



US supports 'direct' talks between India, Pakistan: State Dept

The United States support "direct discussions" between India and Pakistan, saying the two neighbouring countries should work out the mode for the talks themselves, State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller has said. "We value our important relationships with both India and Pakistan," he said in response to a question from a Pakistani TV channel reporter at his daily news briefing on Thursday.



Ahsan Iqbal delivers landmark speech at China-Pakistan Political Forum

The Minister for Planning & Development of Pakistan, Ahsan Iqbal, delivered a significant speech at the China-Pakistan Political Parties Forum and the Third Meeting of the CPEC Political Parties Joint Consultation Mechanism. The event, attended by high-ranking officials and dignitaries, including H. E. Mr. Liu Jian Chao, Minister for International Department Central Committee of the Communist Party of China... (Details on Page 8)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Pak-China Relations

Chinese Minister Liu Jianchao met General Syed Asim Munir, COAS at General Headquarters on Friday.



Photo: ISPR

China minister, Army chief discuss CPEC progress, defense of regional peace and stability

Spokesman Report

RAWALPINDI: Mr. Liu Jianchao, Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC), met General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at General Headquarters today. During the meeting, both discussed matters of mutual interest, including regional peace and stability, and reviewed progress on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The COAS reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the strategic partnership with China and pledged full support for the successful implementation of CPEC, a

flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Mr. Liu Jianchao highlighted that he is visiting Pakistan as a follow up of the successful meetings between the leadership of the two countries in China. He emphasized the significance of the longstanding brotherly relations between the two nations and expressed satisfaction with the progress achieved on CPEC, reiterating China's commitment to its timely completion. The visiting dignitary also commended Pakistan's efforts in maintaining regional peace and stability, acknowledging the support of the Pakistan Armed Forces in providing security to Chinese nationals and projects in Pakistan.

Pak-China friendship vital for peace, development of both countries & region: PM

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said that the Pakistan-China friendship was indispensable for peace and development of both the countries as well as the region and beyond. Emphasizing on historic and unique significance of bilateral relations between the two countries, the prime minister reaffirmed that the Pakistan-China friendship was time-tested and enduring. He was talking to Minister of International Department of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC) Liu Jianchao who along with a delegation called on him at the PM House. While welcoming the Chinese dignitary and members of his delegation to Pakistan, the prime minister congratulated him as well as political leaders of Pakistan on the successful organization of Pakistan-China Political

Parties Forum and the 3rd round of Joint Consultative Mechanism (JCM) of Political Parties on China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He said it was a matter of great satisfaction that there was complete political consensus in both countries on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Reflecting on his recent visit to China where he held fruitful and productive meetings with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang, the prime minister commended the vision of the Chinese leadership for the continued growth of Pakistan-China strategic relations and the shared desire of both countries to work together to ensure success of the CPEC and its upgradation to the next phase. He underlined that early completion and implementation of all ongoing and new CPEC projects would contribute significantly towards Pakistan's economic growth and inclusive



development. Appreciating the role of IDCPC in the deepening of bilateral ties, he stressed the importance of enhanced exchanges between the political parties of two countries for experience-sharing, capacity building and people-centered governance. He lauded the CPC for its full support to strengthening of China's iron-clad brotherhood with Pakistan. Liu Jianchao, in his remarks, stressed that Pakistan and China were iron brothers, strategic partners and most-trusted friends. He further emphasized that China accorded a special place to Pakistan in its foreign policy and would continue to support Pakistan's economic development and jointly work for the upgraded version of CPEC. The prime minister hosted a banquet in honour of Liu

Jianchao and the accompanying Chinese delegation which was also attended by representatives of major political parties. The prime minister also briefed the Chinese delegation about the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) which was established through a "Whole of the Government" approach with an objective to attract investment in key areas and has evolved into a useful forum offering one-window facility to domestic and foreign investors. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, Federal Ministers for Finance, Interior, Planning, Petroleum, Power, Privatization, Information, MOS for IT, SAPM Tariq Fatemi and senior officials attended. Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan H. E. Mr. Jiang Zaidong and senior officials of the International Department of the Communist Party of China also attended the meeting.

Five soldiers martyred as military vehicle blown up in Kurram



City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Five Pakistan Army soldiers embraced martyrdom when an improvised explosive device (IED) hit a security forces' vehicle in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kurram district, said the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). According to military's media wing, the incident took place in Saddam area of Kurram district when an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated on a vehicle of the security forces, resulting in martyrdom of five soldiers. The martyrs include Havaldar Aqel Ahmed, Lance Naik Muhammad Tafeer, Sepoy Anush, Sepoy Haroon William and Sepoy Muhammad Azam Khan. "Sanitisation of the area is being carried out to eliminate any terrorists present in the area, and perpetrators of this heinous act will be brought to justice," the ISPR statement said. In a similar incident on June 9, seven Pakistan Army

soldiers, including a captain, were martyred after an improvised explosive device (IED) hit the vehicle of the security forces in Lakki Marwat district. Resultantly, Captain Muhammad Faraz Ilyas, 26, resident of Kasur district along with six other soldiers — Subedar Major Muhammad Nazir, 50, resident of Skardu district; Lance Naik Muhammad Anwar, 34, resident of Ghanchi district; Lance Naik Hussain Ali, 36, resident of Ghizer district; Sepoy Asad Ullah, 33, resident of Multan district; Sepoy Manzoor Hussain, 27, resident of Gilgit district; and Sepoy Rashid Mehmood, 31, resident of Rawalpindi district made the ultimate sacrifice and embraced shahadat, according to the ISPR. Pakistan has witnessed a surge in terrorist activities, especially in KP and Balochistan, since the outlawed militant group Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ended its ceasefire with the government in November 2022.

Pakistan's current account deficit drops to \$464mn: SBP

Bureau Report

KARACHI: Pakistan's current account deficit has seen a substantial reduction over the past 11 months, dropping by \$3.3 billion to a mere \$464 million, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), which is still massively lower than \$3.76 billion in the same period of the previous year. This improvement attributed to a notable decrease in the trade deficit, which fell by 87 percent during the same period. In May 2024, the current account deficit stood at \$27 million. The month's trade figures revealed imports worth \$5.93 billion against exports of \$3.69 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of \$2.3 billion. The combined deficit from trade, services, and revenue for 2024 reached \$3.66 billion. Worker remittances in May amounted to \$3.24 billion, contributing positively to the current account balance, while the current account balance for the 11 months remained slightly negative at \$46.40 million. From July 2023 to May 2024, Pakistan's imports totaled \$48.40 billion, while exports were significantly lower at \$28.67 billion, leading to a trade deficit of \$19.72 billion. The overall loss from trade, services, and income for the 11 months was recorded at \$29.37 billion. Worker remittances over this period were reported at \$27.9 million.

Centre should have consulted PPP before budget: Bilawal

Bureau Report

KARACHI: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that the federal government should have consulted them before the annual budget as he vowed to continue the legacy of slain former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. "We are determined to carry forward the struggle of Bibi Shaheed [Benazir Bhutto]," he said while addressing the PPP rally in Karachi's Lyari on Friday held to mark the birth anniversary of her mother and former PM. Benazir was the first woman prime minister in the Muslim world. Bilawal made his entry into politics after his mother was assassinated on December 27, 2007, in Rawalpindi. His father and party co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari led the party affairs after the demise of Benazir. In his speech, Bilawal acknowledged the dire economic situation facing the country, stating, "The economic conditions of the country are before everyone." He added that the incumbent government, led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, was making efforts to address the economic crisis. But he also criticised the government for not consulting his party prior to the budget announcement. "The government should have consulted us before the budget, and if our input had

'Saudi state did not fail' after hundreds dead during Hajj: official

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: A senior Saudi official defended the Gulf kingdom's management of the Hajj pilgrimage on Friday after various countries reported more than 1,100 deaths, many attributed to high heat. The state did not fail, but there was a misjudgement on the part of people who did not appreciate the risks," the official told AFP in the government's first comments on the deaths. An AFP tally on Friday, compiling official statements and reports from diplomats involved in the response, put the toll at 1,126, more than half of them from Egypt. The senior Saudi official said the Saudi government had confirmed 577 deaths for the two busiest days of Hajj: Saturday, when pilgrims gathered for hours of prayers in the blazing sun on Mount Arafat, and Sunday, when they participated in the "stoning of the devil" ritual in Mina. "This happened amid difficult weather conditions and a very harsh temperature," the official said, while acknowledging that the 577 figure was partial and did not cover all of the Hajj, which formally ended on Wednesday. The Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam, and all Muslims with the means must complete it at least once before they die. Saudi officials had earlier said 1.8 million pilgrims took part this year, a similar total to last year, and that 1.6 million came from abroad.

