



Sattar urges govt slash consumer tax

Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) Senior Deputy Convener Dr Farooq Sattar on Wednesday said that the government should slash the increased consumer tax and defer its internal debt repayments to revive the economy.



Co-creator of cricket's Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method dies

Frank Duckworth, the statistician who co-developed cricket's Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method, breathed his last at the age of 84 last week.

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Zilhaj 20, Thursday, June 27, 2024

www.dailyspokesman.net

@daily_spokesman

Daily Spokesman Vol: 18, Issue: 75

Price Rs. 25.00 Pages 8

Goodwill gesture

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif interacts with parliamentarians during a session of the National Assembly on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

UNSC's counter-terrorism efforts need urgent reforms: Munir

Spokesman Report

expanding number of non-per-

NEW YORK: At the United Nations, Pakistan says the UN Security Council's work on counter-terrorism needs urgent reforms.

Speaking at UN Security Council, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Munir Akram said

Council should set up a body to monitor and facilitate the implementation of its resolutions, including those in abeyance for considerable time, such as those on Palestine and Kashmir.

Pakistan's Envoy said



manent members is vital to enhancing its representativeness and reducing dominance of its permanent members.

Ambassador Munir Akram called on UN Security Council to shift some of its focus on combating Al-Qaeda and ISIS/Daesh to Hindutva groups in India terrorizing Muslims.

Juvenile accused should undergo rehabilitation program: SC

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday declared that juvenile accused should not be punished rather they should undergo a rehabilitation programme and given special treatment so that they become responsible citizens in future.

The three-member SC bench headed by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah and comprising Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, granted the post-arrest bail of a 14.5 years juvenile accused in a murder case.

The court, in its order, observed that the accused Mehran was 14 years and 5 months old at the time of the incident according to the school certificate.

It further said that according to the first information report,

two persons were travelling in the vehicle and during the journey accused Mehran along with one companion tried to stop the vehicle.

As per the case, the accused Mehran opened fire due to the failure of the vehicle to stop, killing one person, it added.

The SC said that the Peshawar High Court (PHC) had rejected the bail application due to the delay in the trial on the heinous charge.

The order said, "There is a law to treat juvenile accused differently from adult accused. According to the law of juvenile accused, they should not be punished but they should undergo a rehabilitation programme and they should be given special treatment so that they become responsible citizen in future." APP

PM greenlights Pakistan-China JV project for industry relocation

Promoting both local and foreign investment in Pakistan was among the government's priorities

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday gave the green light to the joint ventures between Chinese and Pakistani companies for relocating the Chinese industries to Pakistan.

Chairing a meeting to discuss the matters of the Board of Investment (BoI), he said that promoting both local and foreign investment in Pakistan was among the government's priorities.

He said the government was

PM again invites opposition for talks

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has once again invited the opposition to sit with the government to sort out the issues and take the country forward on the path of development.

Responding to the points raised

taking all possible steps to create a business-friendly environment for traders and investors. The prime minister directed the concerned to submit a compre-

by Ali Muhammad Khan on cut motions in the National Assembly on Wednesday, he regretted that his repeated offers for the Charter of Economy following the 2018 elections were never responded in a positive manner.

The Prime Minister lamented

the bitterness in politics and questioned who is responsible for it.

Alluding to the excesses meted out to his family and the party leaders in the past, the Prime Minister said he does not want happening the same to the opposition.

following his China visit.

Prime Minister, Shehbaz said there was significant potential for relocating China's textile, leather, footwear, and other industries to Pakistan. Meanwhile, during the briefing, the BoI Secretary said that the steps were being taken to relocate Chinese industry to Pakistan.

It was told that the services of Chinese experts were being hired for establishing Business Facilitation Centre in the federal capital and the draft of "Easy Business Act" was being sent to Cabinet Committee for Legislative Cases.

US resolution not align well with positive dynamics of bilateral ties: FO

Says Pakistan committed to constitutionalism, human rights and rule of law

ISLAMABAD: In response to a resolution passed by the United States House of Representatives on alleged poll irregularities in Pakistan's nationwide general election 2024, the Foreign Office (FO) has said that it "stems from an incomplete understanding of the political situation and electoral process in Pakistan".

"Pakistan has taken note of the passage of the House Resolution 901 by the US House of Representatives on June 25," FO spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in response to media queries on Wednesday.

She said, "We believe that the timing and context of this particular resolution does not align well with the positive dynamics of our bilateral ties, and stems from an incomplete understanding of the political situation and electoral process in Pakistan."

Pakistan, she said, believes in constructive dialogue and engagement based on mutual respect and understanding.

Earlier, the US House of Representatives expressed its support for democracy and human rights in Pakistan by a massive majority, approving the "House Resolution 901" which urged an impartial probe into the claims of irregularities during the February 8 general elections in the country.

At least 368 members of the US house voted in favour of the resolution and called for a "full and independent investigation of claims of interference or irregularities in Pakistan's February 2024 election". Around



seven members have voted against it.

Through the resolution, the US lawmakers have emphasised on the need for the Pakistani public's participation in the country's democratic process months after its general polls were contested as "rigged" and its outcome termed "delayed" by political parties now seated on the opposition benches in the legislature.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is among those opposing the results of the polls after its candidates faced immense hurdles in their run up to their participation in the vote, leading them to participate as independent candidates and being deprived of their iconic bat symbol following a legal

battle with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

The country's two major parties, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), along with other political parties, formed a coalition government in the Centre following the polls, leaving the candidates of PTI and other political parties with the opposition seats.

The resolution, on the other hand, has denounced "attempts to suppress the people of Pakistan's participation in their democracy, including through harassment, intimidation, violence, arbitrary detention, restrictions on access to the Internet and telecommunications, or any violation of their human, civil, or political rights".

The resolution also condemned "any effort to subvert the political, electoral, or judicial processes of Pakistan".

Responding to the allegations, the FO spokesperson said, "Pakistan, as the world's second-largest parliamentary democracy and fifth-largest democracy overall, is committed to the values of constitutionalism, human rights and rule of law in pursuance of our own national interest."

Such resolutions, she further said, are therefore neither constructive nor objective. "We hope that the US Congress will play a supportive role in strengthening Pakistan-US ties and focus on avenues of mutual collaboration that benefit both our peoples and countries," Baloch concluded. Agencies

Outgoing Dutch PM Rutte appointed as NATO secretary general

Spokesman Report

BRUSSELS: The North Atlantic Council decided to appoint outgoing Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte as the next secretary general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), NATO said in a statement Wednesday.

The statement said Rutte will assume his duties as NATO's secretary general on Oct. 1, when Jens Stoltenberg's term expires after ten years at the helm of the alliance.

On June 19, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis officially announced his withdrawal from the race for NATO's secretary general. Consequently, Rutte has gained the support of all 32 member countries.

The Netherlands is a founding member of NATO. The 57-year-old Dutch leader, whose 14-year term as Dutch prime minister is set to end within weeks, will be the fourth Dutchman to head the 75-year-old alliance.

NATO's secretary general is responsible for coordinating the alliance and is one of NATO's most important officials, alongside the chair of the NATO Military Committee and the Supreme Allied Commander Europe.



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has stressed that eliminating the scourge of drug abuse required creation of awareness, strengthening of anti-narcotics laws, investing in prevention and treatment and engaging communities.

"We also need to educate our youth about the harmful impacts of drug abuse to save them from this menace. Additionally, we should divert the energies of our youth into healthy and productive activities. The future of our young generation lies in our hands," the president said in a message on the occasion of "International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking" being observed on June 26.

Today, the president said they commemorated the international day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking under the theme "The evidence is clear: invest in prevention."

The day highlighted the urgency of taking concrete steps to eliminate the scourge of drugs from the society by intensifying efforts to prevent drug abuse and trafficking in Pakistan, he added.

"Drug production and illicit trafficking not only immensely harm our youth and their families, but are also a potential source of financing for criminal and terrorist elements," he observed.

The president also called

upon every citizen to support the government in its fight to eradicate drugs from our society.

"I urge each one of you to raise awareness about the harmful effects of drug abuse at the individual, family, and community levels, prioritizing prevention and treatment," President Secretariat Press Wing, in a press release, quoted the president as saying.

President Zardari further said that addressing the root causes of drug abuse required an integrated approach involving all stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies (LEAs), media, civil society, parents and teachers.

"We must curb the flow of drugs into our society, especially within educational institutions, by targeting drug suppliers and peddlers. LEAs should adopt proactive measures and take strict actions against persons involved in drug trafficking," he maintained.

The president expressed the hope that through their collective efforts, they could achieve a drug-free Pakistan.

KP CM directs completion of baseline survey of KP-RET Project

PESHAWAR: KP Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur has directed the concerned authorities to immediately complete the baseline survey regarding Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Economic Transformation Project and completion of all the arrangements including deployment of necessary staff to initiate physical work on the project without any delay.



He issued these directives during a meeting with the Regional Director of International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Rehana Raza, who called on him in Islamabad, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

During the meeting they discussed matters related to execution of Rural Economic Transformation Project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Besides, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and Secretary Agriculture Javed Marwat, other higher officials of Planning and Development department were also present on the occasion.

It was decided in the meeting to immediately finalize all the prerequisites for initiating practical work on the project. Both the sides also agreed to have a joint strategy to ensure phys-

ical progress on this important project as per the stipulated timelines, in addition to deciding that an effective mechanism would be put in place for coordination and close linkages between the concerned provincial departments and donor agency.

The chief minister has directed the concerned administrative secretaries to hold fortnightly meetings in order to review progress on the projects, adding that Rural Economic Transformation Project is of vital importance for providing livelihood opportunities to the people. The provincial government would extend all out support at its part including provision of funds so as to ensure that the project is implemented within the stipulated time-frame, said the Chief Minister.

He maintained that the developing agriculture sector on modern lines is the priority area of his government;

and significant investment is being made for this purpose.

He said that agriculture sector has a lot of potential and can go a long way in providing livelihoods to the needy people of this province; incumbent provincial government is working under a comprehensive strategy to utilize this potential in a beneficial manner.

The chief minister further said that at current, the government is working on 49 different projects aimed at developing agriculture sector on fast track and sustainable basis.

Apart from this, Rs 4.00 billion have been allocated in the new fiscal budget for providing soft loans to the people working in this sector, he said and added that work is also in progress on other important projects including CRBC, Gomal Zam Dam and Tank Zam Dam projects, which on completion would provide all time solution to the issues of food security in the province.

Similarly, he said that a number of suitable sites have been identified for the construction of check dams, thereby preserving the natural water resources as well as providing employment opportunities to the people.

Later on, the chief minister chaired an important meeting regarding mega development projects being executed in the province in collaboration with international development partners.

The participants of the meeting thoroughly reviewed the progress on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Investment and Institutional Support Project, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Integrated Tourism Development Project, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Accessibility Project and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Roads Development Project.

The chief minister has directed the concerned quarters to ensure that all these mega projects are completed within the stipulated timelines, adding that the government will provide funds required for this purpose on priority basis.

However, he directed them not to compromise on the quality of the projects, adding that the government is spending huge resources on the projects, so the benefits should also reach the people in the truest sense.

Secretary Local Government Daood Khan, Secretary C&W Asad Ali, Chief Economist Arifullah and other relevant officials attended the meeting.

Monsoon system brings dust storms, light drizzle to Karachi

Staff Reporter

KARACHI: The monsoon system's impact was felt across various parts of Karachi on Wednesday afternoon, with strong dust-laden winds blowing during a thunderstorm.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), the city's weather remained hot and humid, consistent with the past several days. From morning until noon, sea breezes were inactive, and north-western winds from Balochistan blew towards the city. This created intense humidity and heatwave-like conditions. The maximum temperature reached 39 degrees Celsius with 48% humidity, and the heat index hit 50 degrees Celsius. Some areas experienced light drizzles and sprinkles.

