the lab, introduced.

Mohammad Malik, a local farmer who has been growing wheat, sugarcane and other crops in Punjab for more than 30 years, is one of the participants in the pilot project. At first, he had many doubts about the project. "This technology is too complicated for farmers like me, and I doubt its effectiveness and practicality."

The project team members promptly explained it, "We could produce a text guide and audio-visual materials of the vegetation health map written in the local dialect and send them to your son's smartphone application."

PIC directs SBP to make public list of 1000 loan defaulters

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Information Commission has issued a directive to the Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to disclose the list of the top 1000 loan defaulters.

The order said: "It is an admitted fact that 1000 individuals obtained loans from the concerned banks and failed to repay them, causing significant financial damage to both the country and the banks involved. Such individuals cannot be protected from disclosure."

The Commission observed that the exemption cited by the SBP did not pertain to this case. Consequently, the plea of the public body has been rejected.

The SBP Governor has been directed to disclose the required information and submit it to the Commission within 10 days.

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PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 353 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 353.41 points, a positive change of 0.44 percent, closing at 80,566.21 points against 80,212.79 points on the last working day.

A total of 261,649,614 shares were traded during the day as compared to 448,981,017 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 13,024 billion against Rs 18,995 billion on the last trading day.

Around 427 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 216 of them recorded gains and 158 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 53 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Hum Network with 20,667,563 shares at Rs 11.36 per share, National BankXD with 19,555,510 shares at Rs 50.92 per share and Bank of Punjab with 17,587,329 shares at Rs5.79 per share.

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Independent Report KARACHI: Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, has apprised that Chief Collector of Customs Appraisal (South), Mr. Mohsin Rafiq, has agreed with principal stand of FPCCI to improve ease of doing business benchmarks vis-a-vis customs during clearance at customs appraisal. The only way forward to cut human interaction is to

we want our due and rightful facilitation during customs appraisal.

Mr. Asif Sakhi, VP FPCCI, maintained that Custom House and its staff in Karachi should be made more hospitable, amicable and facilitative as it will promote liaison and compliance from the traders. WeBOC was meant to be a 24/7 facility; but, it is not being operated as such and shortage of staff is the primary reason

for issues, he added.

Mr. Aman Paracha, VP FPCCI, highlighted that business community can provide thousands of real-time and realistic prices to the customs without charging a penny; therefore, customs appraisal should take them onboard. We, at FPCCI, are willing to play the role of a bridge between the stakeholders of the system from either sides, he added.

Mr. Shabbir Mansha, VP FPCCI, pointed out that updated rules of section 203 pertaining to warfage or storage fee have not yet been drafted; causing tremendous financial losses to the importers in case of any discrepancy or delays. Additionally,

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LAHORE: AWPDA engineer is busy in repairing Transformers at G.R.O in the Federal Capital.

Minister directs NHA to make organization profitable and resource increasing

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Communications, Privatization and Board of Investment Abdul Aleem Khan on Monday directed the National Highway Authority (NHA) to make a profitable and resource increasing organization to ensure the self-sufficient in future.

Presiding over a high-level meeting, the minister said that NHA should bring change in its reputation and become a good name for the nation and the country by working with self-reliance, hard work and honesty, said a press release.

He further said that his first priority in the department is to ensure the construction of a safe and qualitative Motorway from Sukkur to Karachi, followed by the completion of highways from Karachi to Quetta and from Mansehra to Babusar Top, as soon as possible.

He said that from the commercial point of view, the main target of all our highways' and road network should be the countries of Central Asia which will be more beneficial for Pakistan.

Aleem Khan said that he is offering new tasks and departmental plan of action under which Government funds will not be wasted in any way and there will be zero tolerance on corruption through which maximum benefit could be attained from minimum expenditure. He directed that for the new and ongoing projects of NHA there must be third party evaluation from multinational companies. He said the authority has to avoid the old working system and come forward to compete with the private sector.

The minister directed that trucks exceeding the allowed weight should not come on any highway of NHA moreover long queues should be eliminated by ensuring "M-Tag" on all motorways including Lahore-Sialkot sector.