Minister Salik visits MCO Madinah, gets briefing on post-Hajj operations

Spokesman Report

MADINAH AL-MUNAWARAH: Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Friday visited the Main Control Office (MCO) of the Pakistan Hajj Mission in Madinah and got briefing on arrangements for the post-Hajj operation.

During the month-long post-Hajj flight operation, approximately 160,000 Pakistani pilgrims will be transported from King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah and Prince Mohammad Bin Abdulaziz International Airport in Madinah to major cities in

SCO leads digital revolution in AJ&K's Capital City Muzaffarabad with New Software Technology Park

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: In a landmark event, the capital city of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) Muzaffarabad witnessed inauguration of a state-of-the-art Software Technology Park, established through collaborative efforts of Special Communications Organization (SCO) and Read Foundation. The inauguration ceremony was graced by Major General Umar Ahmed Shah, HI(M), Director General SCO, who officially opened the park in a glittering ceremony.

The newly established Software Technology Park in capital city of AJ&K is set to revolutionize region's IT landscape. The park is expected to create job opportunities for youth in AJ&K and facilitate local workforce to learn niche skills in information



During inaugural ceremony, Major General Umar Ahmed Shah, HI(M), Director General of SCO shared his excitement about future of Software Technology Park.

excitement about future of Software Technology Park.

He said, "Today marks a historic day for AJ&K as we inaugurate this advanced Software Technology Park in the capital city.

The project underscores our commitment to fostering innovation and cutting-edge technology in AJ&K. It will help in refining skills of our youth, create jobs for them and elevate AJ&K as a premier IT hub. I am very eager to see its positive impact on local economy and look forward to its success."

The inauguration of Muzaffarabad Software Technology Park signals a significant leap in regional IT advancement, promising economic growth and positioning the area as a thriving tech hub under SCO's leadership.

Nurses protest against arrest of Khanewal nurse in Nishtar Hospital



Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Nishtar Hospital Multan organized by Young Nurses Association. Apart from Children Complex Hospital Multan and Allied Hospital Faisalabad, protests were held in South and North Punjab against the illegal arrest of Khanewal nurse officer Aqsi Afaq, President of South Punjab Nurses Association Shamim Akhtar from the protests. Young Nurses Association Nishtar Hospital Multan Noreen Kausar and Young Nurses Association Faisalabad Zahida Jameel while addressing the protesting nurses said that wrong injection was provided by Punjab Health Department in Khanewal due to District Headquarters Hospital of Khanewal. Three children died. The nurses leaders further said that after examining the patients, the doctors in the hospitals prescribe medicines and injections to the patients, after that the staff nurses on duty in the hospitals give the medicines and injections prescribed by the doctors to the patients. But in the Khanewal government hospital incident, the provincial administration of Punjab and Khanewal called the doctors as evil and blamed the staff nurse Aqsi Afaq for the death of the children without any investigation, which is a complete abuse. Office bearers of Young Nurses Association Miss Noreen Kausar, Miss Shamim Akhtar and Mrs. Zahida Jameel said that the protest of staff nurses in all hospitals of Punjab is going on against the illegal arrest of staff nurse Aqsi Afaq of Khanewal and this protest will continue until the release of staff nurse Aqsi Afaq. The Staff Nurses Association also demanded the immediate dismissal of Secretary Health Medical Education Punjab Ali Jan and said that it has strongly condemned the derogatory statement made by Punjab Information Minister Uzmi Bukhari about nurses across Punjab.

Meanwhile, Khanewal Additional Sessions Judge Amjad Gadhni has granted bail to the arrested staff nurse Aqsi Afaq and has ordered her release on bail.

Punjab minister for Law, Communications and Construction tours Attock district

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Provincial Minister for Law, Communications and Construction Malik Soheb Ahmed Bharat said that Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz is taking all possible steps for the improvement of the province. Also, provincial assembly Malik Prabi Khan Chaudhry Sher Ali Khan, former provincial minister Jahangir Khanzada, Ifikhar Khan Malik Hameed Akbar Khan and district administration officers were also present. The relevant officers briefed them regarding development schemes and other matters. It was told that 103 schemes across the district will cost 32514 million rupees. These include the maintenance and repair of education and health infrastructure and other schemes. The district heads of the government departments briefed the provincial minister. Sohail Ahmed directed that the relevant officers visit the development schemes regularly along with the local Nawaz League leadership. The Provincial Minister of Law, Construction and Communications later visited the Government Isfandiyar Bukhari District Hospital and the relevant officers of the Health Department briefed him. Visited various sections and reviewed the administrative matters. He directed to further improve the administrative and other related matters of the hospital.

Book on History of Sultanabad: A modern village Launched

Kamran Khamiso Khowaja

HYDERABAD: A book on one of Sindh's earliest modern villages, titled "Sultan Ka Sultanabad", has been published. The village, located 50 kilometers from Hyderabad city, is part of Tando Muhammad Khan district and was established in 1936 by Waris Fadu, on the directions of Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan, the first President of the All-India Muslim League and pioneer of the Muslim emancipation movement. The village is inhabited by the Shia Ismaili community, with a current population of around 600.

The book has been co-authored by two young historians, Muzafar Mansoor and Latif Pirwani, who claim it took them around two decades to compile the history of their village and transform it into a book. One of the authors, Muzafar Mansoor, said that the villagers have contributed significantly to the social and economic development of the country. He added that the fruit and vegetable market of Tando Muhammad Khan district, established by the villagers in collaboration with the Aga Khan Development Network around 20 years ago, is considered the cornerstone of the district's economy.

"The first private school of the district was established here in 1938, followed by a dispensary and a community training center," said Latif Pirwani. He added that when educating girls was considered a sin, the women of this village led an active social life and went to remote areas of Hyderabad to serve as teachers and nurses. He further said that teachers from this village were selected to train young teachers in other districts of Sindh during the Muhammad Khan Junejo regime.

The authors explained that the book comprises contributions of local villagers to the country's social development, their struggle, dedication, and the city's concept of voluntarism. The book also carries the history of the Aga Khan Family and their journey in the village's development, besides Waris Fadu and other major contributors.

The villagers have assisted government authorities in running their affairs several times, and their efforts have been commended by heads of state, the authors said. The book is written in Urdu.

Professor Abid Arbani, a villager, eulogized the efforts of both authors and termed it a revolutionary move. "This village will always stand as an example for the Sindh government when it comes to social development and uplifting remote areas," he proposed.

CCPO directs Lahore police to launch crackdown against electricity theft

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Lahore Police have registered 15,513 cases and arrested 14,938 suspects in various operations against electricity thieves this year.

The spokesperson Lahore Police stated it in a statement issued today. The spokesperson added that 2,087 suspects were arrested in Iqbal Town, 2,523 in Sadar, 4,437 in Cantonment, 2,398 in Model Town, 2,650 in City and 843 in Civil Lines.

CCPO Lahore informed that a vigorous crackdown on electricity thieves is ongoing in the provincial capital. He expressed his determination that Lahore Police is providing full support to the relevant departments to prevent electricity theft. Bilal Siddique Kamryana issued instructions to complete the challans in electricity theft cases in consultation with the prosecutors at the earliest. He emphasized that challans should be timely submitted to the courts and effective follow up on the cases be ensured for their competition. He also appealed to the citizens to promptly inform the police and the relevant authorities in case of electricity theft.

Called on

ISLAMABAD: The delegation of All Pakistan Fertilizer Dealers Association (APFDA) calls on the Federal Minister for Industries and Production on Friday.



Photo: PID

People's Lawyers Forum South Punjab celebrate 71 Birthday of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: People's Lawyers Forum South Punjab organized The cake cutting ceremony of former Prime Minister Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed 71st birthday was held under the chairmanship of People's Lawyers Forum South Punjab Sheikh Gayyas ul Haq Sheikh Advocate at District Bar Association Hall Multan. Khawaja Rizwan Alam Vice President PPP South Punjab was the chief guest of the event. President People's Lawyers Forum South Punjab Sheikh Gayyas ul haq, Khawaja Rizwan Alam Senior Vice President of PPP South Punjab, President of People's Party Multan city A. D Baloch and People's Lawyers Forum paid tribute to Mrs. Benazir Bhutto Shaheed in wonderful words and said that Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto introduced the missile system in Pakistan, with which the defense of Pakistan was increased. Ms.