In the afternoon, the weather suddenly changed. Initially, a thunderstorm with high-speed dust-laden winds was recorded in the suburban areas of Gadap and Surjani Town, reaching speeds of 54 kilometres per hour. Later, dusty winds also blew through other parts of the city, including Korangi, Federal B Area, Ayesha Manzil, and Water Pump.

The Early Warning Centre of the Meteorological Department forecasts that the province will experience very hot weather over the next three days. On Thursday and Friday, temperatures are expected to range between 37 and 39 degrees Celsius in Karachi. There is also a chance of thunderstorms and light rain in some suburban areas of the city on Friday.

Temperatures in Ghotki, Jacobabad, Dadu, Larkana, Shikarpur, Qambar Shahdadkot, and Kashmore ranged from 47 to 49 degrees Celsius. Sukkur, Khairpur, Naushahro Feroze, Sanghar, and Shaheed Benazirabad experienced temperatures between 45 and 47 degrees Celsius.

In Hyderabad, Matiari, Tando Allahyar, MT Khan, Mirpurkhas, Umerkot, Thatta, Sujawal, and Badin, temperatures ranged from 42 to 44 degrees Celsius.

PHC orders PTA to remove blasphemous content from TikTok

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Wednesday directed the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to ensure the removal of any blasphemous and objectionable material from the social media short-video sharing platform TikTok.

A bench comprising Justice SM Atiq Shah and Justice Shakeel Ahmed presided over the critical hearing of the petition seeking to ban TikTok in Pakistan.

The petition was filed by Advocate Imran Khan requesting the court to direct the respondents — PTA, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), and Ministry of Information — to ban TikTok in Pakistan permanently for persistent breach of guidelines and violation of the Constitution.

The court addressed concerns over the platform's content, specifically focusing on blasphemous and objectionable videos.

Jehanzaib Mehsud, the lawyer representing PTA, informed the court, "We have submitted our comments today."

The petitioner's lawyer said they had in their petition appealed to the court that TikTok be banned, arguing, "While we do not oppose the sharing of positive content, the platform is also being used to share blasphemous material."

Justice Ahmed supported this view, asserting, "Positive content should be shared, but there must be no place for objectionable material."

During the hearing, PTA's lawyer noted that any blasphemous posts on TikTok were promptly blocked.

However, Justice Shah questioned the effectiveness of these measures, pointing out "why such content didn't get filtered in Pakistan like in the US and other countries, where they have better filtering systems in place."

"Why hasn't such a system been implemented here?" he asked. He further inquired about the possibility of creating a firewall to automatically block blasphemous videos, to which the PTA's lawyer responded, "We do not currently have such a system."

The court emphasised the national importance of this issue, urging the PTA to take a proactive role in addressing the concerns raised.

The PTA was directed to remove all objectionable content from TikTok and to submit a detailed report within seven days.

The next hearing of the case is scheduled for July 24. Agencies

Karachi commissioner rejects reports of large-scale deaths due to heatwave

KARACHI: Karachi Commissioner Hassan Naqvi dismissed reports of large-scale fatalities in the city due to the recent heatwave, stating that the figures being circulated are incorrect.

Speaking to the media at the Commissioner House in Karachi on Wednesday, he clarified that the heatwave affected 1,700 people and resulted in 10 deaths. However, he acknowledged a 4% to 5% increase in the death rate in the city while further investigations are underway.

Addressing reports of mysterious deaths, he explained that information from hospitals indicates that deaths from heart attacks and other medical conditions are not linked to the heatwave.

Commissioner Naqvi mentioned that on June 25, 147 people were hospitalised due to heat-related illnesses. Except for two, all patients were discharged after recovery. The two individuals who died had been admitted to Qatar Hospital on June 25.

Naqvi urged welfare organisations to coordinate with the administration on sensitive matters to prevent unnecessary panic among citizens. He stated that the situation caused by the heatwave in Karachi is under control.

The commissioner emphasised that the unverified data being reported on the number of deaths in the city has not been confirmed by any credible source. He urged welfare organisations and other entities not to release mortality data independently, but to allow the administration to verify it first.

Naqvi highlighted that the Karachi administration is taking emergency measures to manage the situation arising from the heatwave.

He noted that the intense heat has left citizens struggling without electricity, with load-shedding lasting 12 to 14 hours. Naqvi said he plans to meet K-Electric officials to address these issues.

He said he aims to ensure that there is no load-shedding in Karachi from midnight to 6 AM to provide relief to citizens at night and that load-shedding is avoided during heatwave warnings issued by the Meteorological Department.

Additionally, Naqvi expressed concern over water supply issues in Karachi. He questioned why areas with normal water supply are now facing disruptions.

The Water Corporation will be tasked with providing complete details on water distribution, identifying which areas are receiving water and which are affected by supply issue, he added. Agencies

Another incident of woman driver running over motorway cop reported

RAWALPINDI: A woman driver was charged with over speeding and allegedly running over a motorway patrol officer's foot, according to police reports on Wednesday. The incident occurred at the main Islamabad toll plaza, leading to a case being filed at Nasirabad police station.

Police reported that the patrol officer's boot was torn as a result of the vehicle running over his foot. The woman's identity was confirmed, and a speeding ticket was issued on her British driving licence.

The woman was fined Rs2,500 for over speeding, which was paid by a 22-year-old man in the vehicle. Police noted that before and after the payment, the woman misbehaved with the motorway police and issued serious threats.

According to the case, the woman ran over the patrol officer's foot after paying the fine and then fled the scene.

Heat stroke camp

KARACHI: A volunteer serving Sharbat to passengers at a heat stroke camp, at Nipa Chowrangui Gulshan-e-Iqbal, due to extreme heat in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

'Drug Prevention Conference' held

Our Correspondent

LAHORE: On the occasion of World Anti-Narcotics Day, the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) organised the Drug Prevention Conference, here on Wednesday.

The conference was chaired by LCCI Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry, and was addressed by SSP (Operations) Tasawar Iqbal, Assistant Director of Anti-Narcotics Force M. Muqem, Convener of the Standing Committee on Health and Narcotics Control Dr. Zafar Iqbal, and Director of the University of Education Professor Umar Saleem.

LCCI Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry emphasised the importance of drug prevention, stating,

"Our goal is to make Pakistan drug-free, and all members of society must play their part in this endeavor. The theme of International Anti-Drug Day, 'The evidence is clear: invest in prevention,' calls on us all to focus on preventing drug use."

He highlighted the concerning increase in drug use within society, noting that ignoring this harsh reality is detrimental to the nation. He expressed concern over the rising number of drug addicts, particularly among young students, and pointed out that the situation in Pakistan is also troubling in this regard.

Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry shared that an estimated 9 million people in the country are drug addicts, with research indicating that 40,000 new individuals

start using drugs each year in Pakistan. Of these, 860,000 regularly use heroin, with 73 per cent of them using shared syringes. Additionally, 3.6pc of the population uses other prohibited substances.

The report further revealed that 25,000 street children who have run away from home are addicted to drugs, with 78 per cent of users being men and 22 per cent women. In Punjab alone, 2.9 million individuals are drug addicts. Research suggests that people with self-confidence, decision-making skills, communication abilities, the capacity to handle pressure, time management skills, and anger management are better able to avoid drug use.

He noted that many educational institutions are not immune to this scourge, particularly colleges and universities

with hostel facilities where drug use is on the rise. This has led to an increase in depression and various psychological issues among students.

Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry recommended that educational institutions organize positive activities such as sports, cultural programs, and workshops to divert students' attention away from drugs. He urged institutions to adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards drug use and to convey a clear message to students about its dangers.

In addition to educational institutions, doctors can also play a significant role in combating the drug problem. He suggested that doctors initiate detoxification programs in hospitals and clinics to help patients cleanse themselves of the effects of drugs.

Balochistan Govt to enrol 400 children of labourers

QUETTA: The Balochistan government has decided to enrol around 400 children of labourers in higher educational institutions across the country on scholarship basis this year.

The Labour and Manpower Department has registered 200 children of laborers and the registration of 200 more children in the process would be completed by July 15.

This was decided in a review meeting of the Department of Labour and Manpower which was chaired by Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti here Wednesday.

The meeting reviewed the progress of the Youth Skills Development Program. The Chief Minister was informed

that the first batch of skilled youth from Balochistan would be sent abroad in March 2025, while unskilled would also be sent abroad for employment in December 2025.

Adviser to the Chief Minister on Labour and Manpower Sardar Ghulam Rasool Ummrani, Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan, Secretary Labour Welfare, Director General B-TEVTA and other officials concerned were also present in the meeting.

The chief minister directed that the implementation of the Youth Skills Development Program should be expedited and also ensure the provision of employment after imparting the skill among the youth.



He stressed that Kuchlak Driving School should be made operational immediately and B-TEVTA should provide driving training to 100 people in the first phase of the program so that they can be sent to Oman for employment.

The chief minister said

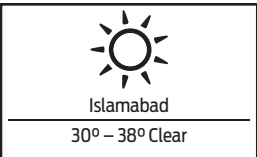
that the number of registered labourers in Balochistan was much less than the actual figure and ordered that the Labour department should collect accurate data of labourers through special survey and register them.

He said that efforts would be made to bring the labourers into

the social security plan and for their welfare. Sarfraz Bugti said that industrial owners deliberately do not disclose the actual number of workers to save social security costs.

He added that majority of labourers in Balochistan were not paid according to the wages fixed by the government. Exploitation of workers will not be allowed and their social security will be ensured, he added.

Adviser to Chief Minister on Labour and Manpower Sardar Ghulam Rasool Ummrani told the meeting that according to the vision of the chief minister, comprehensive measures were being taken to provide technical training to the youth of Balochistan. APP



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr	3:15 am
Zohr	12:11 pm
Asr	5:11 pm
Maghrib	7:22 pm
Isha	9:06 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 4451122
Motorway Police	9266044
Motorway Police	9270601-20

Women Police Stations

Islamabad	9222596
Rawalpindi	9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance	115
PIA Flight Info	114
PIA Cargo	9280979
Railway Enquiry	117
Railway Exchange	9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi	5555489
CAA	9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH	561111
MH	561116
MH	561116
Cantt Hospital	9270907-11
DHQ	5556311-4
RGH	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
PIMS	9261170-79
Polyclinic	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA	9221334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3

AGP prays SC to dismiss SIC's appeal for reserved seats

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan on Wednesday submitted written arguments to the Supreme Court of Pakistan in the case of Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) regarding reserved seats.

The AGP requested the top court to dismiss the SIC's appeal and uphold the verdict of Peshawar High Court (PHC) in the matter.

He said, "A political party that participates in elections and wins at least one seat can get reserved seats. According to the law, a list has to be provided for certain seats to the ECP (Election Commission of Pakistan)."

The SIC neither participated in the elections nor submitted the list for the specific seats, "which are only reserved for minorities and women", he added.

The AGP said, "Independent candidates can join the political parties that have representation in the Parliament."

He argued that the SIC was not a parliamentary party at the time of the allocation of reserved seats, and its demand for reserved seats was unconstitutional. He said that the PPP (Pakistan Peoples Party), PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) and others had submitted their lists before the elections, and their voters were aware about the reserved seats before elections.

NCSW to host conference on Gender Climate Action in Pakistan

With 80 percent of those affected by climate change being women and children, their inclusion in decision-making is essential

ISLAMABAD: The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) hosted the pivotal conference "From Vulnerability to Resilience: Gender Climate Action in Pakistan" in partnership with Pathfinder and UNFPA at the Marriott Hotel, Islamabad.

This event reinforced NCSW's dedication to fostering gender-inclusive climate resilience strategies in Pakistan. The conference gathered a diverse group from all provinces including governments, climate activists, community leaders and private sector. NCSW Chairperson Nilofar Bakhtiar opened the session, highlighting the critical role of women in addressing climate change. She noted, "With 80 percent of those affected by climate change being women and children, their inclusion in decision-making is essential."

