



This noble sacrifice stands as another glorious testament to the unflinching resolve of our gallant sons, who have never hesitated to offer the ultimate sacrifice for the defence of our Motherland. The whole nation stands in solidarity with our Armed Forces'

President of Pakistan
Asif Ali Zardari

[/asian_telegraph](#)

[/theasiantelegraph](#)

[/company/theasiantelegraph](#)

[.theasiantelegraph.net](#)

Price Rs 8 | Pages 4

Ayaz Sadiq, Iran's Ambassador discuss bolstering parliamentary, economic relations



ISLAMABAD: The Speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and Ambassador of Iran, Dr. Amiri Moghaddam Sunday discussed bolstering parliamentary and economic relations between Iran and Pakistan.

During the meeting, Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq reaffirmed Pakistan's deep-rooted fraternal bond with Iran, steeped in shared history, culture, and religion, said a news release.

He emphasized the need to strengthen these ties further by expanding cooperation across all mutual areas of interest, particularly in energy and trade, to uplift the economies of both nations, especially those living on both sides of the common border.

The Speaker highlighted the strategic geographical positioning of both countries, presenting significant opportunities for regional and global connectivity and trade promotion.

While acknowledging the positive trajectory in bilateral trade, he noted that there is untapped potential that both nations should explore.

He stressed the importance of cordially addressing pending issues related to banking, trade, transportation, and energy.

Additionally, he expressed optimism about resolving issues related to the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline. Ayaz Sadiq underscored the pivotal role of parliamentary diplomacy in strengthening bilateral relations.

He expressed intent to actively engage all relevant stakeholders regularly to support governmental efforts in achieving the common goal of expanded economic cooperation. Dr. Amiri Moghaddam congratulated Speaker Ayaz Sadiq on his re-election and extended warm Ramazan greetings.

He praised the Speaker's vision for collective growth and assured full commitment and cooperation from Iran across all areas.

The Ambassador also informed the speaker about the upcoming visit of the Iranian President to Pakistan, highlighting its significance in advancing bilateral relations and enhancing cooperation in various sectors.

Ayaz Sadiq thanked the Ambassador for his kind words and pledged mutual efforts to strengthen the bond between Pakistan and Iran. APP



Mr Ikramullah, hailing from Qila Saifullah Balochistan, who is currently 9th class student at Lawrence College, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. Mr Ikramullah's house and school were damaged in 2022 floods. On instructions of the Prime Minister, he was facilitated to continue education.

Country's future links with well educated youth: PM

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that the country's future hinged upon well educated and skilled youth of the country and for the provision of quality education, the federal government would facilitate the high achievers with scholarship schemes to get education in the well reputed global educational institutes.

The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with Ikramullah, a student from Balochistan province, who is now studying in the 9th class at Lawrence College Murree.

Under the prime minister's direction, the student from 2022 flood affected area of Qila Saifullah was provided with a facility to get education at the country's prominent educational institute.

The prime minister recalled that he met the desperate student in the Khasnood camp in Qila Saifullah when floods had caused destruction in Balochistan province during 2022.

He said that he had assured the student of

Punjab province, they had sent the high achievers to get education at the best European and Scandinavian countries who later returned completely transformed and full of confidence

the provision of quality education, adding that it pleased him a lot that the student was now studying in Lawrence College. The student thanked the prime minister for giving him an opportunity to meet him. Congratulating the prime minister, he said that he prayed for Shehbaz Sharif for his kind gesture. The student also expressed his resolve to

achieve the goal and serve the country in the future.

The prime minister advised him to serve the nation and country by working hard and concentrating on his studies.

He assured that all his educational expenditures would be borne by the government as the students were the future and hope of the country.

The prime minister said that when he had visited the flood affected area, the student was in a protest mood but now he was showing a discernible change.

He mentioned that in Punjab province, they had sent the high achievers to get education at the best European and Scandinavian countries who later returned completely transformed and full of confidence.

The prime minister also welcomed the principal and housemaster of Lawrence College and gave away gifts to the student including a pen and tablet, expressing the hope that it would help him in pursuance of his studies.

Ikramullah also presented a set of books to the prime minister.

The prime minister personally saw off the student from the Prime Minister's House.