Benazir Bhutto became stronger and expanded the nuclear program of the Pakistan. Modern expansion project of Kamra Rebuild Factory, Pakistan Aeronautical Complex, JF-17 Thunder aircraft assembly plant. Completed the expansion project of Pakistan Steel Mill and provided dignified employment to the educated people of Pakistan and established Women's Bank

and Benazir Income Support Program for destitute women while his father and the creator of Pakistan's nuclear program was martyred. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's idea of Roti Cloth and House was nurtured and implemented which continues even today. Shaheed Benazir Bhutto resisted the vindictive actions of Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf during martial law, not only raised

the morale of the party workers but also united and organized the party. Removed abolished black laws, provided employment opportunities at home and abroad, improved bilateral relations with India, their efforts are still a beacon for the workers. Going forward with the mission of Benazir who will play an important role in the construction and development of Pakistan. Hasnain Gilani, Wajid Rizvi, Fayyaz Sukhira, Zal Fatima, Raheela Klasra, Nadeem Qureshi, Arafa Arif, Syed Ishiaq Shah, Firdous Jamal, Nagina Muzaffar Haraj, Babar Hafeez, Ayesha Ali, Sheikh Shahid Hameed, Miss Asia participate in Birthday celebration, martyred Ms. Benazir Bhutto. He expressed his thoughts about the development and high leadership of Pakistan under the timeless and inspiring leadership and at the end of the ceremony, the 71st birthday cake of the martyred Prime Minister Ms. Benazir Bhutto was also cut.

Railway Prime Union to support Faisalabad railway employee after tragic accident

Abdul Mujid

FAISALABAD: Sheikh Muhammad Anwar, Central President of Railway Prime Union, along with Chief Organizer Khalid Mahmud Chaudhry, visited the railway employee Muhammad Rafi, who lost both legs in a tragic accident during duty last day, in the hospital and presented him with a bouquet and financial aid to the Prime Union. Munir Chatta, Zonal President Zaheeruddin Babar, Nooruddin, Basit Shafiq, Sajid Imran, Bau Tahir and others were also with him. Later, talking to the railway employees at the railway station, Sheikh Mohammad Anwar and Khalid Mahmud Chaudhry said that this tragic accident has affected the employees of all



over Pakistan. has been saddened, Prem Union has tried to provide financial support to the injured railway employee immediately according to its own

standards while maintaining its traditions, last night, it met with DS Railway Hanif Gul at his residence, he said. He also expressed deep sorrow over this

tragic accident. He said that the railway administration has promised immediate government treatment and financial assistance which is commendable. The non-recruitment of permanent employees even by the Chairman and CEO of Coreilway is incomprehensible. He has demanded the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to immediately allow the recruitment of vacant posts in the railways to avoid such tragic human accidents. Sheikh Mohammad Anwar said that despite the severe shortage of staff, the railway employees are expected to earn a record revenue of 87 billion rupees by the end of this financial year due to the hard work and sincerity of the railway employees, for which the railway officers and employees deserve congratulations.

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Pakistan in Crisis: Navigating Challenges toward a Stable Future

Dr. Muhammad Shahzad Ashfaq

The current situation in Pakistan is one that demands careful analysis and strategic planning in order to navigate the challenges the country faces toward a stable future. From political instability to economic challenges, Pakistan is confront with a myriad of issues that require immediate attention and long-term solutions. It is important to explore the various dimensions of the crisis in Pakistan and propose potential pathways to a stable future. However, Pakistan has a history of political instability, characterized by frequent changes in government, military coups, and a lack of continuity in policies and governance. The recent years have seen a rise in political polarization, with competing political parties struggling for power and influence.

The ongoing power struggle between the civilian government and the military has further intensified the political instability in the country. The lack of political consensus and the destruction of democratic institutions have hindered the effective governance of Pakistan, leading to a sense of disillusionment among the public. In order to address this challenge, it is imperative for Pakistan to strengthen its democratic institutions, uphold the rule of law, and promote political inclusivity. A stable future for Pakistan hinges on the establishment of a political system that is transparent, accountable, and representative of the diverse interests of the population.

Main problem of Pakistan faces significant economic challenges that have contributed to the overall crisis in the country. High levels of inflation, unemployment,

and a growing debt burden have strained the economy, leading to social unrest and economic hardship for many Pakistanis. The lack of sustainable economic growth and development has further worsened the situation, creating a sense of uncertainty and instability. It is essential to implement comprehensive economic reforms that prioritize inclusive growth, job creation, and poverty alleviation. Investing in infrastructure development, promoting entrepreneurship, and enhancing the business environment are critical steps toward achieving economic stability and prosperity. Additionally, Pakistan must focus on diversifying its economy, reducing its dependence on a few key industries, and promoting sustainable development practices.

The security situation in Pakistan linked to the regional dynamics of South Asia. The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan, the long-standing tensions with Hindustan and the presence of extremist groups pose significant security challenges for Pakistan. The spillover effects of regional conflicts, cross-border terrorism, and internal security threats have contributed to a sense of insecurity and instability within the country. Pakistan must prioritize national security, counter-terrorism efforts, and regional cooperation. Strengthening border security, enhancing intelligence capabilities by using AI, and promoting dialogue and diplomacy with neighboring countries are essential steps toward achieving stability and security. Addressing the root causes of extremism, promoting social cohesion, and fostering a culture of tolerance and inclusivity are critical in countering the threat of extremism and violence.

Pakistan extends beyond political and economic dimensions to encompass social and human development challenges. Issues such as poverty, illiteracy, healthcare access, and gender inequality continue to impede



institutional reforms that enhance the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of public institutions. Investing in capacity building, promoting merit-based appointments, and streamlining bureaucratic processes are critical steps toward improving the overall governance framework. Fostering a culture of peace, ethical leadership, and public service excellence is essential in rebuilding public trust and confidence in the government.

The country has a large population living below the poverty line and services such as education and healthcare are few. Gender inequality is also a serious problem: Women is differentiate in both the public and private sectors. A comprehensive approach to solving social problems would include investing in social programs, improving education and health services, and empowering women and disadvantaged families. To address governance issues, Pakistan needs to strengthen anti-corruption measures, improve service delivery, and promote transparency and accountability in government affairs.

The overall development of the country. The lack of access to quality education, healthcare, and social services has perpetuated social disparities and hindered the potential for progress and prosperity. In order to address the social and human development challenges, Pakistan must prioritize investments in education, healthcare, and social welfare programs. Promoting gender equality, empowering marginalized communities, and enhancing social safety nets are essential in fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. The underlying social determinants of health, such as access to clean water, sanitation, and nutrition, is critical in improving the overall well-being of the population.

In this crisis, Pakistan demand comprehensive governance and institutional reforms to address the systemic challenges that have hindered the country's progress. Weak governance, corruption, and a lack of institutional capacity have undermined the effectiveness of public institutions and eroded public trust in the government. Strengthening the rule of law, promoting transparency and accountability, and combating corruption are essential in building resilient and effective governance structures. In order to achieve a stable future, Pakistan must prioritize

Pakistan stresses a holistic approach that addresses the political, economic, security, social, and governance challenges facing the country. Navigating toward a stable future requires concerted efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, promote inclusive economic growth, enhance national security, and prioritize social and human development. By addressing political, economic, security, social and governance challenges together, Pakistan can pave the way for a better, more prosperous and inclusive future for its people. Only through full and united efforts, Pakistan overcome its challenges to realize its potential as a nation.

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Cartoon by Amjad Rasmi. (Courtesy of Asharq Al-Awsat)

Water Stress Myth or Reality

Naqash Taj Abbasi

Pakistan is the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change, witnessing erratic monsoon, and multiple seasonal climatic disasters. In the year 2022, a 175% increase in rainfall was witnessed in various regions. In the year 2024, country northern areas experienced faster glacier melt and increased small glacial events due to high temperatures. Situation has caused alarm for scientists and disaster management authorities as the nation is already facing economic challenges, coupled with low disaster resilience. Foreseeing the coming months Pakistan is likely to face flood disaster for year 2024 as predicted by climatic models and projections. Despite large inputs of water from nature, the country is transitioning from a water stressed phase to water scarce. Multiple anthropogenic activities, and trans-boundary pollution activities have contributed to the worst scenario. In this article we have highlighted various facts that explains why "Pakistan will be a Water Scarce country".