Chief Guest Lt General Inam Haider Malik, Chairman of NDMA, stressed the urgent need for proactive climate policies. "Pakistan must move beyond a reactive stance. We need immediate and effective policies to counter the looming crisis," he urged.

Notable contributions included a captivating speech by humanitarian and singer Shehzad Roy, and insights on the "Advancing the leadership of women and girls for better health and climate resilience Surmi Project" from Madiha Latif, Country Director of Pathfinder International Pakistan. Ambassador Khazar Farhadov of Azerbaijan discussed gender-inclusive climate strategies in anticipation of COP29, while environmentalist Samar Khan shared her firsthand experiences of climate impact on livelihoods and winter sports.

The conference featured thematic working groups focused on women's preparedness, climate-induced gender-based violence (GBV), health impacts, and livelihoods.

Nilofar Bakhtiar launched the "National Agenda on Women and Climate Change in Pakistan," outlining key recommendations including: the immediate roll out of the Climate and Gender Action Plan, educational institutionalization of climate literacy, and investments in women leadership for climate action.

It was emphasized to strengthen local level institutions for enhanced coordination and development of gender specific budget allocations to address Gender Based Violence and ensure gender based violence response is integrated across all climate and emergency policies.

Further, investments in climate



resilience healthcare infrastructure

focus on comprehensive Family Planning and Maternal Health Services. The need to focus on alternative and climate smart agriculture practices, involvement of private sector in early alert system, and women economic resilience was stressed upon.

The event concluded with a keynote address by Musadik Malik, Federal Minister for Water Resources reflected on the dire situation of gender disparity within the public and private spaces. He spoke passionately of the continued socioeconomic losses and disproportionate vulnerability to death and violence of women and girls as a result of climate shocks.

He highlighted the intersections of climate and health underscoring the need of increased representation of women and girls in policy making. APP

Work zone

ISLAMABAD: Jinnah Avenue closed owing to Underpass Construction project in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

ANF Commemorates Int'l Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

Staff Reporter

RAWALPINDI: Anti Narcotics Force Pakistan (ANFP) on Wednesday observed the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, a day of profound importance dedicated to raising awareness and strengthening our resolve against drug abuse and illegal drug trade.

This significant day calls for global solidarity in addressing the challenges of drug addiction and trafficking, striving towards a drug-free society.

The day began with a Wreath Laying Ceremony & heartfelt tribute to the martyrs of the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), who sacrificed their lives in the fight against drug trafficking. Their courage and dedication continue to inspire us in our

relentless pursuit of a society free from the dangers of drugs. DG ANF Major General, Abdul Moeed (HI M) was present at the ceremony along with families of Shuhada.

During later half of the day a cycle rally and anti-drug awareness walk, were also organized which underscored the collective determination of the community, media representatives, diplomats, DLOs of various countries to combat drug abuse and promote a healthy, drug-free lifestyle. Participants carried banners and posters with messages advocating for a drug-free future, spreading awareness among the public. The event was organized at the F-9 Park, Islamabad.

Director General Anti-Narcotics Force, Major General,

Abdul Moeed (HI)M emphasized the critical role of the ANF in combating drug abuse and trafficking. He acknowledged the sacrifices of the ANF martyrs and highlighted the ongoing efforts to create a safer and healthier nation.

The event was graced by the Chief Guest, Captain(R) Muhammad Khurram Agha, Federal Secretary of the Ministry of Narcotics Control. Mr. Jeremy Milsom, the Country Representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). UNODC Goodwill Ambassador, Shahzad Roy shared his insights regarding today's event and highlighted the significance of raising awareness among youth and communities about the dangers of drug abuse.

Throughout the day, various activities were carried out across the country these includes; Awareness Walk in Peshawar, Martial Arts Competition in Quetta, Sports activity and Awareness walk in Punjab, and another Awareness walk/ Marathon in Karachi. These activities were organized by ANF to mark the International day against drug abuse and Illicit Trafficking on national level. The activities aimed to educate the masses about the dangers of drug abuse and the importance of preventive measures.

ANF reaffirmed its commitment to fighting drug abuse and trafficking and urged all the participants to continue joint efforts to create a safer, healthier world for future generations.

Azerbaijan's experience to be utilised for beautifying Islamabad: CDA chief

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, on Wednesday said that Azerbaijan's experience would be utilised for the beautification of Islamabad by adopting modern techniques and traditional architectural methods.

During a meeting with a delegation from Baku, Azerbaijan, he said that Islamabad's beautification efforts would leverage Azerbaijan's expertise to meet contemporary needs while preserving traditional architectural styles.

The meeting was also attended by the Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov, said a press release issued here.

The delegation, comprised of experts in urban beautification and landscaping from Baku, will spend three days in the federal capital. The experts will visit various locations including parks, historical sites, Melody Food Street and other key areas to provide recommendations for enhancing the city's aesthetics.

In collaboration with the CDA's technical team, the Baku delegation will offer proposals to improve Islamabad's maintenance and landscaping.

They discussed techniques for implementing small-scale, attractive landscaping along sidewalks and pedestrian pathways. The first phase of this initiative will focus on introducing Baku-style landscaping along the Srinagar Highway.

The expertise of the delegation will be applied to enhance Islamabad's Food Street in the initial phase. A series of short-term, mid-term, and long-term projects will also be executed collaboratively to improve the city's overall appearance.

The delegation expressed their gratitude for the exceptional hospitality provided by the CDA. APP

Christian community welcomes minority's rights resolution

ISLAMABAD: The Christian community has welcomed the approval of the minority's rights resolution by the National Assembly with a majority.

Christian spiritual leader and Archbishop of Rawalpindi/Islamabad Dr. Joseph Arshad said that the Christian community applauded the Federal Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Azam Nazir Tarrar and members of NA for tabling and approving the resolution in the National Assembly.

He also demanded the implementation of Justice* Tasadaq Hussain Jilani points for the protection of minority rights.

Joseph added that the development and prosperity of the motherland was possible only by ensuring the provision of equal rights to all citizens. APP

Muqam meets with Tribal jirga's elders to end sit in

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for States & Frontier Regions (SAFRON), Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Engineer Amir Muqam on Wednesday met with the elders of the Tribal Jirga and they ended the ongoing sit-in at Islamabad.

During the meeting, the minister assured the Jirga that he would seriously take up the issue of compensation for damaged houses in the Prime Minister's Steering Committee for the merged districts, said a press release.

The official decision of ending the protest demonstration was taken in the Tribal Jirga chaired by Javed Mehsud here while PML-N Tank President Samiullah Khan Barki was also accompanied by Jirga members.

Amir Maqam said that the government has no objection regarding any demand of the tribes and the tribes were the protectors of the borders. The minister said that he was personally playing a role in resolving their problems.

The elders thanked the federal minister for the assurance and said that they were confident that their issue will be raised in the relevant committee.

Govt taking measures for protection of minorities' rights: Tarar

Staff Reporter

Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan Dr. Riina Kionka called on Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights Azam Nazeer Tarar in Islamabad on Wednesday.

The meeting discussed relations between Pakistan and European Union, issues of mutual interest and Pakistan's GSP plus status were discussed during the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said the government is taking all possible measures for the betterment of minorities and protection of their rights.

He mentioned different resolutions passed by Parliament in this regard. Azam Nazeer Tarar said the provincial governments have also been urged to play role in protecting the rights of minorities.

Late Iranian President Raisi hailed for his 'Neighbourhood Policy'

ISLAMABAD: speakers at a seminar on Wednesday hailed the late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's neighbourhood policy that intended to promote regional cooperation and support for peace and development.

The Institute of Regional Studies in collaboration with Asian Institute of Eco-Civilization Research and Development (AIERD) organized the seminar on Late President Ebrahim Raisi's vision of regional cooperation, a news release said.

Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam was the keynote speaker alongwith Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran, Mohammad Mudassar Tipu. Shakeel Ahmed Ramay acted as the moderator for the discussion.

In his welcome address, President IRS, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem hailed the 'Neighbourhood

Policy' of Late President Ebrahim Raisi. He recalled that Ambassador Jauhar pointed out that IRS was the first institution that had arranged a seminar on this policy and highlighted Raisi's successful diplomacy for revival of ties with UAE and Egypt and rapprochement with Saudi Arabia in 2023. He also underscored that Iran's relations towards its east, especially with Pakistan have been always cordial and cooperative, which were further strengthened in the wake of late President Raisi's visit to Pakistan. Stressing upon the need of a multilateral cooperative framework, Ambassador Saleem underlined the need for promoting intra regional and inter regional connectivity and cooperation.

Ambassador Reza Amiri thanked IRS for organizing the seminar and noted that regional cooperation was

the key agenda during the tenure of President Raisi and Foreign Minister Dr. Amir Abdollahian. That was very much reflected by 28 foreign visits that President Raisi undertook.

Ambassador Amiri stressed that President Raisi's visit to Pakistan was his most extensive visit in which he visited three cities and met with top leadership of the country including the President, Prime Minister, Speaker National Assembly, Chairman Senate and Army Chief.

The MoU signed during the visit in the areas of free trade agreement, economic cooperation and promoting tourism were the attestation to the strong brotherly ties which both Pakistan and Iran share, Ambassador Amiri expressed. He also praised President Raisi's ambition of prioritizing regional cooperation through SCO, Caspian Sea Summit and BRICS.

Ambassador Amiri assured that the new government in Iran would uphold the legacy of President Raisi and continue to promote cooperation vis-à-vis regional states and Pakistan.

Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran, Mohammad Mudassar Tipu highlighted President Raisi's dedicated efforts to bolster the enduring cultural and economic bonds with Pakistan. He explained that President Raisi and other Iranian officials shared the deep sense of respect for Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Iqbal.

President Raisi's stance on increasing bilateral trade with Pakistan to \$10 billion annually and his interest in fostering the security cooperation with Afghanistan exemplified his commitment to economic cooperation and regional stability, Ambassador Tipu said.

Group Chairman/Chief Editor: **Almas Ayoub Sabir**
 Vice Chairman: **Asim Nazir Ahmad**
 Managing Editor: **Naveed Ahmad Khan**
 Head Editorial Advisory Board: **Amjad Mehmood**
 Bureau Chief Karachi: **Saleem Zaman Khan.**
 (mszk786@gmail.com)
 Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**
 (afrazalishah@gmail.com)
 Islamabad Office: **Rose Plaza, I-8 Markaz.**
 Karachi office: **Flat No.C.3.A.One Comfort, Block No 11.**
Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Main Rashid Minhas Road.
 Lahore Office: **7-E,Samanberg, Johar Town.**
 Email: **spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com**
 Whatsapp: **0346-5008408**

Embracing the AI-energy-climate nexus

Sultan Al-Jaber

Six months ago, at the UN Climate Change Conference in Dubai known as COP28, the world transcended geopolitical divides — something few believed possible — and united behind a realistic plan, known as the UAE Consensus, to promote sustainable prosperity and address the threat of climate change. Nearly 200 governments and all sectors of the global economy coalesced around a practical, science-based pathway for achieving low-carbon economic growth while keeping the target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach.

The key to the agreement's success was inclusivity: no one was excluded, no industry was sidelined and no solution was off the table. As we move to implementation, the world must leave no stone unturned to accelerate progress. Specifically, that means embracing artificial intelligence, which promises to have a far-reaching, transformational impact on the energy transition and is projected to add \$7 trillion to global gross domestic product over the next 10 years.

It is difficult to overstate the potential of AI in the fight against climate change. This evolving technology can change the pace of progress by redesigning industrial processes, optimizing transport systems, maximizing energy efficiency and minimizing emissions at scale. AI will also strengthen our adaptive resilience through innovations in agriculture, water security and health.

But AI development will necessarily lead to a surge in energy demand. Resolving the contradiction between AI's thirst for electricity and its potential to accelerate a just transition will require technology and energy firms to cooperate in new and creative ways.