Aleem Khan further said that he himself visit to Sindh and Balochistan provinces so that the speed of work on the projects of NHA could be reviewed on the spot.



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chairs a meeting regarding Railways Development Projects, in Islamabad

AIOU to provide free education facilities to students of Balochistan, GB, FATA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Vice Chancellor, AIOU Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood Monday said that the university is extending free education facilities for the students of Gilgit-Baltistan, Balochistan Province, and the merged tribal districts (formerly FATA).

The objective behind this initiative is to contribute to the efforts of the present government towards the enrolment of out-of-school children.

AIOU is setting an exemplary role by playing its role in the national initiative of enrolling out-of-school children through providing free education up to matriculation level for children.

The university's autumn semester for 2024 is commencing from July 15.

The Vice-Chancellor has directed the heads of the relevant regional offices to ensure that this message reaches every household in these three regions so that out-of-school children can benefit from this university facility and illuminate their lives through education.

Additionally, the university provides fee concessions for those students who are unable to continue their education due to financial constraints, said a news release.

For availing of this facility, individuals can contact the nearest regional office of the university.

AIOU also offers free education to prisoners and transgender individuals so that they can be empowered to become productive and positive members of society.

The university provides education to prisoners within jail premises.

The aim of providing free education to prisoners is to transform the lives of criminals in such a way that they can start a new life as civilized, useful, and positive citizens of society after completing their sentences.

USAID, Pakistani institutions to enhance student support office at universities

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Pakistani higher education institutions are taking significant strides to transform student support services across universities in Pakistan.

This initiative aimed to equip students with the essential skills needed to thrive in today's competitive global environment, said a news release issued here on Monday.

The 3rd annual summit, organized through USAID's Higher Education System Strengthening Activity (HESSA), brought together over 100 officials and faculty from 16 partner universities across Pakistan.

This four-day event highlights the robust partnership between the United States and Pakistan, underscoring their joint commitment to enhancing access to quality higher education for all Pakistanis.

The opening session of the four-day event was chaired by Prof. Dr. Bushra Mirza, Member (R&D) Higher Education Commission of Pakistan alongside Maura O'Brien, USAID Deputy Mission Director.

Dr. Mirza emphasized the need for universities to foster student belonging. "It is important for higher education institutions to foster a sense of belonging, and empower students to navigate and shape their futures. As we gather at this summit, let's reaffirm our commitment to creating inclusive and supportive environments where every student can thrive," she added.

Ms. O'Brien highlighted the importance of soft skills in her remarks, stating, "By prioritizing soft skills building, universities can better prepare students to meet the demands of the modern workforce and enhance their career prospects."



ISLAMABAD: Members of Sunni Ulema Council are holding a rally in connection of first Muharram-ul-Haram the day of Martyrdom of 2nd Muslim Caliph Hazrat Umar Farooq (R.A) passes through a road.

IESCO introduces Pro-rata billing system for conveniences of consumers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has introduced "Pro-rata" billing system aimed at charging customers with 100 per cent accurate meter readings for the convenience of customers.

Pro-rata system would help billing the consumers based on 30-31 days, told IESCO spokesperson in a statement issued here.

He said IESCO kept check to ensure 100% accurate meter reading through Pro-rata system and added Pro-rata billing was used to match meter readings and days of the month.

He said Pro-rata billing would directly benefit the customers. The number of protected consumers increased in winter due to less electricity consumption but its numbers decreased in summer owing to high consumption, he added.

He said due to Eid-ul-Adha holidays, the billing of one batch of June 24 was definitely affected but its billing was not done over 30 days to avoid inconvenience for the consumers.

River Kabul runs in low flood: FFC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Flood Commission (FFC) on Monday said that River Kabul was flowing in low flood at Warsak-Nowsheera reach while all other main rivers of Indus River System (IRS) were flowing normal.

According to daily FFC report, monsoon trough along the foothills of Himalayas (India) has temporarily become insignificant for Pakistan whereas a strong trough of the westerly wave that was previously prevailing over the northern parts of Pakistan has now moved eastwards. A new trough lies over northwestern Afghanistan.