President, COAS attends funeral prayers of Shaheed officers, resolves to wipe out terrorism



RAWALPINDI: The funeral prayers of Lieutenant Colonel Syed Kashif Ali Shaheed, age 39 years and resident of Karachi and Captain Muhammad Ahmed Badar Shaheed, age 23 years and resident of District Talagang who embraced martyrdom while defending their motherland against the scourge of terrorism in Mir Ali, North Waziristan District, were offered at Chaklala Garrison Rawalpindi. President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, Foreign Minister, Interior Minister, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Chief of Army Staff, senior serving military and civil officers, relatives of Shuhada and locals of the area attended the funeral, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said on Sunday.

"Pakistan Army has consistently upheld the ideals of Faith, Unity and Discipline. Guided by these enduring principles, Pakistan Army has always endeavoured to set higher benchmarks of professionalism and loyalty in its unrelenting fight against terrorism. This noble sacrifice stands as another glorious testament to the unflinching resolve of our gallant sons, who have never hesitated to offer the ultimate sacrifice for the defence of our Motherland. The whole nation stands in solidarity with our Armed Forces", the President said. The bodies of Shuhada have been taken to their native home towns where they will be laid to rest with full military honour. PR

PM, Saad Rafique discuss political situation

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Sunday here held a meeting with leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khawaja Saad Rafique. Khawaja Saad congratulated the prime minister on assuming his office and expressed best wishes for him. During the meeting, they discussed the overall political situation in the country and matters of mutual interest. APP

Dar among four candidates vying for Capital Senate seats



ISLAMABAD: Four candidates including former finance minister Ishaq Dar are vying for the two vacant Senate seats from Islamabad. According to the preliminary list of candidates, Dar is competing for a technocrat seat as joint candidate of the ruling coalition. Advocate Ansr Kayani represents the Sunni Ittehad Council. Rana Mahmoodul Hasan from the Peoples Party is vying for the general seat in Islamabad, while Farzand Hussain Shah is a candi-

date representing the Sunni Ittehad Council. In the federal capital, National Assembly members will vote to elect Senate representatives, including one for the general seat and another for technocrats, including Ulema.

Members of the four provincial assemblies will elect senators for seven general seats, two women seats, and two seats for technocrats, including Ulema, from each province, along with one seat for non-Muslims from both Punjab and Sindh provinces. The scrutiny of nomination papers for the elections on forty-eight vacant Senate seats is scheduled for Tuesday.

The updated candidate list will be released on the 26th of this month, and candidates will have until the 27th of this month to withdraw their nomination papers. Polling is scheduled to take place on the second day of the upcoming month. APP

Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu granted one-year extension by PM Shehbaz



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday granted a one-year extension to Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu. According to a private TV channel, the prime minister has sent the advisory of the Air Chief Marshal's extension to President Asif Ali Zardari and granted him extension after his approval. Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu is a four-star air force officer and 16th Chief of Air Staff. He took over command of the air force on March 19, 2021, from his predecessor ACM Mujahid Anwar Khan. He was due to retire tomorrow (Monday) 18th March. It may be noted that Air Chief Zaheer Babr held a meeting with newly elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif few days ago and discussed matters of national importance. SABAH

Scrutiny of nomination papers for elections on 48 vacant seats of the Senate to be carried out tomorrow

ISLAMABAD: The scrutiny of nomination papers for elections on 48 vacant seats of the Senate will be carried out tomorrow (Tuesday).

Revised list of the candidates will be issued on the 26th of this month whilst the candidates can withdraw their nomination papers by 27th of this month. In the federal capital, members of the National Assembly will elect members of the Senate against one general seat and one seat for technocrats including Ulema.

Members of the four provincial assemblies will elect senators for seven general seats, two women seats, and two seats for technocrats including Ulema from each province, as well as one seat for non-Muslims from both Punjab and Sindh provinces.

According to the schedule, polling will be held on the second of next month.

Forty-two candidates have submitted their nomination papers for Senate Election in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to a list issued by a spokesman of ECP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sohail Ahmad in Peshawar this afternoon, twenty-five candidates have submitted their nomination papers for seven general seats. Similarly, ten candidates have submitted their nomination papers for two technocrat and Ulema seats.

Seven women candidates have submitted nomination papers for two reserved seats for women from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. SABAH

Elements behind campaign against martyrs to face stern action: Tarar

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Sunday the government was fully aware of the challenges facing the country and steps were required to tackle economic problems. Addressing a press conference here at the PML-N Secretariat, he said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had shared his agenda aimed at stabilizing the country's economy.