1. Temporal and Spatial Variability: a) Seasonal Distribution: Water availability fluctuates seasonally. Monsoon rains provide significant water during the rainy season, but dry periods lead to water scarcity. b) Geographic Disparities: Certain regions receive more rainfall than others. For instance, the southern parts of Pakistan are much drier compared to the northern regions. 2. Water Management Issues: a) Inefficient Irrigation: Pakistan's agriculture heavily relies on irrigation, but outdated and inefficient irrigation practices lead to significant water wastage. b) Storage and Distribution: Lack of sufficient water storage facilities and poor distribution infrastructure means, much of the water from rainfall and glacial melt cannot be effectively utilized. 3. Climate Change: a) Changing Patterns: Climate change is altering precipitation patterns, making rains more erratic and unpredictable. b) Glacial Melt: Glacial melt may increase in the short term but is not a reliable long-term source as glaciers continue to shrink. c) Extreme Events: Increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as floods and droughts, exacerbate water management challenges. 4. Population Growth: a) Rapid population growth increases the demand for water for domestic, agricultural, and industrial use, outstripping the available supply. 5. Pollution and Over-Extraction: a) Water Quality: Pollution from industrial, agricultural, and domestic sources contaminates water supplies, reducing the amount of clean, usable water. b) Groundwater Depletion: Over-extraction of groundwater for irrigation and other uses leads to the depletion of aquifers, which are crucial during dry periods. 6. Infrastructure and Governance: a) Poor Infrastructure: Inadequate and poorly maintained infrastructure results in substantial water losses. b) Governance Issues: Inefficient water management policies, lack of coordination among different sectors, and political challenges hinder effective water resource management. 7. International Factors: a) Transboundary Water Issues: Pakistan relies on rivers that flow from neighbouring countries. Disputes and lack of cooperation over shared water resources can impact availability. 8. Reduction in Infiltration: a) Paved surfaces like roads, sidewalks, and parking lots prevent water from seeping into the ground. Instead of infiltrating the soil, rainwater and meltwater run off these surfaces rapidly. 9. Increased Runoff: a) The increase in surface runoff due to impervious surfaces leads to water flowing directly into storm drains, rivers, and lakes, rather than slowly percolating through the soil to recharge groundwater aquifers. 10. Urban Heat Island Effect: a) Paved surfaces absorb and retain heat, contributing to the urban heat island effect. This can increase evaporation rates, further reducing the amount of water available for infiltration. These multiple factors altogether create a complex situation where, despite periods of abundant water from rainfall and glacial melt, Pakistan still faces significant challenges in managing its water resources sustainably and equitably, thus leading to water stress. In the context of Pakistan, rapid urbanization and the expansion of paved surfaces in cities exacerbate water stress by reducing the natural replenishment of groundwater. This is particularly concerning in regions where groundwater is a primary source of water for agriculture, industry, and domestic use. To mitigate these effects, strategies such as implementing green infrastructure, promoting permeable pavements, and enhancing urban planning practices that incorporate water-sensitive design can help improve infiltration and groundwater recharge.

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Kashmir in the Mirror of Reality - III

Despite international outcry and calls for their prohibition, pellet guns continue to be used indiscriminately, causing devastation and hopelessness. One of the most troubling aspects of the atrocities in IIOJK is the prevailing culture of impunity that shields perpetrators from accountability. Legal frameworks like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) grant blanket immunity to Indian security forces, allowing them to act with impunity. The absence of impartial investigations, prosecutions, and avenues for redress exacerbates the suffering of victims and their families, perpetuating a cycle of injustice and impunity.

The Kashmir region has long been a focal point of geopolitical tensions and territorial disputes, divided between India and Pakistan and enduring decades of conflict and instability, resulting in significant suffering for its residents. Amidst calls for independence and conflicting claims to sovereignty, the possibility of Kashmir's integration with Pakistan merits careful consideration. Exploring the potential advantages of a unified Kashmir under Pakistani governance reveals compelling arguments that transcend mere political rhetoric to address socio-economic, cultural, and strategic aspects of regional integration. Integrated economic development emerges as a prominent benefit of Kashmir's

union with Pakistan. Through coordinated economic policies, infrastructure development, and investment initiatives, a unified Kashmir could leverage synergies to foster growth and prosperity. Pakistan's strong industrial foundation and economic assets have the potential to strengthen Kashmir's economy, facilitating the creation of jobs, fostering entrepreneurship, and reducing poverty. Furthermore, tapping into Pakistan's extensive market could improve trade prospects for businesses in Kashmir, opening up avenues for exporting and broadening economic activities. By utilizing Pakistan's knowledge and experience in sectors like agriculture, tourism, and technology, Kashmir could unleash its complete economic capacity, paving the way for sustainable growth and prosperity. The deep cultural and historical ties between Kashmir and Pakistan provide a compelling basis for their unification. Shared language, customs, and heritage foster a sense of kinship that transcends geographical boundaries. Through uniting under a common banner, Kashmiris can reaffirm their cultural identity and safeguard their linguistic and religious heritage from external influence. Furthermore, integration with Pakistan could facilitate cultural exchange programs, educational endeavors, and collaborative artistic ventures, enriching the cultural fabric of both regions. By embracing diversity and promoting

cultural inclusivity, a unified Kashmir could promote social cohesion and unity, creating the groundwork for a dynamic and welcoming society.

From a strategic standpoint, the integration of Kashmir with Pakistan carries significant benefits for regional stability and security. By aligning defense capabilities and security protocols, Pakistan could bolster deterrence against external threats and ensure the protection of Kashmir's territorial integrity. Additionally, unified governance structures could streamline administrative procedures, enhance law enforcement efforts, and fortify border security, reducing the risk of cross-border incursions and insurgency. Moreover, strategic collaboration between Pakistan and Kashmir could facilitate regional connectivity initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), opening up new trade routes and promoting economic integration throughout South Asia.

By promoting peace, stability, and cooperation, a unified Kashmir could emerge as a linchpin for regional development and prosperity.

The situation in AJK stands in stark contrast to that in IIOJK and other regions of Pakistan, reflecting the deep-seated affection and mutual respect between Pakistan and Kashmir. For many Kashmiris, the most viable and desirable option is to live alongside Pakistan rather than under Indian rule or as an independent entity. The majority of Kashmiris recognize this reality, yearning for the right to self-determination, seeking liberation from Indian control, and expressing a desire to unite with Pakistan.

ISSI hosts Roundtable on 'Astana Summit2024: Solidifying SCO's Partnerships'

By Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: China Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a roundtable discussion titled, "Astana Summit2024: Solidifying SCO's Partnerships". The event was moderated by Dr Talat Shabbir, Director CPSC. The speakers at the roundtable included Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI; Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG, ISSI; HE Yerzhan Kistafin, Ambassador of Republic of Kazakhstan to Pakistan; Ambassador Babar Amin, Pakistan's first National Coordinator of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO); Dr. Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi, Professor, University of Peshawar; and Mr. Marghoob Saleem Butt, Pakistan's National Coordinator for SCO, MOFA.

DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood stressed the significance of the upcoming Astana Summit within the SCO framework, underscoring SCO's role as a pivotal trans-regional platform committed to stability, economic development, and cooperative multilateralism. Emphasizing SCO's expansive reach covering 60% of Eurasia, encompassing 40% of the global population, and a significant portion of the world's GDP, he underscored its evolution into a vital platform for stability and multilateral cooperation. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted SCO's commitment to non-alignment, non-confrontation and inclusivity, offering an alternative perspective in international relations and a different cooperation model in a

polarized world. He also acknowledged the internal and external challenges facing SCO, urging coordinated efforts amidst complex regional and global realities. Pakistan's active engagement with SCO, he noted, aligned closely with its national development goals and aspirations for regional peace and prosperity, reflecting its proactive role in advancing SCO's objectives.

Earlier, Dr. Talat Shabbir highlighted the pivotal role of the SCO in fostering regional stability and prosperity through robust security mechanisms, enhanced economic collaboration, and cultural exchanges. Emphasizing the significance of the Astana Summit 2024, he highlighted the SCO's commitment to promoting peace and cooperation on a global scale.