There are grounds for optimism. AI is already driving efficiency gains across industries. Through AIQ, its technology joint venture with G42 and Presight, the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company has used predictive maintenance and machine-learning tools to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by more than 1 million tonnes in just one year. Other power companies are using neural networks to mitigate the intermittency and storage challenges of renewable energy by forecasting weather patterns and preempting peaks and dips in usage.

In material sciences, researchers are using AI to identify the molecular structures best suited to carbon capture. The technology is also transforming agriculture, another energy-intensive sector, by analyzing micronutrients, enhancing crop yields and reducing water use by as much as 40 percent. Over the next five to 10 years, AI is expected to enable breakthroughs in fusion, hydrogen, modular

nuclear power and long-term battery storage, along with as-yet-unimagined climate solutions.

The flipside to AI's transformative potential is its insatiable energy consumption, which is putting additional stress on an already stretched power system. Since 2019, emissions from the largest AI firms have increased by more than 30 percent. By 2030, the number of data centers is expected to double worldwide, owing to the technology's vast processing needs, and these new operations could consume as much electricity as Canada. Bridging this gap will be difficult, as no single energy source is currently capable of meeting such a huge leap in demand.

Major tech companies are starting to collaborate with energy companies to face this challenge head-on. In May, Microsoft and Brookfield closed a deal to develop 10.5 gigawatts of renewable capacity by 2030. Masdar, the UAE's leading renewable-energy company, is on track to quadruple its capacity to 100 gigawatts by 2030 and is exploring opportunities to supply the tech sector with clean electricity. There is also increased investment in nuclear-powered data centers, although these will take decades to build. In the interim, up to 200 billion cubic meters of natural gas — the least carbon-intensive fossil fuel — will be needed per year, as will significant investment in global grid infrastructure to cope with increased demand.

Adopting a holistic approach is critical to addressing these problems and reaping AI's potential benefits. To that end, I am convening a "Change Makers Majlis" — a majlis being a traditional gathering that encourages the exchange of diverse perspectives — in Abu Dhabi in November to discuss AI and the energy transition. Business leaders from the energy and technology sectors, policymakers, investors and civil society organizations will come together to reimagine the relationship between energy, AI and inclusive economic growth.

Given the UAE's history as a responsible energy supplier, our long-standing commitment to sustainable development and our emergence as a leader in AI, with investment platforms like MGX, infrastructure developers like G42 and the region's largest and fastest-growing large language model, Falcon, we are keen to bring all relevant stakeholders together on an issue of profound importance to all humanity. By building a bridge between energy and AI, we can help realize the UAE Consensus and, in doing so, take advantage of the greatest economic opportunity since the First Industrial Revolution. (Courtesy: Arab News)

Sultan Al-Jaber, the UAE's Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, is COP28 President, CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company and Chairman of Masdar.

Adulterated foods pose severe risks to health

The deliberate addition or contamination of food products with non-food substances can pose severe health risks, ranging from mild discomfort to life-threatening conditions. Food adulteration is a pervasive issue with serious health implications. The risks associated with adulterated food had far-reaching consequences from acute illnesses to chronic health conditions.

The authority concerned need to ensure round-the-clock vigilance in food markets and take stern action against the violators for playing havoc with the public lives. The food adulteration was an act of adding or mixing low-quality, non-nutritive, or harmful substances to food products for economic gains. This practice often compromises on the quality, safety, and nutritional value of the food, potentially leading to serious health risks. The impacts of the food adulteration on health said that consuming adulterated food can lead to immediate health issues such as food poisoning, gastrointestinal disorders, and allergic reactions. The contaminants like pesticides, heavy metals, and microbial pathogens can cause symptoms ranging from nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea to severe abdominal pain and fever.

The contamination of food with pathogenic microorganisms like bacteria, viruses, and fungi due to improper handling or storage conditions is called microbial adulteration. The primary driver of food adulteration is economic gains. Producers may adulterate food to reduce production costs and increase profits. For instance, diluting milk with water or mixing low-quality grains with premium ones can significantly cut costs. The second cause of food adulteration is inadequate regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms. Countries with weak food safety regulations often see higher instances of adulteration due to minimal accountability. In order to address food adulteration requires a multifaceted approach involving regulatory measures, public awareness, and technological advancements. The government needs to implement stringent food safety regulations. This includes setting clear standards for food quality, conducting regular inspections, and penalizing violators.

The producers may resort to adulteration to meet market demands and maintain competitive pricing. Ignorance and lack of awareness is also one of the causes of food adulteration, adding that both producers and consumers may lack awareness about the dangers of food adulteration. Poor quality control measures and lack of proper testing facilities can result in undetected adulteration of food products. This is especially prevalent in regions with limited access to advanced food testing technologies.

Children are vulnerable to the effects of adulterated food. Consumption of contaminated or nutritionally compromised food can hinder physical and cognitive development, leading to developmental delays, learning difficulties, and weakened immune systems. Promoting ethical practices among food producers and suppliers is essential to prevent adulteration. This includes training programs, certifications, and incentives for adhering to food safety standards. Creating a culture of transparency and accountability within the food industry can reduce the prevalence of adulteration. There is a dire need to conduct research and development in food safety which can lead to innovative solutions for detecting and preventing adulteration.



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmī. (Courtesy of Ashraf Al-Awsat)

Deployment of Frontier Constabulary in AJK - I

Nestled amidst the stunning Himalayan and Karakoram ranges, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) boasts abundant natural resources, including flowing rivers and cascading waterfalls. These resources present tremendous potential for producing clean, renewable energy through hydropower projects. As the global community increasingly prioritizes sustainable development and carbon emission reduction, the importance of hydropower in AJK cannot be overstated.

Hydropower, a renewable energy source harnessing the kinetic energy of flowing water to generate electricity, stands in stark contrast to fossil fuels, emitting no harmful greenhouse gases. In AJK, where rivers and streams define the natural landscape, hydropower offers a sustainable solution to meet the region's escalating energy needs without compromising its ecological balance. By leveraging local water resources, AJK can diversify its energy mix, ensuring a dependable electricity supply for residents, businesses, and industries, thereby bolstering energy security and economic stability.

The construction and operation of hydropower projects not only spur economic growth but also create job opportunities, particularly benefiting local communities. Skilled labor for engineering, construction, and maintenance is in demand, lifting income levels and stimulating economic activity. Moreover, the availability of affordable hydropower attracts investment in downstream industries, further propelling regional development.

AJK's hydropower projects prioritize environmental sustainability, employing careful

planning and mitigation strategies to minimize ecological impact. Additionally, hydropower reservoirs serve as vital water storage facilities, aiding in river flow regulation, flood mitigation, and agricultural irrigation, thus contributing to comprehensive environmental management and conservation efforts.

These projects yield social benefits as well, elevating living standards and enhancing quality of life in AJK. Access to electricity facilitates the delivery of essential services like healthcare, education, and communication, empowering communities and fostering social cohesion. Furthermore, electrification drives technological innovation and connectivity, bridging urban-rural disparities and promoting equitable development across the region.

The influx of Chinese workers into Pakistan has grown notably in recent years, propelled by collaborative projects within the framework of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). These workers, representing diverse backgrounds and professions, play a pivotal role in shaping Pakistan's socio-economic landscape.

Chinese workers spearhead infrastructure development initiatives across Pakistan, particularly within the scope of CPEC. From constructing highways and railways to establishing power plants and industrial zones, their expertise and technical proficiency are indispensable in realizing Pakistan's infrastructural aspirations. These projects not only enhance domestic connectivity but also lay the groundwork for sustainable economic growth and regional integration.

The presence of Chinese workers facilitates the transfer of skills, knowledge, and technology to their Pakistani counterparts. Through

training programs, joint ventures, and on-the-job learning, Pakistani workers have the opportunity to acquire new competencies and enhance their technical expertise. This exchange of expertise not only strengthens the capacity of the local workforce but also fosters enduring partnerships between China and Pakistan.

Chinese workers contribute significantly to expanding economic cooperation between the two nations, fostering mutually beneficial relationships across various sectors. Their presence stimulates investment, trade, and business opportunities, generating employment and propelling economic development in both countries. Furthermore, joint ventures between Chinese and Pakistani enterprises facilitate the exchange of ideas, resources, and market access, laying the groundwork for sustained prosperity and growth.

The presence of Chinese workers in Pakistan also promotes cultural exchange and mutual understanding between the two nations. By engaging with local communities, sharing traditions, and participating in cultural events, they enrich Pakistan's cultural mosaic and promote goodwill between the peoples of China and Pakistan. This cultural interchange fosters friendship and cooperation, bolstering bilateral ties between the two nations. Ensuring the safety, well-being, and rights of Chinese workers, along with promoting harmonious coexistence with local communities, is crucial for the sustainable development of collaborative projects.

In recent years, cooperation between AJK and Chinese partners has catalyzed the initiation and implementation of several hydropower projects. Chinese workers, renowned for their prowess in infrastructure development, play a pivotal role in propelling forward these projects. They bring a wealth of technical expertise and engineering finesse to AJK's hydropower initiatives.

To be continued

Proposed drone ban exposes irrationality of US politics

Tom Fowdy

A bill, titled "Countering CCP Drones Act", passed by the US House of Representatives in mid-June, alleges, without providing any evidence whatsoever, that all Chinese-made drones, especially those made by DJI, constitute a "national security threat" and therefore should be banned.

Industry experts believe there is little reason for the bill not to get through the Senate at this stage, because it is part of a series of US attacks against Chinese technology and manufacturing, and because it is backed by a bipartisan consensus in Washington. However, this is a bill that will cause immense collateral damage to US hobbyists, professionals and organizations, and disrupt the entire domestic market with no feasible replacement for Chinese-made drones.

US politics is suffering from mass hysteria pertaining to China. All Chinese technology products, whether they be electric vehicles, Huawei products and services, or the TikTok app, are irrationally denounced as a "national security threat" by the US. Although such denunciations are presented as legitimate "concerns" in the mainstream media, the accusers never furnish evidence to back their claim. Such accusations are based on McCarthyist hypotheses, which baselessly speculate that the given target will "spy" on behalf of China in some way or the other, and therefore the only option is to ban it outright.

This mass hysteria reached its height at the beginning of 2023, when the US unilaterally declared China's high-altitude meteorological balloon to be a "spy balloon". The US has applied the same lame logic to pretty much everything, creating a media echo chamber that

offers no opinion to the contrary, no balance and no reasoning.

Despite this, the proposed ban has been criticized by industry insiders, who recognize the political motivations behind it and the damage it will cause. The Drone DJI website says: "The Airborne Public Safety Association, Law Enforcement Drone Association, and DRONE-RESPONDERS — which represent over 6,000 agencies, police and fire agencies with drone programs across the US — have written a letter to the members of the Senate Armed Services Committee to oppose the inclusion of the Countering CCP Drones Act in the Senate version of the NDAA."

In another article published on the news site TechRadar, a columnist says: "In much the same way that no one has yet to definitively prove how TikTok is stealing our data and putting us at risk, I can find no proof that DJI drones are putting the US at risk." The author adds: "My frustration level with a US government that's sliding Chinese technology companies from safe and acceptable to dangerous and bannable like so many beads on an abacus is at an all-time high".

What sets the DJI ban apart from other US bans and sanctions on Chinese products is that it will impose economic and technological backwardness on itself just to oppose China, an action which is motivated by spite, opportunistic paranoia and small-minded protectionism. As it were with Huawei's 5G, Chinese-made EVs and other Chinese products, US politicians see the ban on Chinese-made drones as an acceptable way to curb China's technological progress only to increase the cost of US consumers and inconvenience them because it has completely lost its mind. (Courtesy: China Daily)

The author is a British political and international-relations analyst.

US Presidential debate 2024

High stakes for Biden and Trump

This high-profile debate marks their first face-off since 2020

WASHINGTON: The stakes are high for President Joe Biden's first debate of the 2024 race to the White House, which is set to take place on June 27.