He said the Premier had taken up all matters seriously, including reducing government expenses, privatisation of certain state-owned entities. "Restructuring of the Federal Board of Revenue and tax reforms are major initiatives the government is undertaking to increase the tax net. All these measures are being taken to reduce the burden on poor people and to bring elites in the tax net," he maintained. He said that international economic journals like Bloomberg had termed the appoint-

ment of the Finance Minister a good step, adding that international journals had acknowledged that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had a potential to overcome economic challenges through reforms. He said: "Political stability leads to economic stability and sincere efforts are being made in this regard."

He strongly condemned the terrorist attack in the Mir Ali area of North Waziristan, in which seven soldiers, including two officers, were martyred. He said that Captain Muhammad Ahmed Badar was also martyred, who was the only brother of five sisters. He said how painful and tragic it was for his family. "Law enforcement agencies, the people of Pakistan, politicians and almost every segment of society have rendered a lot of sacrifices in the war against terrorism," he added. Attaullah Tarar paid tribute to all martyrs of Mir Ali including Lieutenant Colonel Syed Kashif Ali and Captain Muhammad



Ahmed Badar and strongly condemned the malicious campaign launched by social media accounts associated with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

"The PTI is involved in disrespecting martyrs," he said, citing some examples such as May 9, when state institutions came under attack, martyrs' memorials were vandalised, and the Lasbela heli-

copter crash was ridiculed. The Federal Minister for Information said that the smear campaign against martyrs was not acceptable and it had not only hurt the sentiments of families of martyrs but also the entire nation. He said those who were behind the vile campaign were being identified and stern action would be taken against them. He said

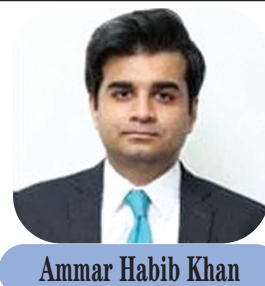
that accounts involved in the malicious campaign had been reported to relevant platforms but unfortunately the accounts were still operational. He said, "One can resort to political criticism but for God sake, stop promoting an anti-Pakistani agenda."

He said, "Martyrs are the pride of the country and a guarantee of its survival." Attaullah Tarar said that it was a high time to get united in the larger interest of the country and certain red lines should not be crossed at all. The minister alleged that some political elements wanted to harm the national economy for their vested interests through negative tactics like writing a letter to the International Monetary Fund. He said it was a mission of the government to ensure development in the country besides making the lives of people prosperous. He said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf should have openly condemned those who had demon-

strated outside the IMF building and made online petitions to revoke Pakistan's GSP plus status. "There is a need to promote national harmony. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif talked about a charter of reconciliation just to put the country on track to real development," he added.

He said that anything against the country's integrity was not acceptable, adding that all political parties should condemn such actions and make collective efforts to strengthen the country. To a question, he said that many accounts involved in the vile campaign were being operated from outside the country but some followers of the accounts were also in Pakistan. He said that many accounts were also being operated from Pakistan, adding that a legal action would be taken against the elements involved in the vile campaign so that such elements meet their logical end. APP

Editor-in-Chief: Amna Munawwar Awan
 Editor: Muhammad Hasam
 Office # 408, 4th Floor, Evacuee Trust,
 Agha Khan Road, F-5/1 Islamabad
 Phone: + 92 51 8354964



Ammar Habib Khan

A plan for electricity prices

without undertaking or even planning for any serious reforms. A complex circular debt resolution plan, which has failed multiple times over the last few years continues to see the light of the day, only to fail again. The lack of imagination is appalling, and such lack of imagination is holding back the potential of almost a quarter of a billion people, just because the usual suspects do not have a plan.

As electricity prices continue to increase, and as demand remains flat or goes down, there will be a mass exodus of industrial units from the grid, making electricity more expensive for the remaining consumers on the grid – mostly households and commercial entities. Even though high electricity prices may not work for the consumer, the government likes high electricity prices – because that leads to higher tax collection. In some sadistic way, higher electricity prices result in higher taxes, which allows tax authorities to boast about how they have increased tax collection, even though it wrecked the economy at large.