Ambassador Yerzhan Kistafin highlighted Kazakhstan's role in the SCO's development, emphasizing its contributions to regional stability through robust counterterrorism mechanisms and economic cooperation. He underscored Kazakhstan's commitment to fostering deep ties with SCO countries, promoting global peace, and enhancing regional connectivity. Additionally, he discussed bilateral efforts with Pakistan in geopolitical dimensions, digital development, economic collaboration and connectivity, affirming a shared vision for peace, prosperity, and environmental security in the region.

Ambassador Babar Amin emphasized the significant role of cooperation within SCO member states, stressing also the importance of people-to-people connections and media engagement. He

highlighted SCO's evolving visibility and potential for enhancing development dynamics, suggesting it could surpass BRICS in certain aspects. Addressing challenges such as terrorism and security, he stressed the imperative of collaborative efforts to foster connectivity and mitigate obstacles, including the involvement of groups like TTP.

Professor Dr. Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi underscored the interconnectedness of security and economics in global affairs, emphasizing the recent Gaza and Ukraine conflicts as examples. Prof. Dr. Soherwordi proposed key measures including diversifying regional ties, establishing mutual non-aggression agreements among powers, and jointly combating terrorism to ensure regional stability and resilience against foreign intervention. His remarks emphasized the urgent need for collective action to safeguard the region's economic and security interests.

In his address, Dr. Marghoob Saleem Butt, Pakistan's National Coordinator for SCO, underscored the significant contributions of the SCO in various domains, including food security, climate change, and counter-terrorism. He emphasized the expanding scope of cooperation within the SCO, highlighting initiatives such as joint border operations and enhanced cyber cooperation. Dr. Butt also outlined Pakistan's priorities during its chairmanship, focusing on connectivity, poverty alleviation, and youth empowerment through digital initiatives. He also noted that Pakistan would be hosting the meeting of SCO Ministers of Trade/Commerce in September



2024 and the Council of Heads of Government (CHG) in October 2024. Looking forward to Astana Summit, he expressed Pakistan's commitment to adopt the documents which would reflect shared values of good neighbourliness, trust, and partnership, alongside commitments to initiatives such as safe drinking water, sanitation, and strategies for development, anti-drug efforts, and energy cooperation.

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood,

in his concluding remarks, said that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) stands committed to its core mission of fostering security and economic cooperation among member states. He added that SCO is an organization focused on addressing diverse security challenges including terrorism, extremism, separatism, and non-traditional threats such as climate change and food security. Highlighting the upcoming Astana summit and the

expansion of SCO membership to 10 states with the inclusion of Belarus, he underscored the organization's evolving role and effectiveness in regional stability and development efforts.

The roundtable discussion concluded with a comprehensive question and answer session. The event was attended by a large number of diplomats, practitioners, academics, think-tank experts, students, representatives of the business community and the media.

Palestine welcomes statehood recognition by Armenia

Spokesman Report

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Presidency and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) on Friday welcomed Armenia's decision to recognize the State of Palestine.

According to a statement, reported by the official Palestinian news agency Wafa, "the Palestinian Presidency has commended the Republic of Armenia's decision to officially recognize the State of Palestine as an independent and sovereign nation."

The presidency expressed deep appreciation for "this courageous and significant decision," viewing it

as a "pivotal step towards enhancing bilateral relations and fostering peace and stability in the region."

"Armenia's wise decision aligns with the principles of the two-state solution, a strategic choice that upholds international will and legitimacy. This recognition contributes positively to preserving the two-state solution, which faces systematic challenges, and promotes security, peace, and stability for all parties involved," said the presidency, according to Wafa.

The Palestinian leadership urged "other nations, particularly European countries that have yet to recognize the State of Palestine, to



follow suit based on international legitimacy resolutions based on the 1967 borders, which include Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem."

Meanwhile, Hussein Al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO Executive Committee, praised Armenia's recognition of the State of Palestine.

"We welcome the friendly state of Armenia's recognition of the State of Palestine," wrote Sheikh on X.

"This is a victory for truth, justice, legitimacy, and the struggle of our Palestinian people for liberation and independence. Thank you, friendly Armenia," he added.

Earlier on Friday, Armenia said it recognized the state of Palestine, the latest country to do so during the war in Gaza, where Israel has killed

more than 37,000 Palestinians since Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas incursion that claimed 1,200 lives. Yerevan said it was against violence towards civilian population.

Spain, Norway, Ireland and Slovenia have all recently recognized the Palestinian state.

Over eight months into the Israeli war, vast tracts of Gaza lay in ruins amid a crippling blockade of food, clean water and medicine.

Israel also stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice, which has ordered Tel Aviv to ensure unhindered provision of urgent aid to the blockaded territory.

Beeline and ZTE unveil Giga City project in Kazakhstan

Spokesman Report

ASTANA: ZTE Corporation (0763.HK / 000063.SZ), a global leading provider of integrated information and communication technology solutions, in partnership with Beeline Kazakhstan, a leading player in Kazakhstan's telecoms industry and a subsidiary of VEON Group, has successfully completed the modernization of the Beeline's network in the Akmola and Turkestan regions, which lead in traffic consumption and cover 25% of the population of Kazakhstan.

This milestone was celebrated with an official launch event in Astana, titled "Giga City: Accelerating the digitalization of Kazakhstan".

The project encompassed the modernization of the Beeline's mobile network in the Akmola region (including Astana) and the Turkestan region (including Shymkent), involving more than 1,800 base stations. Additionally, FDD Massive MIMO technology has been introduced in major cities. The implementation of this solution resulted in substantial 4G throughput growth for subscribers,

significantly enhancing services quality. Notably, the modernization project using ZTE equipment was completed ahead of schedule.

Mr. Kaan Terzioglu, Chief Executive Officer of VEON Group, said, "I truly believe that with our strategy of digital operators, we will not only delight our customers with our telecom services like in the GIGA City project, but we will also provide them financial services, entertainment, education, health care and we will not stop there. We would like to thank ZTE for the successful partnership with Beeline Kazakhstan in this radio network modernization project. The high-quality results will help achieve the digitalization goals we have for Kazakhstan."

"As an important participant in the digital transformation in Kazakhstan, Beeline has always been at the forefront of introducing innovative products and solutions to improve connectivity and empower people in the digital world. Rapid growth in data traffic consumption continues in Kazakhstan. This requires a more efficient 4G network to meet increasing network capacity

demands while delivering a better user experience. The FDD Massive MIMO solution is a right way to optimize the modern 4G network," said Mr. Evgeniy Nastradin, Chief Executive Officer of Beeline.

"Kazakhstan is an important market for ZTE Corporation," said Mr. Xu Ziyang, Chief Executive Officer of ZTE Corporation. "The Giga City project, implemented in collaboration with Beeline in the Akmola and Turkestan regions, demonstrated our capability to effectively solve complex technical problems on a live network. We organized a comprehensive modernization of the radio network infrastructure, including preparation for its future evolution. This will enable the operator to significantly reduce operating costs due to more energy-efficient equipment and the capability for remote site management. We are committed to accelerating the digitalization of Kazakh society, bringing more digital services to all Kazakh people, and accelerating the country's digital economic growth in partnership with Beeline."

The event was also attended by representatives of the Ministry of



Digital Development, Innovation, and Aerospace Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

World Bank to loan Pakistan \$535 million to support two climate-smart projects after 2022 floods

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors approved \$535 million in financing for Pakistan to support two projects. The additional financing for the Crisis Resilient Social Protection (CRISP) Program aims to strengthen the country's social protection system and build shock resilience among poor and vulnerable households, while the Sindh Livestock and Aquaculture Sectors Transformation (LIVAQUA) Project will promote climate-smart and competitive small and medium producers in the livestock and aquaculture sectors in

Sindh.

"The catastrophic floods that hit Pakistan in 2022 were a tragic reminder of the importance to build resilience to such disasters, including by strengthening both social protection and sectors that support economic growth and recovery," said Najy Benhassine, World Bank Country Director for Pakistan. "It is also imperative to help the vulnerable absorb climate shocks through innovative climate-smart technology and contingency planning."