The election is anybody's to win, as the candidates are running neck-in-neck. While former U. S. President Donald Trump leads incumbent Biden in all the key battleground states according to the latest Real Clear Politics poll averages, he does so by only a hair in some states.

The first presidential debate will see the two candidates square off on national television and proclaim their vision for the nation's future.

"The debate is very high profile because it is a close race and this will be people's first chance to see the two men side-by-side," Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Darrell West told Xinhua.

Indeed, the two have not faced off since 2020, the year that Biden was elected.

Much has changed since then. The worst inflation in 40 years has impacted the wallets of lower income Americans, as well as retirees on a fixed budget and young people. Rents are up significantly, and it's harder to purchase a home now due to the highest interest rates in decades.

Millions of migrants are illegally pouring over the southern border, straining the resources of cities and towns nationwide, according to some, while others argue they are reducing



wages. Critics raised Biden's age issue. At 81, he is the oldest ever sitting president.

At the same time, Trump has recently been convicted of a felony, although it remains unknown whether the conviction will stick upon appeal. He is also charged with dozens of additional crimes in several other cases.

"I expect a lot of fireworks, with Biden saying Trump is a convicted felon while the former president tries to show that Biden is too old to do an effective job," West said.

"Most Americans have made up their minds but there is 5 to 7 percent of voters who are undecided and the debate could make a big difference to them," West said of the tight race.

Experts said Trump's best bet to score points with voters is to behave in a more "presidential" way than in past debates, which means refraining from

interrupting his opponent, launching personal insults or yelling, as he's often done in the past.

"This would be his best shot," said Clay Ramsay, a researcher at the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland.

Trump could also do well to highlight the fact that inflation was low during his presidency, the economy was humming, and the stock market was boosting people's investment portfolios and retirement accounts to new highs, experts said.

As for Biden, highlighting Trump's recent felony conviction and maintaining a calm demeanor — unlike Trump, who is prone to public temper tantrums — could help him in the debate, experts said.

Ramsay told Xinhua that Biden could take the high road "and then mention more in sorrow than in anger

that Trump is a convicted felon, and state clearly that Trump is under indictment" for another alleged crime.

The Ukraine crisis is likely to come up in the debate, with each candidate making his case.

President Biden continues to send billions of U. S. dollars to Ukraine, while Trump has been deeply critical of this, and has threatened to cut U. S. aid to Ukraine quickly if reelected.

At the same time, the war in Gaza continues to rage, and some voters, especially young people, disapprove of Biden's Israel policy.

Trump has been open in criticizing Biden's handling of the Israel-Hamas conflict, and the issue is sure to be one of contention between the two candidates.

Immigration is also likely to emerge as a major issue in the debate.

Recent years have seen millions of migrants pour illegally over the southern U. S. border. Trump has been highly critical of the situation, referring to it as an "invasion."

During his administration, Trump began building a wall to prevent migrants from illegally entering the United States over the southern border.

For his part, Biden is likely to slam Republicans for refusing to cooperate on the immigration issue.

Biden could highlight a new policy he implemented earlier this month, which prevents undocumented spouses of U. S. citizens from being deported. Xinhua

Israel strikes Lebanon with white phosphorus bombs



BEIRUT: Israeli warplanes struck a town in southern Lebanon with white phosphorus bombs, according to Lebanese media on Wednesday.

The attack targeted Mtolleh in the border town of Khiyam, the state-run National News Agency reported.

No reports were yet available about casualties. Under international humanitarian law, the use of airburst white phosphorus is unlawfully indiscriminate in populated areas.

Three homes were also destroyed in Israeli airstrikes in the occupied Shebaa Farms in southern Lebanon, according to an Anadolu reporter.

Israeli artillery shelling was also reported in Wazzani, Wadi Hamoul and Dhayra in southern Lebanon.

Tensions have risen along Lebanon's border with Israel amid cross-border attacks between Lebanese group Hezbollah and Israeli forces as Tel Aviv pressed ahead with its deadly offensive on the Gaza Strip, which has killed over 37,700 people since October following an attack by the Palestinian group Hamas. Anadolu Agency

South Korea resumes live-fire drills

Near North's maritime border after 7 years



SEOUL: South Korea on Wednesday resumed live-fire drills near the maritime border with North Korea, for the first time in seven years.

The full-scale live-fire drills were held in the islands of Yeonpyeong and Baengnyeong in the Yellow Sea, just south of the Northern Limit Line (NLL) — the de facto inter-Korean maritime boundary, Seoul-based Yonhap News reported.

During the exercises, the South Korean soldiers fired 290 live rounds into the waters off the islands. It also involved K9 howitzers, Chunmoo multiple rocket launcher systems, and Spike anti-tank missiles.

The last time the South Korean forces held live-fire exercises was in 2017 ahead of the 2018 inter-Korean tension reduction agreement that barred both sides from such activities.

The agreement that set up a maritime buffer zone around the NLL to ban such drills, among other measures, to reduce cross-border tensions was recently fully suspended by both neighbors.

The latest development also came after North Korea launched a suspected ballistic missile toward the East Sea on Wednesday morning. According to the South Korean military, Pyongyang test-fired a hypersonic missile but it exploded in the air.

On Tuesday, Seoul said South Korea and the US held joint drills aimed at strengthening their combined logistics capabilities.

The US, South Korea and Japan also plan to hold the first-ever trilateral multidomain exercises, dubbed Freedom Edge, which will be held later this month.

The USS Theodore Roosevelt already arrived on the peninsula ahead of the planned exercises.

Opposition lawmakers will not be silenced, vows Rahul Gandhi

NEW DELHI: India's new opposition leader Rahul Gandhi said Wednesday in his first speech since formally taking up a post vacant for a decade that his lawmakers would not be silenced.

Gandhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's chief rival, was appointed by fellow opposition lawmakers to the post in a signal of a reinvigorated challenge to the government.

"The government has political power, but the opposition also represents the voice of India's people," Gandhi said in a speech in the lower house of parliament, accompanied by supportive thumps by his party's lawmakers on their desks.

"This time, the opposition represents significantly more voice of the Indian people." In the past two parliaments, Gandhi's once-mighty Congress party did not have enough seats in the legislature to qualify him for the post.

Modi's first two terms in office followed landslide wins for his right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), allowing his government to drive laws through parliament with only cursory debate.

However, the BJP won only 240 seats in this year's poll, its worst showing in a decade and 32 seats below a majority. That forced it to rely on coalition allies to build a 293-seat majority in the 543-seat lower house.

Modi, 73, on Monday appealed to an emboldened opposition for "consensus" following his election setback. Agencies

Jordan declares it won't send troops to Gaza to replace Israeli forces

'We will not clean up after Netanyahu,' Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi says

AMMAN: Jordan said Wednesday it will not send troops to the Gaza Strip to replace Israeli forces in the Palestinian enclave.

"We will not clean up after [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu," Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi told a joint press conference with his Greek counterpart Giorgos Gerapetritis in Athens.

"We will not deploy troops to Gaza as a substitute for Israeli forces or place ourselves in the catastrophic reality he (Netanyahu) has created," he added.

Israeli national security adviser Tzachi Hanegbi said Tuesday evening that



an alternative to Hamas in Gaza would emerge with a new policy in the coming days, acknowledging the difficulty of eradicating the group entirely.

"What we seek is a comprehensive plan, not

from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories," he added.

The top Jordanian diplomat highlighted the danger of a regional spill-over from the Gaza conflict.

"The Israeli government does not want peace, and we cannot allow the war on Gaza to persist (...). It must cease," Safadi said.

Israel, flouting a UN Security Council resolution demanding an immediate cease-fire, has faced international condemnation amid its continued brutal offensive on Gaza since an Oct. 7, 2023 attack by Palestinian group Hamas.

More than 37,700 Pales-

tinians have since been killed in Gaza, most of them women and children, and nearly 86,400 others injured, according to local health authorities.

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

Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice, whose latest ruling ordered Tel Aviv to immediately halt its military operation in the southern city of Rafah, where over a million Palestinians had sought refuge from the war before it was invaded on May 6. Anadolu Agency

UN official warns of escalating crisis in Gaza, West Bank

UNITED NATIONS: A UN official has warned the Security Council of a deepening crisis in Gaza and the West Bank.

During a Security Council briefing, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland described the "catastrophic and horrifying" humanitarian crisis in Gaza, where civilians suffer under the impact of hostilities and a near-total breakdown of civil order.

He reiterated the secretary-general's warning that further escalations "will only guarantee more suffering and potentially catastrophic consequences for the region."

Wennesland condemned the ongoing Israeli settlement expansions as having "no legal validity" and being in "flagrant violation of international law and relevant UN resolutions."



"I urge the Government of Israel to cease all settlement activity immediately," Wennesland stated. The UN official also condemned the

use of explosive weapons in populated areas, which have destroyed neighborhoods and vital infrastructure, including hospitals and UN premises.

Wennesland noted the increase in violence between Palestinians and Israeli forces and attacks by both Israeli settlers and Palestinians, emphasizing that "all perpetrators of violence must be held accountable and swiftly brought to justice."

He also expressed serious concerns over potential military escalations between Israel and Hezbollah along the Blue Line, the boundary separating Lebanese and Israeli armed forces.

Additionally, Wennesland addressed the Palestinian Authority's fiscal crisis, exacerbated by Israeli financial constraints. He warned of severe repercussions for the Palestinian financial system, urging immediate action to resolve these financial issues to mitigate the economic and security situation in the occupied West Bank. Xinhua

Gaza crimes

Netanyahu fears potential ICC arrest warrants by July 24

ICC prosecutor requests arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza

JERUSALEM/ GAZA: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expects the issuance of arrest warrants by the International Court of Justice (ICC) for him and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant by July 24, according to Israeli media on Wednesday.

On May 20, ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan requested arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip.

"Netanyahu convened a high-stakes discussion on Tuesday evening about the looming possibility that the ICC might head the request of its chief prosecutor, Karim Khan, and

soon issue arrest warrants against him and Gallant," Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper said.

The meeting was attended by Justice Minister Yariv Levin, Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer and Attorney-General Gali Baharav-Miara.

"Netanyahu anticipates the court will act on the prosecutor's request and issue the warrants soon, potentially even before his upcoming speech in front of the US Congress on July 24," the daily said.

While the US is not a member of the ICC, receiving Netanyahu despite an international arrest warrant could expose it to criticism.

Israel also is not a member of the court, whereas Palestine was accepted as a member in 2015.

The ICC, established in 2002, is an independent international body not affiliated with the United Nations or any other international institution, and its decisions are binding.

"Historically, this process has taken anywhere from one to eight months — January being the latest possible timeline in this case," the newspaper said.

It pointed out that given that Khan submitted the request publicly, it is likely that the court's decision will also be made public.

"Both Israel and the individuals facing personal arrest

warrants have the option to appeal to the court, presenting arguments for the annulment of the warrants," it added.

Read: Israel concerned over possible ICC arrest warrants related to Gaza war

According to the newspaper, some 123 countries are signatories to the Rome Statute, which defines the powers of the ICC. These nations are obligated to enforce the warrant and arrest the individuals named in the warrants.

Israel, flouting a UN Security Council resolution demanding an immediate cease-fire, has faced international condemnation amid its continued brutal offensive on Gaza since an Oct.



Thousands holding banners and Israeli flags gather during a demonstration to demand a hostage swap deal with Gaza and the dismissal of the government led by Benjamin Netanyahu, in Tel Aviv, Israel on June 22, 2024. PHOTO: ANADOLU AGENCY

7, 2023 attack by Palestinian group Hamas.

More than 37,700 Palestinians have since been killed in Gaza, most of them women and children, and more than 86,300 others injured, according to local health authorities.