There can be a plan. The plan is to consider policy framework at a molecule or electron level, and to direct energy to its most efficient, and value-added use. The current gas allocation policy effectively supplies energy at ridiculous subsidies, creating an arbitrage for industries to get off the electricity grid, and use gas. This is what the government needs to do. Almost one-fifth of an electricity bill is just various taxes and government charges – cut those in half. This can potentially unlock demand for electricity, and drive industrial growth. Reduction in taxes would

mean that the tax authorities may have to actually do work on expanding the tax net, and increase taxes through more direct means, rather than extracting the same through consumption. If we want the economy to have even an iota of hope to get on a sustainable growth trajectory, this will have to be done. As taxes on electricity consumption are reduced, and consumption increases, overall capacity charges will also reduce, triggering positive cyclicity. Similarly, gas prices across the board also need to be rationalized, such that domestic consumers pay a fair price for the gas they are consuming. Currently, gas companies have protected consumers, based on the level of consumption of gas. As gas is barely supplied to households, even the richest consumers become protected consumers. The concept of protected consumers should strictly be linked to household income, and not consumption of gas. If any subsidies do need to be provided to the most vulnerable economic segments, the same can be reallocated through direct cash transfers via BISP, rather than through distortion of energy pricing.

Available gas should then be reallocated to the highly efficient natural gas fired power plants, rather than inefficient captive power. This will automatically reduce the price of electricity through more efficient usage. Since electricity prices are reduced through the above measures, industries will have an incentive to remain on the grid and move towards more efficient utilization of machinery, and processes. As industries and commercial entities alike start using the grid again, the positive cyclicity associated with lower capacity charges will kick in again. There's more that can be done here. There is almost \$4 billion of debt that various CPEC power projects have on their balance sheet. Even though it is debt of private entities, it is covered by sovereign guarantee, and the responsibility of arranging foreign currency for repayment of this also for the government. Effectively, this becomes a sovereign risk, whether anyone accepts it or not. Since such debt is denominated in US dollars, any depreciation of the rupee effectively results in escalation in tariff, since it is passed onto the consumer. In order to hedge the consumer from further increase in prices due to a depreciation of the rupee, there exists a case for the sovereign to swap out the US dollar debt of power plants, and replace it with rupee-denominated debt. Through this, it would be possible to hedge the consumer against the rupee depreciation, while also improving the risk profile of the debt, much to the satisfaction of lenders. These are policy decisions that can be executed within a few weeks, and the impact can be seen almost instantaneously. Detractors may say that these are all difficult decisions, and even theoretical at best. Such detractors must acknowledge that through lazy policy we have succumbed almost quarter of a billion people to a life of misery. Maybe it is time to be more ambitious, and actually do something to pull people out of their misery and put them on a path of sustainable growth.

The writer is an independent macroeconomist.

Counting our deficits

HAZAI SALAHUDDIN

With this week's advent of Ramadan, our lives have changed in some tangible ways. Our daily routines have acquired a new rhythm. At least in these initial days of the month of fasting, the tempo has considerably slackened. And, though it seems ironic, the cost as well as the consumption of an entire range of food items has risen. In this environment of religiosity, there is a sense of a new beginning in some other respects too. We have new governments at the federal and provincial levels, finding their feet in a difficult situation. One surprise in this arena was the meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, a PTI firebrand, on Wednesday.

Then, this is the month of March that heralds a shift in the weather. We will have the summer equinox, when night and day are of equal length, this coming Wednesday. It marks the beginning of spring. For us in Pakistan, the long hot summer is descending on the plains. As it is, we have no way of celebrating spring and have no time to mourn the death of that life-affirming festival of Basant that once would brighten the lives of ordinary people in Lahore and other cities in Punjab. Incidentally, Ramadan, as it is observed in many Muslim, mainly Arab countries, is a festive month. It enhances our sense of community and Sehri time can be lived up with a sense of adventure and drama. Iftar parties and late-night shopping pick up by the middle of the month. Ah, but there is a seamy side to this month of prayers and piety. Because of the high prices of necessary food items, against the backdrop of long-standing inflation, the plight of the poor comes into a sharper focus. Yes, Ramadan is also the month when giving zakat and donations to the needy becomes an obligation for the believers. There is, thus, a lot of charity being doled out. Extensive arrangements are made to provide iftar to the general public. Besides, large investments have been allocated for the provision of relief packages for the poor and this operation is apparently being conducted this year in a more organized manner. But the publicity given to these projects, meant to score political points, is rather excessive. The authorities should respect the dignity of those who are receiving this aid.