The additional financing for CRISP (\$400 million) will build on the program's on-going efforts to equip Pakistan's social protection

system with the policy and delivery system foundations necessary for more effective and rapid responses to future crises. The program will focus on longer-term policy actions to further improve the national cash transfer program's effectiveness, coverage and Federal-Provincial coordination.

"Since its inception, the CRISP program has achieved significant results with regular safety net support to more than 9 million families and a demonstrated capability of quickly reaching 2.8 million families during the recent floods," said Amjad Zafar Khan, Task Team Leader for the Project. "The additional

financing would not only assist families in becoming more resilient to climate and economic shocks, but also encourage the use of provincial capacities to take up a larger role in social assistance."

LIVAQUA (\$135 million) will finance interventions to promote climate-smart production, value addition, and inclusive access to markets, and help create opportunities for growth in the livestock and aquaculture sectors. These will include improving sector policy and strategic frameworks, as well as evidence-based decision making. It will also contribute to strengthening the capacity of

public and private providers to deliver essential knowledge, inputs, and services such as disease surveillance and control, diagnostic laboratory services, breeding programs, food safety, and the development and transfer of green technologies.

LIVAQUA will cover all districts in Sindh using a phased approach. It is expected to directly benefit more than 940,000 farm families, including 930,000 livestock households and 10,000 aquaculture producers. The project also includes measures to ensure female farmers' participation in the project and narrow gender gaps.

Ambassador Amna meets Deputy CEO Luxembourg Space Agency



BRUSSELS: Ambassador of Pakistan to Belgium, Luxembourg, and the European Union Amna Baloch on Friday met with Deputy Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Luxembourg Space Agency Dr. Mathias Link and discussed potential collaborations in space related matters.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

| Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------|
| Current | Prev. Close | |
| 78,810.49 | 78,801.53 | |
| Day's High | Day's Low | |
| 80,059.87 | 78,169.02 | |
| Index Value | Change | |
| 15,054,633,137 | +8.96 | |
| Percentage | Time | |
| +0.01% | 21 Jun, 2024 5:00 pm | |
| Europe: FTSE 100 Index | | |
| Index Value | Change | |
| 8,237.72 | -34.74 | |
| Percentage | Time | |
| -0.42% | 21 Jun, 4:35 pm GMT+1 | |
| USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average | | |
| Index Value | Change | |
| 39,145.08 | +10.32 | |
| Percentage | Time | |
| +0.026% | 21 Jun, 1:11 pm GMT-4 | |
| Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average | | |
| Index Value | Change | |
| 38,596.47 | -36.55 | |
| Percentage | Time | |
| -0.095% | 21 Jun, 3:15 pm GMT+9 | |
| Open Market Forex Rates | | |
| Currency | Buying | Selling |
| Australian Dollar | 182.2 | 184 |
| Bahrain Dinar | 740.98 | 748.98 |
| Canadian Dollar | 202 | 204 |
| China Yuan | 38.4 | 38.8 |
| Danish Krone | 40.15 | 40.55 |
| Euro | 294.3 | 297.9 |
| Hong Kong Dollar | 35.68 | 36.03 |
| Indian Rupee | 3.34 | 3.45 |
| Japanese Yen | 1.9 | 1.98 |
| Kuwaiti Dinar | 908.7 | 917.7 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 59.07 | 59.67 |
| New Zealand \$ | 170.98 | 172.98 |
| Norwegians Krone | 26.38 | 26.68 |
| Omani Riyal | 723.75 | 731.75 |
| Qatari Riyal | 76.53 | 77.23 |
| Saudi Riyal | 72.85 | 73.6 |
| Singapore Dollar | 202 | 204 |
| Swedish Korona | 26.68 | 26.98 |
| Swiss Franc | 315.21 | 317.71 |
| Thai Bhat | 7.59 | 7.74 |
| U.A.E Dirham | 75 | 75.8 |
| UK Pound Sterling | 352 | 355.5 |
| US Dollar | 277.8 | 280.7 |

Pakistan facing critical period since its founding: Dr. Murtaza Mughal

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW), said on Saturday that the country has been going through a critical period for the masses since its creation. Since the 1970s, families ruling Pakistan have claimed to serve the masses but have become billionaires, while the people began to crave bread, he said. For the last 25 years, Pakistan has been adjusting its budget according to the terms and conditions of the IMF. Still, he added that the country's conditions continued to deteriorate instead of improving. Dr Murtaza Mughal said in a statement issued today that we have been facing problems like reduced net tax, uncontrolled expenditure, and unnecessary incentives and subsidies for the last 25 years because their resolution is limited to announcements.

He said that in the last twenty-five years, the neighbouring countries have made fantastic progress, while Pakistan has seen three short periods of artificial growth during which hefty loans were acquired. However, the elite took the benefits or growth while people were left high and dry. He said that even in the year 2000, Pakistan had signed an agreement with the IMF on strict terms, and presently, we are in the process of signing another harsh agreement with no signs of real economic improvement. The IMF has created a single formula to get all countries out of the crisis in which the ground realities of a country are not considered. The IMF only pressures countries to cut spending, raise taxes, sell national assets, and devalue the currency. The lender formula increases the problems of many countries, including Pakistan. Even in 2000, Pakistan faced problems like external debt, limited revenue, deficit,



decayed energy and service system, employment to the growing youth population, food security, water scarcity, and health and education systems. After 25 years later, we are still facing these issues. In the last twenty-five years, no serious attempt has been made to remedy the problems affecting the economy, but no budget has been introduced that would cause any fundamental changes in the country's system. Dr Murtaza Mughal said that the country's population is multiplying, along with the unemployment and malnutrition crisis, and millions of children are not able to go to school. Still, no attention is being paid to this. Nothing is being done to equip people with skills to make them valuable citizens. Employment opportunities are such that millions of educated people are fleeing the country, and there is no effort to stop this brain drain. The alliance between the rulers and the capitalist class has made the country hell for the people. The country's system constantly transfers capital from the poor to the rich, a perfect recipe for disaster.

Eid holidays continue

ISLAMABAD: A view of deserted fruit and vegetable market due to Eid Al-Adha holidays at sector I-11 in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

FPCCI holds FBR's top anomalies committee meeting, says Atif Ikram Sheikh

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI and Dr. Gohar Ejaz, former federal commerce minister – who are jointly chairing FBR's Anomaly Committee 2024 from the business side – called a high-profile meeting of all chambers, trade bodies and associations at FPCCI; and, discussed the glaring anomalies in the Finance Bill and federal budget 2024 – 25 in detail on a sector-to-sector basis. It is pertinent to note that Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, will be presenting the dossier of anomalies from the entire business, industry and trade community of Pakistan to the federal minister for finance and revenue to be reviewed by federal government's economic team and the prime minister to remove or resolve anomalies from the federal budget 2024 – 25. Dr. Gohar Ejaz stressed that it is imperative to amend the finance bill to take out its regressive and contractionary measures to keep the economy afloat, curtail inflation, keep current account deficit in control, enable exporters to grow, create jobs and



generate revenues. Dr. Gohar Ejaz added that Pakistani trade and industry is already at a disadvantage as compared to the region due to unbearable cost of doing business; which has been driven up due to electricity and gas tariffs; inflationary pressures in the economy and inconsistencies in economic policymaking. Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, SVP FPCCI & Focal Person for anomalies in federal budget 2024 – 25, said that imposition of enhanced taxes on salaried class will further fuel the brain drain from Pakistan; which is already suffering from the shortage of skilled workforce for its industry. In view of fairness, the government should not tax the already taxed even further, he added.

CCP approves acquisition of Luxembourg Firm with presence in Pakistan's solar market



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has approved the 100% acquisition of M/s. Actis Holdings S.a.r.l (Actis Holdings), a Luxembourg-based company having a presence in Pakistan's solar power market, by M/s. General Atlantic Partners, L. P. (GA), a US-based firm. Actis Holdings is a sustainable infrastructure investor with a diverse portfolio in energy infrastructure, long-life infrastructure, digital infrastructure, real estate, and private equity sectors. Funds managed by Actis hold a majority interest in Solis, which is a majority shareholder in Yellow Door. Yellow Door is actively engaged in the solar electricity business in Pakistan. The acquirer General Atlantic Partners, L. P. (GA), founded in 1980 and headquartered in New York, is a growth equity firm that provides capital and strategic support for global growth companies. GA boasts an impressive portfolio of 225 companies across six global sectors: climate, consumer, financial services, healthcare, life sciences, and technology. The CCP's Phase-I competition assessment identified 'Power Generation – Solar' as the relevant product market. The assessment revealed Actis Holdings indirect presence in Pakistan via Yellow Door which has a market share of less than 1%, remaining unchanged post-transaction. Ultimately, the proposed acquisition will not result in GA gaining dominance in the relevant market. This move is expected to bring enhanced expertise, technology, and capital to the local market, fostering competition and innovation in the renewable energy sector.