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

Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice, whose latest ruling ordered Tel Aviv to immediately halt its military operation in the southern city of Rafah, where over a million Palestinians had sought refuge from the war before it was invaded on May 6. AA

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index

Current	Prev. Close
78,275.64	77,940.58
Day's High	Day's Low
78,679.49	77,968.90
Index Value	Change
14,357,483,771	+335.06
Percentage	Time
+0.43%	26 Jun, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index

Index Value	Change
8,225.33	-22.46
Percentage	Time
-0.27%	26 Jun, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average

Index Value	Change
39,151.78	+39.62
Percentage	Time
+0.10%	26 Jun, 1:34 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

Index Value	Change
39,667.07	+493.92
Percentage	Time
+1.26%	26 Jun, 3:15 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	182.2	184
Bahrain Dinar	740.67	748.67
Canadian Dollar	203	205
China Yuan	38.38	38.78
Danish Krone	40.08	40.48
Euro	294	297.5
Hong Kong Dollar	35.66	36.01
Indian Rupee	3.33	3.44
Japanese Yen	1.9	1.98
Kuwaiti Dinar	907.87	916.87
Malaysian Ringgit	59.13	59.73
New Zealand \$	170.28	172.28
Norwegians Krone	26.38	26.68
Omani Riyal	723.62	731.62
Qatari Riyal	76.5	77.2
Saudi Riyal	73.1	73.9
Singapore Dollar	202	204
Swedish Korona	26.62	26.92
Swiss Franc	311.34	313.84
Thai Bhat	7.58	7.73
U.A.E Dirham	75.1	75.85
UK Pound Sterling	349	352.55
US Dollar	277.7	280.55

Swedish innovations set to revamp Pakistan's Textile Industry

Pakistan's textile industry, a crucial part of its economy

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Swedish Embassy and Business Sweden along with key industry players are set to launch the Sustainable Textiles Platform aiming to help Pakistan in the textile sector with Swedish technology and innovation.

"Pakistan's textile industry, a crucial part of its economy, faces mounting pressure to adopt eco-friendly practices," said a Swedish embassy press release on Wednesday.

The embassy noted, "Pakistan's textile, garments, and apparel manufacturing sector is vital to its economy, contributing nearly 10% of the nation's GDP. However, this key industry is under pressure to adopt sustainable practices as global markets demand eco-friendly products. To stay competitive, the textile sector must innovate."

It said that the Pakistani textile industry was making strides towards environmental sustainability by focusing on renewable



energy, advanced water management, and recycling. "These efforts are crucial for the industry's global competitiveness and long-term success. Despite progress, there is still no common standard for sustainability practices across the sector."

Swedish technology and innovation are set to play a transformative role in this area. By incorporating Swedish advancements, Pakistani manufacturers can increase effi-

ciency, reduce their environmental impact, and secure long-term economic benefits."

It further said that this initiative will explore how Swedish technology can enhance sustainability and productivity in Pakistan's textile sector, with a focus on circular economy, water treatment, and renewable energy. "The platform will also highlight the involvement of major Swedish textile buyers like IKEA and H&M, and technology providers like Atlas Copco, through panel discussions."

Key areas of focus includes circularity by adopting circular economy principles to reduce waste and continually reuse resources, water treatment, renewable energy."

The Sustainable Textile Platform event aims to bring together sourcing companies, producers, public sector decision-makers, and academia to drive positive change in the textile sector. By leveraging Swedish technology and innovation, the Pakistani textile industry can enhance sustainability, improve

productivity, and boost product quality, making it more competitive globally.

Director General for Global Affairs in Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dag Juhlin-Dannfelt said, "The people of Pakistan are among those who understand the impact of climate change the most. The Sustainable Textile Platform not only aims to mitigate the climate crisis but hopefully it will inspire more companies to follow suit. The Swedish business community is eager to provide expertise while collaborating with Pakistani partners who understand the possibilities for improvements on the ground."

Ambassador of Sweden in Pakistan Henrik Persson said, "The partnership between Swedish and Pakistani companies is already very strong in the textile sector. The sustainable textiles concept holds great potential for the Pakistani textile industry to maintain and further strengthen its competitiveness in the global market. Swedish partners are ready to support this endeavor."

Water shortage

KARACHI: Jamaat-e-Islami workers sit-in in front of the Shahrah Faisal Provincial Board office against the shortage of water in the city.



Photo: Online

Stakeholders urge govt to reconsider GST hike for veterinary medicines, feed

Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Industry representatives and other stakeholders have urged the government to reconsider GST hike on veterinary medicines, feed.

Delegations from the Veterinary Pharmaceutical Association, farmers, pharmaceutical stakeholders, traders, Punjab Poultry Association, manufacturers, and importers mad this demand in a meeting with Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) Vice President Adnan Khalid Butt here at LCCI on Wednesday.

The delegation included President Punjab Traders Association Tariq Javed, Chairman Punjab Traders Association Rana Qasim Iqbal, Co-conveners of Veterinary Pharmaceutical Association Nadeem Yousaf and Dr. Saleh Mahmood, Secretary Veterinary Pharmaceutical Dr. Majid Ijaz, former Chairman Rai Mansab Ali Kharal, President Tollintan Market Javed Iqbal, President Punjab Poultry Association Tariq Javed, Vice Presidents PPA Mian Aqeel and Chaudhry Shakeel, Chairman Rate Committee Mehar Irfan, Rana Qasim Iqbal, Mian Shehbaz, and others.

The representatives of the delegation

informed the Vice President about the issues facing the veterinary pharmaceutical sector, stating that currently, more than 22,000 pharmaceutical companies are operating in the country. In the recent budget, the government has increased the General Sales Tax (GST) on feed from 10 to 14 percent, while a proposal has been made to increase the GST on veterinary medicine to 18 percent.

The participants demanded the immediate withdrawal of the proposed increase, fearing that if not addressed, the poultry rates would double, putting them out of reach for the public. They mentioned that in the past, feed and veterinary medicines were zero-rated for GST. They argued that this increase would escalate their production costs, causing Pakistani exporters to lose markets like Afghanistan to India and other countries.

They explained that this would diminish the potential of Pakistani exporters and halt farm activities, leading to employment issues. They also highlighted that the 18 percent tax is imposed on every item related to poultry. They emphasized the critical role this industry plays in meeting the country's nutritional needs, with millions of busi-

nesses and a significant economic cycle linked to this sector.

LCCI Vice President Adnan Khalid Butt said that Lahore Chamber is also against various taxes imposed in the Federal Budget 2024-25. He mentioned that the new budget proposes a 10 percent tax on poultry and dairy feed, and the implementation of an 18 percent GST would lead to an additional Rs 50 per liter for packaged milk, besides increasing the prices of loose milk and meat thus contributing to inflation. If these new taxes are not withdrawn, it could damage the poultry industry and a 70 percent reduction in the dairy sector.

It is estimated that the per capita protein intake in our country is only 44 grams per day, compared to around 140 grams per day in other developed countries. Imposing a new tax on poultry will worsen the situation. Similarly, 40 percent of children in Pakistan have stunted growth, 29 percent are underweight, and 18 percent are malnourished. Of the over 240 million Pakistanis, around 90 percent consume unsafe milk, while only 10 percent consume packaged milk. Considering these statistics, the government should revoke this decision, he concluded.

Meeting discusses progress on targets assigned to TEVTA

PESHAWAR: A meeting to review progress on targets assigned to the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) for bringing improvement in its performance was held in the Committee Room of the Department of Industries with Special Assistant to KP Chief Minister on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Abdul Karim Tordhir in the chair here on Wednesday.

Besides, the Additional Secretary Industries Shama Nimat, Chief Planning Officer (CPO) Basit Khalil and Directors TEVTA Munir Gul, Khalid Usman, Haider Ali and Syed Sajjad Ali Shah, others also attended the meeting.

The CM aide was briefed about progress on the achievement of the targets of digitization, sustainability, human resource, financial affairs, procurement, technical and vocational training, business and education and training, business production and other issues.

He was also briefed about

various schemes initiated under the Annual Development Programme (ADP) and completed schemes.

He was informed that a Student Complaint Cell will be established in TEVTA within 20 days for the convenience of the students.

The Special Assistant directed that all the officials of the authority and the department fulfill their responsibilities within the given time lines and also complete the required matters within the specified time period.

He stressed need for introduction of new trades in the curriculum of the technical and vocational education while keeping in view the supply and demand of the province and further directed the speedy achievement of the target of attaining financial self-sustainability.

He also stressed need for the revival of the image of TEVTA and urged the officers of the authority to perform their duties in better manner in this regard.

China's AI development impresses international youth

BEIJING: In June, a group of international youths from diverse professional backgrounds embarked on a journey to explore China's AI technology hubs in Shenyang and Xiong'an.

This enlightening expedition, conducted under the theme of "China's new quality productive forces", was a component of the 2024 Future Close-Up event. The program was jointly hosted by the China International Communications Group (CICG) Center for the Americas, the Marketing and Public Relations Department of Tencent, and the Hong Kong Federation of Liaoning Associations.

Simon Büschges, consultant at Caggemini

Invent, lauded China's AI developments, remarking that China's strides in this realm are very impressive, adding that the country "is really building a great network with different countries and working together to move things into the future."

Stacey Ann Person, head of Web3-APAC at Amazon Web Services, marveled at the growth of China's digital economy. She said, "The growth and evolution of the technology that powers the digital economy in China has been world leading. It's been very interesting to experience an ecosystem where you can pay, play, learn and socialize all within digitized apps. That will connect each other peer-to-peer as well as business-to-consumer."

Saudi Aramco tops world's largest oil companies

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's energy giant Aramco has topped a list of the world's largest oil companies in terms of proven reserves, boasting figures 15 times greater than its nearest competitor, according to newly calculated figures.

Statista, a German online platform for data gathering and visualization, reported that Saudi Aramco's oil and gas reserves were estimated at around 259 billion barrels of oil equivalent for 2022.

These reserves surpasses the combined total of ExxonMobil Corp., Chevron Corp., TotalEnergies SE, Shell plc, BP, and Eni.

ExxonMobil Corp. recorded reserves of 17.7 billion barrels of oil equivalent, followed by Chevron Corp. with 11.2 billion barrels.

The size of Aramco's reserves echo its revenue streams, with the state-run oil giant the world's most profitable company, generating \$716.2 billion in profits between 2016 and 2023, based on the company's annual financial results.

It also produced 12.8 million barrels of oil a day on average in 2023.

Statista highlighted that Saudi Aramco's reserves figures are based on the terms of its concession, which limits its exploration and development ability to certain areas.

On a separate note, Statista reported that the Kingdom's oil reserves amounted to 40.9 billion tonnes in 2020.

"Saudi Arabia has one of the

largest oil reserves in the world, accounting for about one-fifth of the world's conventional oil sources," the data platform stated.

Moreover, according to a US Energy Information Administration study, the proven international oil and natural gas reserves of 187 publicly traded exploration and production companies decreased by 5.6 billion barrels

of oil equivalent in 2022. This represents a 2 percent decline based on the firm's annual financial reports.

The analysis, which was released in July 2023, stated that the proven reserves held by these public companies declined by 9 percent in 2020, primarily due to the economic impacts of

the COVID-19 pandemic, but reserves increased in 2021.

In 2022, some major oil companies, including TotalEnergies and BP, withdrew from Russia. These investments reduced the total proven reserves reported by exploration and production companies by 12 billion barrels of oil equivalent that year.

On June 2, 2024, Aramco began the sale of more than \$10 billion worth of shares in what was the second public offering from the firm.

The final price for the secondary share sale was set at SR27.25 (\$7.26), and the company's allocation to international investors reached 0.73 percent of total shares following the completion of the new issue. Arab News



Who's at the top?

Babar, Rizwan downgraded in ICC T20 rankings

India's Suryakumar Yadav no longer the number one batsman according to latest ICC rankings

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan have dropped one spot each to slip to fourth and fifth position, respectively, in the latest ICC Men's T20I Batter's rankings after a dismal performance in the T20 World Cup 2024.