Additionally, over northeastern Balochistan and adjoining areas, a weak seasonal low also prevails causing incursion of light moisture from the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal to the upper parts of Pakistan, up to 3000 feet.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan presiding over a high level meeting of NHA.

UNHCR's delegation led by UN High Commissioner for Refugees calls on Amir Muqam

ISLAMABAD (APP): The UNHCR's high level delegation led by UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi accompanied by Philippa Candler Representative of UNHCR, Pakistan called on Minister for States and Frontier Regions & Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan, Engr Amir Muqam here on Monday.

The meeting was attended by Secretary SAFRON Zafar Hasan, Joint Secretary Refugees Agha Waseem Ahmad and Chief Commissioner Afghan Refugees Muhammad Abbas Khan and other senior officials of Ministry of SAFRON and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a news release said.

Speaking on the occasion, Federal Minister Engr Amir Muqam said that Pakistan acknowledge UNHCR's continued support for Afghan refugees in Pakistan for the past 45 years. He said that Pakistan hosts millions of Afghan refugees, providing protection, education and health facilities.

"Currently, there are 1.45 million registered Afghan citizens card holders and this does not include a great number of unregistered Afghan refugees and other nationals," he added.

The Federal Minister Engr Amir Muqam said that it is a matter of concern that there is decline in support for Afghan refugees and development funds for their hosting areas in Pakistan.

"We need exclusive, generous and sustainable interventions."

UNHCR's High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi lauded the people and government of Pakistan for hosting Afghan refugees for over four decades.

He said that UNHCR will organize a global dialogue likely in October to discuss the issues pertaining to refugees.

He said that Pakistan would be specially invited at this occasion. He expressed the hope that this event will create a new dimension and avenues for the support of refugees across the globe and for the rests.

IFA conducts 1278 raids; imposes Rs 1.7m fines in June

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) conducted 1,278 raids and inspections in the Federal Capital during June, imposing fines totaling Rs 1,724,000 on violators.

Deputy Director Operations (DDO) of IFA, Dr. Tahira Siddique, revealed in the monthly performance report that these inspections targeted businesses selling harmful or low-quality food products. Over 54,014 liters/kgs of hazardous oils and other unsafe items, including expired food, meat, dairy, drinks, leftover/stale foods, and MSGs, were discarded during various raids.

Additionally, 588 improvement notices were issued, and 38 food points were sealed for violations. The authority also gave 504 verbal instructions and imposed heavy fines on 107 violators.

Furthermore, one FIR was lodged for not observing the standard operating procedures (SOPs) set by the IFA.



ISLAMABAD: Members of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) shouting slogans during protest against Indian army on the eve of death anniversary of Burhan Muzaffar Wani, in the Federal Capital.

ET imposes fine on PML-N MNAs for not filing reply

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Tribunal (ET) has sought affidavits again from successful candidates of PML-N in the case against alleged rigging in 3 constituencies of Islamabad.

ET imposed fine amounting to Rs 20000 each on Raja Khurram Nawaz and Tariq Fazal Chaudhry for not filing forms 45 and 47 and complete reply timely.

The ET also slapped fine amounting to Rs 20000 on Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry for not filing reply.

The ET ordered to file reply within three days.

ET has warned membership of those members who have not filed reply can be suspended.

ET has remarked hearing of all constituencies will be conducted separately and on day to day basis.

The ET adjourned the hearing of case against alleged rigging in NA-48 till July 9, NA-47 till July 10 and NA-46 till July 11.

Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri heard the petitions filed by PTI candidates Monday.

The counsel said adjournment cannot be given more than three days.

Court rejects PTI founder plea for making contact with his sons on whatsapp

RAWALPINDI (Online): Judge Malik Ijaz Asif of Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) Rawalpindi has rejected petition of PTI founder Imran Khan nominated in May 9 cases for making contact with his sons on whatsapp.

The court has rejected the plea in the light of report from jail administration. The court had sought reply from the jail administration on petition of former chairman PTI.