Scammers can crack almost half of the passwords in less than a minute

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Kaspersky experts conducted a large-scale study on the resistance of 193M English passwords, compromised by info-stealers and available on the darknet, to brute force and smart guessing attacks. According to the research results, 45% of all analyzed passwords which is almost 87M could be guessed by scammers within a minute. Only 23% (44M) of combinations turned out to be resistant enough and cracking them would take more than a year. Kaspersky telemetry indicates more than 32 million attempts to attack users with password stealers in 2023. These numbers show the importance of digital hygiene and timely password policies. The results of the Kaspersky study demonstrate that the majority of the reviewed passwords were not strong enough and could be easily compromised by using smart

guessing algorithms. Besides, the majority of the examined passwords (57%) contain a word from the dictionary, which significantly reduces the passwords' strength. Among the most popular vocabulary sequences, several groups can be distinguished. Popular names include "ahmed", "nguyen", "kumar", "kevin", "daniel". While popular words in passwords are "forever", "love", "google", "hacker" and "gamer". Standard passwords are "password", "qwerty12345", "admin", "12345" and "team". In order to strengthen passwords, users should use a different password for each service. That way, even if one of your accounts is stolen, the rest won't go with it. It's better not to use passwords that can be easily guessed from your personal information, such as birthdays, names of family members, pets, or your own name. These are often the first guesses an attacker will try.

70% approved schemes part of Balochistan PSDP: Bugti

Bureau Report

QUETTA: For the first time in Balochistan's history, the provincial Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the fiscal year 2024-2025 includes 70% of approved uplift schemes. "About 70% of approved schemes are included in the provincial PSDP in an effort to enhance good governance, and 100% of schemes will be included by the following year," Chief Minister Balochistan stated on Friday. "Our goal this time is to spend 70 to 80% of the PSDP as the utilisation rate of development budget money has been relatively low in the past," he said while talking to the media outside

the Balochistan Assembly premises following the budget session. The chief minister mentioned that the provincial coalition administration had set a target of 70 percent for spending money on PSDP projects as in the past, the ratio of money spent on PSDP had been extremely low. He said, "There would be a healthy competition among lawmakers, the bureaucracy, and other parties concerned for the timely completion of the development schemes." CM Bugti also issued a warning, stating that development funding would be transferred from those PSDP schemes that were not meeting expectations to those that were moving quickly.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari takes pride in enhancing ICCI performance

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry has said that he has gone all out to enhance the performance of this prestigious body and that it is because of his and his team's tireless efforts that today its membership tally has crossed eight thousand. Speaking to a media group, here on Friday, he said that for ease of doing businesses by addressing the grievances of the community, meetings with relevant government functionaries like CDA, Police, IESCO, IMC high-ups are a routine matter, that's why the traders are getting enrolment in large number which is a crystal clear proof that they are placing their confidence in it. To a question he said that to attract the foreign investment in the country,

meetings with Ambassadors of friendly countries in the Chamber and in the Embassies are trait of the ICCI. Moreover, ICCI delegations' visits to other countries and meetings with the relevant Chambers have also proved beneficial for the country. Answering a question about promotion of industry-academia linkages, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that ICCI has inked MoUs with almost all the leading Universities to enable the educated youth to emerge as job providers instead of job seekers. To another query he replied that it is for the first time during his Presidency that traders belonging to remote areas of the capital city like Tarnol, Bara Kahu etc. have also obtained the membership in large number because of the outclass performance of the Chamber. He said that by acknowledging his Corporate Social Responsibilities, he has launched a campaign to



install water filtration plants and water coolers in different commercial hubs of the capital city to ensure the provision of clean and cold drinking water to traders, customers as well as the residents. Moreover weekly medical camps, provision of computers, laboratory equipment etc. to different educational institutions are also part of the same drive.

He further said that ICCI is trying its level best to establish a new industrial estate in the outskirts of the twin cities for the promotion of businesses and investments and in this connection is in touch with the concerned authorities. He proudly mentioned that ICCI has also inked a MoU with the Gulberg Greens Management for the construction of a state of the art expo centre to boost commercial activities in the twin cities, adding that the forthcoming 2nd All Pakistan Chambers Presidents Conclave on June 25, 26 will also go a long way in highlighting and addressing the business community's problems for the economic wellbeing of the country. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari went on to say that because of the commitment and hard work of his team under his command a Mediation Council Office has been established in the ICCI premises to amicably settle the rent matters.

Moreover, a NADRA facilitation centre and a Police Service Centre are about to commence their working within couple of next weeks. He further said that traders are availing discount from top-class hospitals and Diagnostic Centres owing to the endeavors of the ICCI, added that he and his team is working hard to materialize the dream of the business community to have its own hospital, a School, a College and a University and a is also utilizing all options to resolve the residential problems of the business community. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari added that ICCI also works shoulder to shoulder with the government for the promotion of education, awareness about IPRs, promulgation of religious values, creating awareness about climate change, sustainable development of the country etc. by holding seminars and conferences.

President pays tribute to Shaheed Benazir Bhutto on her 71st birthday anniversary

Mushtaq Chandio

LARKANA: President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday paid tribute to Shaheed Benazir Bhutto on her 71st birth anniversary and termed her as a symbol of democracy.

Celebrating her life and legacy at a ceremony held at the President House in Naudero, the president cut a cake to mark the occasion.

The president hailed Benazir Bhutto's courageous struggle for the party and the nation after the martyrdom of her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

He acknowledged her as his political mentor, saying he learned politics from her and considered himself her student.

President Zardari also vowed to continue the mission of the martyrs, and work towards a democratic and prosperous Pakistan.

The ceremony was also attended by President Zardari's sister, Faryal Talpur, and other party leaders.

On the occasion of the President's arrival in Garhi Khudabakhsh, MPA Jameel Ahmed Soomro, MPA Sahail Anwar Syal, MNA Khursheed Ahmed Junejo welcomed the President.

Birth Anniversary

LARKANA: President Asif Ali Zardari cutting cake on the 71st birth anniversary of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Baksh Bhutto on Friday.



Photo: PID

Pakistan has special place in China's foreign policy, says senior Chinese minister

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: China's Minister of Central Committee of the International Department of Communist Party of China (IDCPC), Liu Jianchao on Friday said as its "iron brother and time-tested friend", China accorded a special place to Pakistan in its foreign policy and desired to strengthen the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership.

The senior Chinese leader expressed these views in a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, held

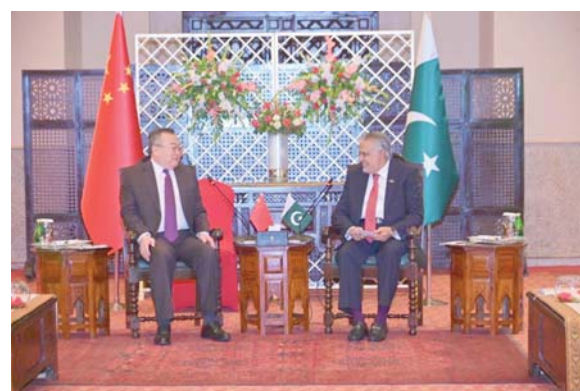
here in Islamabad.

Liu expressed satisfaction at the steady pace of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and said China would extend full cooperation to Pakistan for their timely implementation of all ongoing and new CPEC projects.

He also lauded the political parties of Pakistan for their steadfast support to CPEC and China-Pakistan friendship.

He reiterated China's keen desire to further enhance linkages between the Communist Party of China and the political parties of Pakistan.

Deputy Prime Minister and



Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar appreciated the positive contribution of CPEC to Pakistan's

socio-economic development, and progress and prosperity. He underscored that as the

flagship project of President China's Belt and Road Initiative, CPEC had led to major transformation in energy security.

Lauding the unanimous political consensus on CPEC in the two countries, Dar expressed Pakistan's firm resolve to building upon the achievements of CPEC and for its high quality development in its Phase-II.