Meanwhile, Indian batsman Suryakumar Yadav, who had reigned as the number one batsman since December 2023, lost the top spot in the rankings to Australian opener Travis Head.

Head, 30, climbed four places in the rankings after performing well in the T20 World Cup 2024.

He has scored 255 runs in seven innings at an average of 42.50 and a strike rate of 158.38, making him the



second-highest run scorer in the tournament with two half-centuries, according to India Today.

Furthermore, England's Phil Salt also

downgraded by one rank slipping to the third position.

The latest rankings show that West Indies' Johnson Charles has moved up

four places to be placed at the 10th position while Afghanistan's Rehmanullah Garbaz trails behind him in the 11th position, after moving five ranks.

Additionally, England's Jonny Bairstow climbed 14 places to the 13th position and South Africa's Quinton de Kock has moved up 10 places to the 15th position in the rankings.

Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga overtook Australia's Marcus Stoinis to reclaim his top spot in the T20 all-rounders rankings, sending the Australian all rounder to the fourth position.

Afghanistan's Muhammad Nabi trails behind him in the second position after moving up two ranks. India's Hardik Pandya moved up four ranks to third place, right above Stoinis, while Pakistan's Imad Wasim sits at 11th position.

Germany look to 'awaken spirits' of 2014 with Euros base camp

The host nation still views Campo Bahia as a key factor in building the camaraderie

GERMANY: Germany's Euro 2024 base camp, located in the Bavarian village headquarters of kit manufacturer Adidas, was designed to 'awaken the spirit' of their last great triumph — the 2014 World Cup.

Germany's base in Brazil was Campo Bahia, a secluded island resort accessible only by ferry which had been specifically designed to host the team.

The host nation still views Campo Bahia as a key factor in building the camaraderie and team spirit to lay a winning foundation.

Now on home soil — and with isolation a little harder to come by than in the Brazilian jungle — the DFB have chosen the village of Herzogenaurach, a location historically intertwined with sport and football in Germany.

Former team director and Euro 1996 winner Oliver Bierhoff, who quit after Germany's early exit at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, played a key role in developing the tournament base — known as



the 'Home Ground' — alongside Adidas.

Bierhoff said the camp was designed to "awaken a spirit, a determination, a will to win" just as Campo Bahia had done a decade ago.

A picturesque town of thatched houses and quiet squares with just over 20,000

residents, Herzogenaurach has made an outsized mark on world sport.

Two brothers — Adolf and Rudolf — founded the Dassler Brothers Shoe Company in 1919, but fell out just after World War II and decided to go their own ways.

In 1948, younger brother Adolf, nicknamed 'Adi', named his company Adidas while Rudolf founded Puma.

The Dassler brothers died in the 1970s having never made amends and what was a family feud spread to the entire town.

Herzogenaurach was nicknamed "the town of bent necks", with residents known for looking at strangers' shoes to work out which brand they were wearing before saying hello.

As rank underdogs, Germany won the 1954 World Cup final 3-2 on sodden turf against Hungary thanks to Adidas' adjustable-stud boots.

Just outside the Adidas base, Adi has been commemorated with a bronze statue of him mending football boots.

Adidas' relationship with the German national team remained a constant until 2024, when the DFB announced it had signed a deal with Nike from 2027, with the US sportswear giant reportedly doubling Adidas' offer. AFP

Scaloni says Argentina showed self-belief in late win over Chile

Lautaro Martínez scores in 88th minute for champions

EAST RUTHERFORD: World champions Argentina showed their steel and killer instinct as they beat Chile 1-0 on Tuesday to book their place in the Copa America quarter-finals.

Lautaro Martínez's 88th-minute winner delighted the 82,000, overwhelmingly pro-Argentina crowd at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

It leaves Chile, Copa America winners in 2015 and 2016, needing to beat Canada on Saturday to have hope of staying in the tournament.

Argentina are chasing their third straight major title after their Copa win in 2021 and World Cup triumph the following year, and the confidence that comes with success was evident.

Despite valiant resistance from Chile, Lionel Scaloni's team never lost belief as they delivered another performance full of grit, allied with the flair and imagination that delights their fans.

"It was a well-deserved win," said Scaloni.

"The truth is that the match was not easy and we won in the least expected



moment, I would say," he added.

"But as always the team kept believing and kept attacking even though they started to stretch a bit more in the last 10 or 12 minutes."

Scaloni praised the work of Chile's Argentine coach Ricardo Gareca, who took over in January, calling them "a very, very tough opponent".

Argentina's midfield, with Enzo Fernandez and Alexis Mac Allister in the middle and Rodrigo de Paul and Nicolas Gonzalez out wide, had the upper hand for most of the game.

Liverpool's Mac Allister said they had to earn that dominance.

"It was very hard, we knew it was going to be like this. Generally these

games are like a war, there is like a fight between the two teams. It was a nice show, we all gave 100 percent and in the end we ended up winning," he said.

Chile's draw against Peru leaves them with just a solitary point and needing to beat Canada, who upset the Peruvians earlier on Tuesday.

Gareca said he was sure his team could get the result they need.

"I think we have a chance, our chances are still intact in the last game, we're going to give everything to have a chance of qualifying," he said.

"It was a tough, complicated match, as you would expect. I think the guys played a great game in terms of, more than anything, trying to control Argentina," said the much-travelled 66-year-old.

"In the second half we loosened up more. And the goal... was something that has to do with luck because, you see, it's a deflection off the back of an Argentina player," he added.

"On balance Argentina had more chances than us in the end." AFP

Co-creator of cricket's DLS method dies

LONDON: Frank Duckworth, the statistician who co-developed cricket's Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method, breathed his last at the age of 84 last week, the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) announced on Tuesday.

"Fellows will be sad to learn that [Frank] Duckworth passed away on 21 June 2024," read the statement issued by the RSS. Duckworth was a consultant statistician with the ICC till 2014 and worked with mathematician and lecturer Tony Lewis, who died in 2020 at the age of 78, and devised the DLS method which is used to revise targets in limited overs games truncated due to rain in cricket.

Before the DL method, the rain rule was used to calculate targets in interrupted matches, including the infamous 1992 ODI World Cup semi-final between England and South Africa in Sydney.

The method was later renamed in 2014 with the addition of the name of Australian statistician Steven Stern after he made some modifications.

For his services to the game, Duckworth was also awarded the honour of a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in 2010.

Reacting to his demise, International Cricket Council's (ICC) General Manager of Cricket Operations Wasim Khan expressed condolences to his family and said: "Duckworth was a top statistician who was respected by peers as well as the wider cricket fraternity."

"The DLS method that he co-created has stood the test of time and we have continued to use it in international cricket more than two decades after its inception [...], his contribution to the game has been immense and the world of cricket is poorer with his death," the ICC official added. Reuters

Inter Provincial Netball C'ship kicks off

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Inter Provincial Netball Championship, organized by the Pakistan Netball Federation (PNF), commenced at the Liaquat Gymnasium of Pakistan Sports Complex on Wednesday.

Pakistan Sports Board Deputy Director General Shahid Islam inaugurated the event, which has brought together seven men's and as many women's teams from across the country.

The participating teams include Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

The championship is being played under PNF rules, following a knockout system. The winning teams will receive prizes at the conclusion of the event.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by PNF Chairman Mudassar Arain, Secretary General Mohammad Riaz, Associate Secretary Rana Tanveer Ahmed, Islamabad Netball Association (Women Wing) President Sayeqa Rani, Secretary Rahat Sultana, and a large number of netball enthusiasts.

This championship aims to promote netball in Pakistan and provide a platform for players to showcase their skills and compete at the national level.

Pakistan Cricket Club clinched PCB Zone-VI Inter Club Cricket Tournament Title



KARACHI: Star Studded Pakistan Cricket Club lead by Test Cricketer Sarfraz Ahmed won the PCB Zone-VI Inter Club Cricket Tournament after easily defeated Alamgir Gymkhana by 6 wickets at KCCA Stadium.

On the occasion Intiaz Ali Abro, Director Anti-Corruption Establishment Sindh was the chief guest. He presented the winner trophy to Sarfraz Ahmed captain Pakistan Cricket Club, while Ali Asad Director SBICA District East presented the runner up trophy to Muhammad Hassan captain of Alamgir Gymkhana.

On the occasion, Azam Khan Coordinator, M. Touseef Siddiqui Joint Secretary, M. Ahmed Naqvi Assistant Secretary, Zafar Ahmed, Musarat Raza President Zone-IV, Zia Ahmed Siddiqui President Zone-VI, Mazhar Ali Awan President Zone-VII, Arif Waheed Secretary Zone-I, M. Tariq Hafeez Treasurer Zone-I, Noushad Ahmed Khan Treasurer Zone-IV, Raeesuddin Treasurer Zone-VI, M. Afzal Sheri, Zaib Iqbal, Muhammad Hassan and others were also present.

Scores in Brief:

Pakistan Cricket Club beat Alamgir Gymkhana by 6 wickets at KCCA Stadium. Alamgir Gymkhana 69 all out in 19.4 overs. M. Usman Raheem 17, Ashiq Ali 16. Faraz Ahmed Khan (sla) 3/15, Raza ul Hasan (os) 3/15, Test Cricketer Anwar Ali 2/13, International Cricketer Saim Ayoub 2/18.

Pakistan Cricket Club 70/4 in 16.4 overs. Test Cricketer Saud Shakil 35, International Cricketer Omaid Bin Yousuf 13 notout. International Cricketer Ashiq Ali 2/9, Muhammad Hasnain 2/19. APP

Pogacar 'fairytale' inspiring new generation of Slovenian riders

14-year-old Urban Hvastija says he wants to become as good as his idol 'the best rider in the world'

SLOVENIA: At the Pogi Cup in international cycling star Tadej Pogacar's hometown in Slovenia, 14-year-old Urban Hvastija says he wants to become as good as his idol, "the best rider in the world".

"He is a great role model for all of us young riders," Hvastija told AFP after finishing runner-up in the event organised every June in Komenda, just outside the capital Ljubljana, for riders aged eight to 19 years.

With Pogacar eyeing a third Tour de France title to add to last month's first Giro d'Italia victory, his success — with that of his compatriots Primoz Roglic and Matej Mohoric — has led to a cycling boom in the Alpine state of two million.

"Years ago we had barely 50 kids in the juvenile team, now

we have more than 200," Pogacar's father, Mirko, who helps organise the Pogi Cup, told AFP. He believes Slovenia establishing itself on the biking map is a "fairytale that I don't think we could see again in the next fifty years".

As Pogacar, the Tour de France winner in 2020 and 2021 and runner-up for the last two years, aims to become the first rider in 26 years to win the Tour and the Giro in the same season, Mirko Pogacar remembers his son as an "unstoppable and skillful" youngster.

He recalls how Tadej and his older brother Tilen would use every occasion to practice in the saddle.

Once they spotted a mound of soil in a neighbour's yard. "They made a (biking) path across it and spent the day riding over it up and

down," smiled Mirko Pogacar.

At the age of eight, when Tilen joined the Rog cycling club outside Ljubljana, Tadej wanted to join too but there was no bike small enough for him, and he had to wait months until one was found for him.

Mirko said his son — whose "first and ultimate great love" is cycling — was "always among the shortest kids" and so had to fight harder to compete.

"Once he grew up, he became much better than those that had got big earlier," he said.

By now, Pogacar — a member of the UAE Team Emirates — leads the UCI World ranking. The 25-year-old won bronze at the covid-delayed Tokyo Olympics.

Pogacar senior said his son "sets himself goals to achieve in cycling

and that keeps him going".

"To become a champion, all parts of that puzzle have to fit, if only one is missing, the picture is not right," he said.

"Tadej is only now entering the best riding years, that is between 25 and 27, so he might have quite some years more."

Pogacar's first coach Miha Koncilija, believes the Slovenian rider, known as 'Pogi', is "at a peak". "But, knowing him, I believe there is still room for more," Koncilija told AFP just days before the 2024 Tour de France this weekend.