The jail administration took the plea in its reply as per jail manual no law is in place in respect of meeting of any accused with his relatives on whatsapp. On the other hand as per court's orders the meeting of the accused with his sons is arranged twice in a month.

The court rejected the plea for talks with his sons by the accused on whatsapp once in a week.

Former chairman PTI had taken plea in his petition the petitioner is former Prime Minister (PM) who has rendered enormous services in sports, health, politics and development of the country.

The jail administration is hindrance in the meeting between the petitioner and his sons.

Options for Pakistan NUST think tank holds seminar on "US-China Strategic Competition"

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speakers at a seminar on "US-China Strategic Competition: Options for Pakistan" held on Monday emphasized the need for geopolitical and geoeconomic innovation to deal with challenges of the 21st century.

The seminar was arranged by the NUST Institute of Policy Studies (NIPS).

The keynote speaker, Ambassador Dr Raza Muhammad, President, Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), emphasized that Pakistan faces both challenges and opportunities amidst US-China strategic competition.

He said success consists in maximizing opportunities and minimizing challenges. President IPRI highlighted Pakistan's unique geostategic location as a trade and energy hub, its youth bulge as a potential asset, and its natural resources worth trillions as key anchors of a comprehensive approach to national development, regional connectivity, and diplomatic success.

In the second keynote, Ambassador Zamir Akram, former Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, stressed that in the contemporary geopolitical scenario, Pakistan's options are constrained, making balanced relations between the US and China unfeasible due to a lack of strategic convergence with the US.

He pointed out that the Indo-US alliance has strengthened Pakistan's strategic partnership with China, leading to the latter's unmatched support in political, defence, economic, and technological spheres, notably through CPEC, worth \$24 billion since 2013.

He advised that China's status as Pakistan's strategic partner, largest trading partner,



ISLAMABAD: A view of water level in Rawal Lake has decreased due to below-normal rainfall in the Federal Capital.

SC accepts LHCBA's plea to become party

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Monday accepted the request of Lahore High Court Bar Association (LHCBA) to become a party in an appeal against termination of civilians' trials in army courts.

A seven-member larger bench of the top court headed by Justice Amin ud Din Khan and comprising Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Shahid Waheed, Justice Irfan Saadat Khan and Justice Shahid Bilal heard the appeals of federation.

At the outset of hearing, the court sought arguments from LHCBA's lawyer Hamid Khan on next date of hearing.

Addressing the lawyer of Shuhada Foundation, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail said that according to the records Jinnah House Lahore was also set on fire during May 9, incidents. It will be seen later that how many days Quaid-e-Azam stayed in Jinnah House, he remarked.

The court asked the lawyer that Quaid-i-e-Azam's residence was set on fire in Ziarat, where was the Shuhada Foundation on that incident and how many applications did it file?

The top court, however, also accepted the request of foundation to become party in the case. The PTI's counsel during hearing withdrew the application for live streaming of the hearing.

The further hearing of the case was then adjourned till July 11.



ISLAMABAD: Workers of Capital Development Authority (CDA) buy in planting plants of Sunflowers on a green belt alongside Islamabad Expressway in the Federal Capital.

Iranian envoy pays tribute Abdul Sattar Edhi on his 8th death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Iranian Ambassador Amiri Moghadam on Monday paid tribute to Abdul Sattar Edhi on his 8th death anniversary.

"Today marks the anniversary of the passing of Abdul Sattar Edhi, a man whose legacy continues to inspire millions," he shared a heartfelt message, honoring the life and contributions of this extraordinary humanitarian.

Ambassador Amiri said Edhi was a dedicated man and a treasure for Pakistani society adding that he was a humanitarian, philanthropist and ascetic who founded the Edhi Foundation.

He said his work had created the world's largest ambulance network as well as numerous homeless shelters, animal shelters, rehabilitation centers, and orphanages across Pakistan.

Ambassador Amiri said Edhi's tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to helping those in need had left an indelible mark on Pakistan and the world as his legacy of compassion and service continues to be a beacon of hope and inspiration.

On this solemn day, Ambassador Amiri extended the deepest gratitude for Edhi's selfless service to humanity and prayed, "May God bless his soul."