Anyhow, what we are witnessing is a society where the high visibility of the poor and the disadvantaged loudly proclaims its stark disparities. I recall some statements made by the World Bank about increasing poverty in Pakistan. There are relevant statistical assessments. But what we encounter in our daily lives is enough to certify the truth of our existence. We know how consistently the international agencies have urged Pakistan to reduce poverty and achieve fiscal stability. Now, we have the IMF to deal with. This could be another new beginning that is being made this month. We have a new government and a new man to steer our financial affairs and there is a glint of hope that the intended macroeconomic reforms will ultimately bear fruit.

An IMF staff mission is in Pakistan and is holding discussions with the Pakistan authorities on the second and final review of the \$3 billion short-term bailout package. I have no expertise to expand on this dialogue on the reform agenda for economic growth and stability. What I suspect is that the remedies for our failures should not be beyond the imagination of our experts and planners.

I am reminded of what IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva had told our former caretaker prime minister when he visited the US for the General Assembly session of the United Nations: "What we are asking in our programme is that please collect more taxes from the wealthy and please protect the poor people of Pakistan". Just imagine the incongruity of this encounter. Here was the head of a government – a 'caretaker' he may well have been – being requested ("please!") to protect the poor people of his own country. Yet, this must be a very hard, almost impossible, task for our rulers because the poor in Pakistan are not protected.

Fortunately, our present prime minister has confessed that the rich here have enjoyed subsidies at the cost of the poor – and he aspires to change this equation. But can he, within the scope of his tenure? Hopefully, he also understands that the poverty of our people is not to be measured only in material terms. The challenge is to replace the reality of the elite capture with the induction of social justice and the empowerment of all our marginalized citizens. There is this concept of human development and the UNDP has devised its own index to rank individual countries in this context. This is my final reference to what has happened this week. On Wednesday, the United Nations released the latest report on the Human Development Index (HDI). So, where does Pakistan belong in this report?

Well, this fifth largest country in the world, population-wise, and a certified nuclear power, is ranked 164 out of 193 countries. This means that it has fallen three spots from the previous report. There is no point in listing the ranks of other developing countries. In keeping with our place in nearly all social development indicators, we are at the bottom of South Asia, barring Afghanistan.

Naturally, Pakistan is placed in the 'low' human development category. This index (HDI) seeks to quantify a country's level of prosperity based on both economic and non-economic factors. The report notes that while the world has returned to pre-pandemic levels of development, there is a widening gap between the rich and the poor countries. It has stated that "rich countries experienced unprecedented development, yet half of the world's poorest nations continue to languish". There is, thus, a lot for us to think about and Ramadan gives us ample time to reflect on these matters.

The writer is a senior journalist. He can be reached at: ghazi_salahuddin@hotmail.com

Disclaimer: Views expressed by writers in this section are their own and do not necessarily reflect The Asian Telegraph's point-of-view

Today in History

Pakistan

Both the Congress and the All-India Muslim League rejected these proposals for different reasons. The principles of secession of Muslim India as a separate Dominion was however, conceded in these proposals. After this failure, a prominent Congress leader, C. Rajgopalacharia, suggested a formula for a separate Muslim state in the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress, which was rejected at the time, but later on, in 1944, formed the basis of the Jinnah-Gandhi talks.

PAKISTAN MOVEMENT

The Pakistan demand became popular during the Second World War every section of the Muslim community.

MEN, WOMEN, STUDENT, ULEMA AND BUSINESSMEN

Organized under the banner of the All-India Muslim League. Branches of the party were opened even in the remote corners of the subcontinent. Literature

in the form of pamphlets, books, magazines and newspapers was produced to explain the Pakistan demand and distributed widely. The support gained by the All-India Muslim League and its demand for Pakistan was tested after the failure of the Simla Conference, convened by the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, in 1945. Elections were called to determine the respective strength of the political parties. The All-India Muslim League election campaign was based on the Pakistan demand. The Muslim community responded to this call in an unprecedented way. Numerous Muslim parties were formed making united parliamentary board at the behest of the Congress to oppose the Muslim League. But the All-India Muslim League swept all the thirty seats in the Central Legislature and in the provincial elections also, its victory was outstanding. After the elections, on April 8-9, 1946, the All-India Muslim League called a convention of the newly-elected League members in the Central and Provincial Legislatures at Delhi. This convention, which consti-

tuted virtually a representative assembly of the Muslims of South Asia, on a motion by the Chief Minister of Bengal, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, reiterated the Pakistan demand in clearer terms.