"He simply enjoys riding, enjoys training and beating his rivals."

Pogacar is also expected to join Slovenia's cycling team at the Paris Olympics next month and the Cycling World Champi-



onship, scheduled for September in Switzerland.

At the end of the Giro Pogacar said "we've checked one of the boxes, two or three more remain for this season". AFP

Board meeting

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on matters related to the Board of Investment on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

Govt presented balanced budget: Ahsan

Says it aimed at steering economy towards development

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal, said on Wednesday that under the prevailing circumstances, the government has presented a balanced budget aimed at steering the economy towards development and social prosperity.

Addressing the concluding session of the All Pakistan Chambers Presidents Conference, organized by the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the minister emphasized that overcoming the prevailing economic challenges hinges on effective resource mobilization, budget balancing, and reducing non-developmental expenditures.

Ahsan Iqbal noted that

Pakistan faces external challenges, highlighting a historical failure to cultivate export-led industries, resulting in increased imports and pressure on foreign exchange reserves over the past 75 years.

The minister underscored the necessity of fostering export-led industrial growth to compress imports and alleviate strain on foreign exchange reserves, thereby fostering sustainable economic growth and equitable development.

He elaborated on the government's 5Es framework designed to navigate the country out of its current crisis, stressing the imperative of concerted efforts by all stakeholders to implement the framework and propel the economy towards development and prosperity.



oment and prosperity.

Ahsan Iqbal also stressed the importance of ensuring political stability and policy continuity for at least five years to achieve economic growth and progress. He emphasized that political stability and consistent economic policies are prerequisites for sustainable economic growth, development, and for attracting

both foreign and local investment.

Reflecting on past challenges, the minister highlighted the steep costs incurred due to political and policy instability over the past 75 years. He urged both the public and private sectors to collaborate in overcoming these challenges and achieving sustained growth and development.

oment.

Regarding resource constraints, he indicated that the government would encourage public-private investments in development projects to bridge funding gaps and meet development needs, underscoring the difficulty in earmarking sufficient funds for development alone.

Ahsan Iqbal also said that Pakistan-China Economic Corridors Project entered in second-phase. He said that commencing an upgraded version of CPEC Phase-2 with five corridors focusing on growth, livelihood, information technology, green economy, and regional development. He emphasized the necessity for the private sectors of both countries to collaborate effectively to seize this promising opportunity.

Sattar urges govt slash consumer tax

ISLAMABAD: Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) Senior Deputy Convener Dr Farooq Sattar on Wednesday said that the government should slash the increased consumer tax and defer its internal debt repayments to revive the economy.

"The MQM-P is the only political party that gives shadow budget every year which includes alternate proposals to the government's proposed budget for welfare of the poor and deprived factions of the society," he said while talking to the media outside the Parliament House.

He was by MQM-P's Members of the National Assembly Syed Mustafa Kamal, Khawaja Izhar-

ul-Hassan, Aasia Ishaque Siddiqui, Arshad Abdullah Vohra, Syed Waseem Hussain, Mikhat Shakeel, Sabheen Ghoury and others.

Dr Farooq Sattar said the government should to reduce tax ratio that would help increase growth rate.

He mentioned that growth rate was 7-8% amid low tax regimes in the past whereas more taxes to meet temporary revenue targets were diminishing the growth rate.

He claimed that there was capital flight from the country as the local investors were setting up industries abroad. There was also brain drain in the country, he added.

Dr Sattar said that the consumer tax ratio should not be beyond 2.5 percent.



"There is more than 20 hours loadshedding in Karachi whereas it should not be more than 7.5 hours under the consumer management system amid high losses as per the power distribution laws," he said.

He urged the Federal Government to give a special

package to the middle class that would drive development and growth in the country. "A package should also be given to Karachi as it gives half of the Rs 8,000 billion's total revenue being collected."

He said the government should give special grants to small and medium enter-

prises (SMEs), and domestic consumers for solar panel installation especially in Karachi and Hyderabad.

"Sales tax needs to be reduced on fuel and electricity, whereas tax on packaged milk should be limited to 5% instead of the proposed 18% as 40% of the nation's child population is stunted," he added.

The taxes on export sector and construction industry needed to be reviewed as the latter had 60 businesses associated to it, he said, adding, "The Construction sector gave Rs 50 billion tax last year and Rs 25 billion this year due to the 7E tax, which should be abolished along with tax on POS (point of sale) retailers," he added. APP

Fissures emerge in PTI as '21 lawmakers hint at forming forward bloc'

MNA Shandana Gulzar alleges PTI's political committee comprises "suspicious characters"

ISLAMABAD: Cracks have emerged in the embattled Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) as 21 of its lawmakers, who are now part of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), hinted to form a forward bloc over top leadership's inability to secure release of party founder Imran Khan from jail, a private TV channel reported on Wednesday.

In a setback to the former ruling party, 21 PTI lawmakers signalled to form a forward bloc and "conveyed a message" to Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and Secretary General Omar Ayub Khan to start serious efforts for incarcerated leaders' release.

"More than 27 PTI lawmakers held consultations after Shehryar Afridi's statement about his resignation. Meanwhile, Shandana Gulzar Khan, Sher Afzal Marwat and several lawmakers also protested over the incompetence

of the party's top leadership," stated the report.

It emerged that several PTI legislators excused from attending the parliamentary session due to their differences besides alleging that the parliamentary leader in the Senate and the senior leaders in the National Assembly were "compromised" for some committees. They alleged that some leaders were eyeing higher posts instead of focusing on the PTI founder and party leaders' release from jails.

The 27 lawmakers were in favour of stepping down from the assembly while 21 of them mulled over forming a forward bloc, the report added.

The revelations about heightened differences between PTI legislators were bolstered by a recent statement of MNA Shandana who told Geo News: "Resignations would be a better option

if we cannot take the PTI founder out of jail."

"We are now beating the desk [here in the assembly] and wasting our energy for committees. It is quite better to sit at home. I have also threatened to tender our resignations after Afridi's call," she slammed the PTI's top leadership.

Expressing serious concerns over top leaders' activities in the legislature, Shandana alleged that many "suspicious characters in the political committee" had vanished from the scene after May 9 riots.

She added that the disgruntled leaders were not part of the party's core committee. The MNA also claimed that after Afridi's announcement for resignation, Marwat also decided to step down.

Another PTI leader Atif Khan told Geo News that he also has objections on various matters within the party which

was not an unusual thing for political parties.

He, however, suggested his fellow leaders to end rifts and differences via using party platforms instead of going public.

The development came to light after the party's secretary general and Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Omar, in response to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's offer to talks, showed conditional agreement to start negotiations with the coalition government once its founder and other incarcerated workers and leaders were out of jail. Khan, the deposed prime minister who was ousted from power via the opposition's no-confidence motion in April 2022, has been facing a slew of charges ranging from corruption to terrorism since his removal as the premier. Agencies

NA approves demand for grants for next FY

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly has approved one hundred and three demands for grants pertaining to different ministries and departments for the next fiscal year.

These were moved by Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb.

No cut motions were moved on these demands for grants.

These were related to Defense Division, Communications, Federal Education and Professional Training, Climate Change, Economic Affairs Division, Geological Survey of Pakistan, National Heritage and Culture Division, Housing and Works Division, Human Rights Division, Industries and Production, Information and Broadcasting Division, IT and Telecommunication Division, Combined Civil Armed Forces, Inter Provincial Coordination Division, Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Division, Maritime Affairs Division, Narcotics Control Division, National

Assembly, The Senate, National Health Services, Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Parliamentary Affairs Division, Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Division, Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division, Privatization Division, Pakistan Railways, Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Division, Science and Technology Division, States and Frontier Regions, Water Resources Division, Aviation Division and Commerce Division.

The National Assembly has also approved twelve demands for grants relating to the cabinet division, establishment division and the national security division.

Cut motions moved by the opposition on the demands for grants were rejected by the House.

Another six demands for grants relating to various departments including Power, Petroleum, Revenue and Finance Divisions as well as the Federal Board of Revenue were also approved by the House.

Imran's stubborn attitude hindrance for talks: Rana

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah on Wednesday said that Imran's stubborn attitude and uncivilized agenda are main hindrance for smooth talks with the leaders of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI).

Stubborn behavior, and undemocratic agenda could be harmful for this country, he said while talking to a private television channel.

The court will decide the cases of Imran Khan who is also involved in May 9 mayhem, Tosha Khana, AlQader Trust and "Idat" cases, he added. It is better for Imran Khan to stay in jail rather than to go out, he suggested.

To a question, he said the Pakistan Muslim League-N, never shut down the doors of talks with PTI leaders.

He further stated that despite Imran's hard attitude, we are ready to move forward for strengthening political and democratic system in the country.

Commenting on operation



Azm-e-Istikhdam, he said that the operation would be launched for ensuring complete peace and stability in the country. Political stability and peace are vital for boosting economic and business activity in Pakistan, he added.

Pakistan Muslim League-N, leaders Shehbaz Sharif, and Nawaz Sharif had made serious efforts for charter of democracy (CoD), charter of economy (CoE), and for this, both the leaders had also held talks with political leaders, he stated.

In reply to a question about developing consensus with political groups before launching Azm-e-Istikhdam, he said, we will take all the parties and stakeholders on board to achieve the objectives.

Two TTP commanders arrested: Balochistan minister

QUETTA: In a major success on the anti-terror front, the Balochistan government Wednesday announced the arrest of two high-value commanders of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) namely Nasrullah alias "Maulvi Mansoor" and Idris alias "Irshad".

"We have apprehended an important terrorist network. Terrorists Nasrullah [...] and Idris have been arrested after a difficult operation," Balochistan Home Minister Mir Zia Ullah Langau said while speaking at a press conference in Quetta.

The arrests came a day after the federal cabinet approved Operation Azm-e-Istikhdam — a reinvigorated and re-energised national counter-terrorism drive decided by the National Action Plan's Central Apex Committee.

Highlighting external elements behind terrorist attacks inside Pakistan, Langove said: "India is behind terrorist attacks in the country [and] provides financial support to the mili-

tants." Underscoring that a certain group of youth have been misled and are harming their country, the minister called on such individuals not to fall to the enemy's words.

The new initiative of the federal government will comprise intelligence-based operations (IBOs) instead of a new organised armed operation and will aim at uprooting remnants of militants, crimes and terrorist nexus, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said.

The government's move is a response to a significant surge in terrorist attacks in recent months as reflected in the Q1 2024 Security Report issued by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) which revealed that the country witnessed at least 432 violence-linked fatalities and 370 injuries among civilians, security personnel and outlaws resulting from as many as 245 incidents of terror attacks and counter-terror operations. Agencies

Punjab Assembly approves Rs5446b budget

LAHORE: The Punjab Assembly on Wednesday approved Rs 5,446 billion budget for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25 by a majority vote.

The new provincial revenues and budget measures will take effect from July 1, 2024, wherein taxes that had been in place for 70 years have been updated.

According to the Finance Bill passed by the Punjab Assembly, residential properties valued up to Rs 5 million will be tax-free starting July 1. Commercial properties will incur a 0.07% tax on their total value. Properties valued between Rs 10 million and Rs 25 million will be taxed at 0.08%, while those over Rs 25 million will face a 0.09%

tax. The registration fee for motorcycles and scooters is set at Rs 1,500, with an additional 10% annual fee for registration transfer within 10 years. Vehicles up to 1000cc will have a registration fee of Rs 20,000, with a similar 10% annual transfer fee. Vehicles between 1000cc and 2000cc will be taxed at 0.02% of the purchase price, and those over 2000cc at 0.03%.

The Finance Bill was presented by Provincial Minister of Finance, Mian Mujtaba Shuja-ur-Rehman, and was approved by a majority vote under the chairmanship of Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan. No new taxes were introduced, but existing taxes were rescheduled. Agencies