The two sides agreed to maintain the momentum of high-level engagements and to further enhance communication on important regional and global issues.

Rana Sanaullah meets with KP governor to discuss matters relating to province's welfare

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Rana Sanaullah on Friday met with the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Faisal Karim Kundi to discuss matters related to KP provinces. The minister said that the federal government will provide full support to the KP provincial government, adding that all issues can



be resolved amicably through dialogue and mutual consultation. He said that protest is a fundamental and constitu-

tional right of every citizen, but no political agenda can be allowed to be pursued under its cover. The writ of state will

not be allowed to diminish anywhere in the country. The anarchy and chaos will prevail if crime of challenging state writ goes unpunished. "Action should be taken against those who are trying to stand against the state". Faisal Karim Kundi said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province has lagged behind all other provinces due to mismanagement over the past decade. He said that the present provincial

government is challenging the writ of the state for nefarious purposes. He urged to support the provincial government for the welfare of the people. He further said that there is a need to introduce youth games in KP universities and to revive first-class cricket, which has been dormant for the last 15 years. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cricket League will be launched as soon as possible, he added.

Ahsan Iqbal delivers landmark speech at China-Pakistan Political Forum

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Minister for Planning & Development of Pakistan, Ahsan Iqbal, delivered a significant speech at the China-Pakistan Political Parties Forum and the Third Meeting of the CPEC Political Parties Joint Consultation Mechanism. The event, attended by high-ranking officials and dignitaries, including H. E. Mr. Liu Jian Chao, Minister for International Department Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, and Honorable Mr. Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, underscored the enduring strength of the Pakistan-China relationship and the pivotal role of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Ahsan Iqbal expressed profound gratitude to the Chinese leadership for their steadfast support in fostering bilateral cooperation and advancing the CPEC initiative.

He emphasized the unique nature of the meeting, which demonstrated

national consensus on Pakistan-China relations and CPEC, transcending domestic political divisions. Ahsan Iqbal appreciated the Chinese leadership for hosting the Prime Minister of Pakistan during his recent visit.

The visit resulted in a strong consensus on bilateral matters, with both sides agreeing to enhance the strategic partnership and economic cooperation. The 13th session of CPEC's Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) was successfully held on May 24, 2024. Pakistan and China agreed to upgrade CPEC by introducing five new corridors: Growth Corridor, Livelihood Enhancing Corridor, Innovation Corridor, Green Corridor, and Opening Up/Regional Connectivity Corridor.

These new corridors align with Pakistan's 5E framework, prioritizing export-led growth, digital development (e-Pakistan), environmental sustainability, energy and infrastructure development, and equity and empowerment. Ahsan Iqbal highlighted the importance of Pakistan-China cooperation under CPEC amidst global uncer-

tainties. He stressed that CPEC serves as a beacon of stability, regional integration, and economic interdependence.

The development of Gwadar Port, a crucial component of CPEC, was noted for its strategic significance, providing China direct access to the Arabian Sea and promising economic revitalization for Pakistan.

CPEC is envisioned as part of a broader vision for regional prosperity, fostering economic cooperation with neighboring countries. Phase II of CPEC aims to enhance Pakistan's manufacturing capacity through industrial cooperation, attracting Chinese investment, and relocating industrial units to Special Economic Zones.

Both sides have agreed to expedite initiatives for modernizing Pakistan's agricultural sector with advanced technologies.

Cooperation will also extend to B2B links, industrial cooperation, science and technology, artificial intelligence, and exploration of offshore oil and gas resources. The Government of Paki-

stan is committed to ensuring the security of Chinese personnel working in Pakistan. Measures have been implemented to provide foolproof security, and continuous updates are shared with the Chinese Embassy regarding these actions.

Regardless of political changes, Pakistan remains committed to its relationship with China. Over the past decade, substantial progress has been made across various CPEC projects, reaffirming this steadfast dedication. Ahsan Iqbal recounted the recent launch of Pakistan's satellite through a Chinese rocket, symbolizing the soaring heights of Pakistan-China friendship.

Ahsan Iqbal concluded by expressing sincere gratitude to the Chinese leadership for their continuous support and unwavering commitment to the high development of CPEC. This event marks a significant milestone in the ongoing collaboration between Pakistan and China, highlighting the shared vision and mutual commitment to regional prosperity and development.

Govt announces fixed charges for electricity consumers

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has introduced new electricity tariffs that will come into effect on July 1, 2024. These tariffs include fixed monthly charges for domestic, commercial, and industrial consumers.

Domestic consumers will now face fixed charges ranging from Rs200 to Rs1000 per month, depending on their monthly consumption.

Consumers using between 301-400 units will pay Rs200, while those using 401-500 units will pay Rs400.

Similarly, Consumers using between 501-600 units will pay

Rs600, while those using 601-700 units will pay Rs800.

Commercial consumers will see a significant increase in their fixed charges, with a 300% hike for those using less than 5kW and a 355% increase for those using 5kW or more.

Industrial consumers will also face increased fixed charges, with those using up to 25kW paying Rs1000, B2 category consumers (up to 500kW) paying Rs2000, and B3 and B4 category consumers (500kW and above) also paying Rs2000.

These fixed charges are intended to help Distribution Companies (DISCOs) increase their revenue. However, the move will further inflate electricity bills that are already burdened by record-high unit prices.

ADB, EAD sign agreement worth \$250 mln policy-based loan



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Economic Affairs Division (EAD) on Friday signed an agreement worth \$250 million policy based loan.

According to the ADB official 'X' handle, the agreement aimed at assisting Pakistan drive sustainable investment in infrastructure and services through Public Private Part-

nership (PPP).

ADB Country Director for Pakistan Yung Ye and Secretary EAD Kazim Niaz signed the agreement.

"ADB Country Director for Pakistan Yung Ye and Secretary EAD Kazim Niaz today signed the agreement for \$250 million policy-based loan to assist Pakistan drive sustainable investments in infrastructure and services through public-private partnerships (PPPs)", ADB said.

Punjab govt enforces Section 144 for next 7 days after PTI announces protests

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The Punjab Home Department has declared Section 144 in the province for the next seven days due to security issues in the province.

Punjab Home Department Secretary Noor-Ul-Amin Mengal has issued a notification to implement Section 144 to protect human lives and property. The administration will ensure the implementation of the order till June 27.

The Home Department also banned meetings, processions, rallies, sit-ins and protests across Punjab.

According to the notification, the ban was imposed due to receiving terrorism threats.

The government has also banned public gatherings as they can be considered to be a soft target of terrorists and miscreants.

Punjab Home Department has instructed to publicize the information about Section 144 implementation.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has called for protests

today, and the provincial police in the area have become active, raiding the homes of PTI leaders and workers.

Laure police started raiding homes when PTI announced the protest.

PTI had called for protests after Friday prayers today, but the police have cracked down on the homes and offices of PTI assembly members. Raids were conducted on the homes of PTI leaders like Hafiz Zeeshan Rashid, MPA Mian Haroon, and Sheikh Imtiaz.

Homes of other PTI leaders like Usman Hanza, Hamad Azhar, and the brother of Aslam Iqbal were also raided. Due to the fear of arrests, many opposition assembly members did not even reach the Punjab Assembly today.

The PTI has now decided to go to court against these police raids on their workers' homes.

Rashid has stated that the government has become fearful of the peaceful protest call and has started cracking down.

The PTI has not withdrawn the protest call.

Centre should have consulted ...

Continued from Page 1

been there, it would have been better," Bilawal said.

Despite the differences, he noted that the party's representatives were still engaging with the government. "Even today, our representatives are sitting with the govern-

ment," he stated, reaffirming the party's commitment to finding solutions for the country's economic woes.

Bilawal expressed hope that the prime minister would fulfil his promises, saying: "We hope that PM Shehbaz Sharif will fulfil his commitments."

Minister Sabik visits MCO ...

Continued from Page 1

Pakistan. Director Zia-ur-Rehman of Madinah MCO briefed the minister on the arrangements made to facilitate Pakistani pilgrims visiting the Prophet's city after performing Hajj at holy sites in Makkah, including

Mina, Arafat, and Muzdalifa. The director emphasized the priority of facilitating pilgrims' visits to Riazu-Jannah.

The minister took round of various sections of the MCO, including the Lost and Found Cell, Madinah Departure Cell, Complaint Centre and the adjacent main hospital.