CABINET PLAN

In early 1946, the British Government sent a Cabinet Mission to the subcontinent to resolve the constitutional deadlock. The Mission conducted negotiations with various political parties, but failed to evolve an agreed formula. Finally, the Cabinet Mission announced its own Plan, which among other provisions, envisaged three federal groupings, two of them comprising the Muslim majority provinces, linked at the Centre in a loose federation with three subjects. The Muslim League accepted the plan, as a strategic move, expecting to achieve its objective in not-too-distant a future. The All-India Congress also agreed to the Plan, but, soon realising its implications, the Congress leaders began to interpret it in a way not

visualized by the authors of the Plan. This provided the All-India Muslim League an excuse to withdraw its acceptance of the Plan and the party observed August 16, as a 'Direct Action Day' to show Muslim solidarity in support of the Pakistan demand.

PARTITION SCHEME

In October 1946, an Interim Government was formed. The Muslim League sent its representative under the leadership of its General Secretary, Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, with the aim to fight for the party objective from within the Interim Government. After a short time, the situation inside the Interim Government and outside convinced the Congress leadership to accept Pakistan as the only solution of the communal problem. The British Government, after its last attempt to save the Cabinet Mission Plan in December 1946, also moved towards a scheme for the partition of India.

To be continued....

Showbiz

Robert Downey Jr. addresses his rollercoaster acting career in Hollywood

Robert Downey Jr. explains how home life led him to focus on his career



Robert Downey Jr. has recently addressed his acting career in Hollywood after Oscar win. Speaking to PEOPLE, Robert, who earned Oscar award for Best Supporting Actor in Oppenheimer, dished, "I think if you develop a moral psychology, things are a lot easier." "And I think it's hard to explain away certain behaviours when there are ways to heal," continued the 58-year-old. Robert, who is currently playing four roles in HBO's drama The Sympathizer, stated, "I both have a lot of empathy for, and I also am a little bit sceptical about anyone who doesn't lean into what they can do to improve the state of their compass. That's all." Elsewhere in the interview, Robert

opened up about that his home life led him to "focus" on his career. He told the outlet, "It just gives me, honestly, something to attach my neurosis to that's positive." "And I love when I can ask [Susan] if she thinks we should paint the kitchen a different colour or if maybe a new rug in her office, whatever." The Iron Man star spilled, "I'm not saying that I'm like a fledgling interior designer. But there's two kinds of people and I'm the kind that cares about the drapes." Sharing his thoughts on Al Pacino presenting best picture for Oppenheimer, Robert remarked, "It's crazy that Al Pacino, one of my favourite human beings on earth, presented Best Picture."

Tech

Meta under threat as US prosecutors investigate its role in drug sales

Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, is being investigated by United States prosecutors in the state of Virginia over their role in facilitating the illicit sales of drugs online, New York Post reported Sunday. According to a report by the Wall Street Journal on Saturday, during the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth companies began running ads on Meta platforms, especially Facebook, advocating for drugs for the treatment of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, anxiety, and other medical conditions. These medicines are often not even approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The investigators, after interviewing patients and employees, reported that ads on social media websites have led to an increase in the overuse of substances such as "Adderall". As per the report, the prosecutors have asked for records related to "violative drug content on Meta's platforms and the illicit sale of drugs via Meta's platforms". They further added that even when Meta



removes some of these ads, they often pop up again. In response, Meta has issued a statement, saying, they are working with the State Department to stop the sale of illegal drugs and substances. A spokesman for Meta said, "The sale of illicit drugs is against our policies and we work to find and remove this content from our services. Meta proactively cooperates with law enforcement authorities to help combat the sale and distribution of illicit drugs."

Health

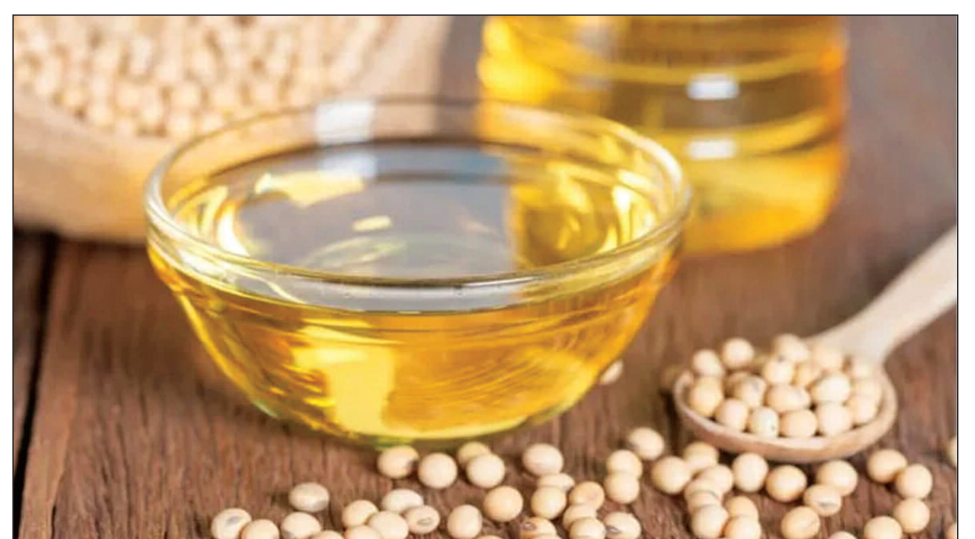
Diet in soybean oil may cause diabetes, obesity: study

Researchers have found soybean oil might be changing our genetic material in brain

New studies have found that soybean oil might be altering our genes and causing a rise in metabolic health conditions such as diabetes, obesity and insulin resistance, TwistedSifter reported. To study the use of soybean oil on health, the experiment was conducted on mice which were divided into three groups. The first group of mice consumed food high in normal soybean oil, the second group was fed in soybean oil from which linoleic acid was removed and

the third group was given coconut oil. It was discovered that the first and the second groups of mice had modified genes. Around 100 different types of hypothalamus genes had been affected. These genes are related to schizophrenia, depression, and Alzheimer's disease, among others. The most affected gene was the oxytocin, which is the happiness hormone. This gene regulates feelings such as euphoria and love, promotes social bonding, and also plays a major role in body

weight. The results of the study have helped researchers identify that linoleic acid is the main driver of the issue. Further tests were conducted and it was found that stigmaterol also has negative effects. Study author Poonamjot Deol has advised people to limit their use of soybean oil until the exact problem in soybean usage is identified. She said, "If this is one message, I want people to take away, it's there: reduce consumption of soybean oil."



PUC vows global action against Islamophobia, calls for steps to address anti-Muslim sentiments



VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) Chairman, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi said the Council is set to escalate its efforts on a global scale to foster interfaith dialogue and harmony.

Addressing international media in connection with the 'International Day to Combat Islamophobia' the other day, he emphasized that Islamophobia poses a grave threat to Muslims worldwide.

Ashrafi urged world powers to accelerate initiatives to eradicate Islamophobia, labeling it as a toxic barrier hindering interfaith harmony. He called upon the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and other international bodies to champion initiatives aimed at eradicating all forms of discrimination while nurturing a culture of love, tolerance, and coexistence.

He stressed that Islam embodies peace, love, and tolerance, emphasizing the teachings of Allah Almighty and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Ashrafi lamented the incitement of non-Muslims against Islam, attributing it to misinformation and hatred propagated against Islamic teachings.

Recognizing Islamophobia as a crime, Ashrafi highlighted the designation of March 15 as the 'International Day to Combat Islamophobia' by the United Nations, a milestone achieved through collaborative efforts involving Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and other entities.

Ashrafi emphasized the urgency of addressing global anti-Muslim sentiment, branding discrimination as a significant threat to world peace.

He underscored the need to clarify the distinction between Jihad and terrorism through dialogue, particularly in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, which fueled widespread misconceptions about Islam and Muslims in the Western world.

The PUC, Ashrafi said, pledged to intensify its global endeavors for interfaith dialogue and harmony, culminating in an upcoming international conference, themed 'Paigham-e-Pakistan' in Islamabad after the holy month of Ramadan.

He informed that the conference would be comprised all faith leaders as the invitations will be tendered to Imam of Khana-e-Kaba, Grand Imam of Palestine, Sheikh Al-Azhar, Pop Francis, Bishop of Canterbury and others.



MULTAN: A tricycle holder on the way loaded with traditional beds (Charpai) heading toward his destination. APP

Entire nation is united against terrorists: Khawaja Asif

Says Pakistan is passing through an economic crisis & one political party has written a letter to the IMF

SIALKOT: Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif says entire nation is united against terrorists and security forces are rendering unprecedented sacrifices for peace and stability in the country.

Talking to media in Sialkot on Sunday, Khawaja Muhammad Asif said martyrs are our real heroes who sacrificed their lives to safeguard the motherland. The Defence Minister strongly condemned cowardly attack by terrorists in Mir Ali area of North Waziristan district.

He also condemned social media campaign by some elements against martyrs and said there is a need for unity in the war against terrorism.

Answering the question, he said Pakistan is passing through an economic crisis and one political party has written a letter to the International Monetary Fund, which is regrettable. The Minister said that the government is determined to steer the country out of economic crisis and put it on the path of progress



and development. To a question, he regretted that Afghanistan's soil is being used for terrorism in Pakistan. He said that some facilitators have been traced, and Pakistan has raised the issue with Afghanistan government. He said those people who do not have valid documents would not be allowed to live in Pakistan. SABAH

CM Maryam does iftar with women prisoners in Kot Lakhpat

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Maryam Nawaz did her iftar with women prisoners in Central Jail Lahore in Kot Lakhpat on Sunday.

The chief minister instead of mixing up with the guests, extended her support to the prisoners by eating with them at Iftar and presenting gifts, clothes and assistance of Rs15,000 to them.

Punjab Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb shared a video which showed CM Maryam Nawaz presenting samosas, pakoras, fruits and food to the women prisoners. She also visited different sections of the jail and planted a sapling in the lawns of Kot Lakhpat Jail. She also visited the cell where her father and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif was kept during his period of imprisonment. She, while recalling those days spent in jail, got emotional.

Besides meeting the prison officials, Maryam also spoke to the prisoners and asked about their issues and problems. The chief minister also inaugurated a 20-bed hospital for rehabilitation of drug-addicts in the Central Jail. Maryam also inaugurated the video call facility for prisoners – a first of its kind. CM Maryam visited kitchen of the jail and checked and reviewed the quality of food being prepared for prisoners. Former Senator Pervez Rasheed, Provincial Minister for Information & Culture Azma Bokari, Chief Secretary, Secretary Home, Special Secretary Home, IG Prisons Farooq Nazir and other officials also accompanied. INP

Army committed to unrelenting fight against terrorism

RAWALPINDI: Funeral prayers of Lieutenant Colonel Syed Kashif Ali Shaheed (age: 39 years, resident of Karachi) and Captain Muhammad Ahmed Badar Shah (age: 23 years, resident of District Talagang) who embraced martyrdom while defending their motherland against the scourge of terrorism in Mir Ali, North Waziristan District, were offered at Chaklala Garrison Rawalpindi. Honourable President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, Foreign Minister, Interior Minister, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Chief of Army Staff, Senior serving Military and Civil Officers, relatives of Shuhada and locals of the area attended the funeral.

"Pakistan Army has consistently upheld the ideals of Faith, Unity and Discipline. Guided by these enduring principles, Pakistan Army has always endeavoured to set higher benchmarks of professionalism and loyalty in its unrelenting fight against terrorism.

This noble sacrifice stands as another glorious testament to the unflinching resolve of our gallant sons, who have never hesitated to offer the ultimate sacrifice for the defence of our Motherland. The whole nation stands in solidarity with our Armed Forces", President said.

The bodies of Shuhada have been taken to their native home towns where they will be laid to rest with full military honour. DNA

38 candidates in run for 11 Senate seats from Balochistan

QUETTA: The Election Commission of Pakistan issued a preliminary list of candidates vying for Senate elections from Balochistan.

As per the details, the Election Commissioner Balochistan issued a list according to which 17 candidates have submitted nomination papers for seven general seats of the Senate from the province. According to the preliminary list, eight candidates are in the run for two women seats while 13 candidates are vying for two technocrat seats.

Former Caretaker Prime Minister former Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar, Aaimel Wali Khan, former Caretaker Provincial Minister Amanullah Kanrani, former Senators Kohida Babar and Naseebullah Bazai, while former Federal Minister and Maulana Abdul Wasi and others are among those who submitted the

nomination papers. The deadline for submitting nomination papers for the Senate elections has ended as the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is all set to hold the polls on April 2.

Fifty-two seats in the upper house of parliament will become vacant, but elections will only be held for 48 senators. The reduction is due to the abolition of four reserved seats for the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) following the 25th constitutional amendment. The election commission will scrutinise the nomination papers, and the process will conclude by March 19, 2024, setting the stage for the next stage of the electoral journey. On March 26, 2024, the eagerly awaited final list of candidates vying for Senate seats will be unveiled. INP



APP25-170324GILGIT: MARCH 17 - Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan presiding over the GBDWP meeting at CM Secretariat. APP/AHS/FHA

FIA arrests seven human traffickers, hawala hundi operators

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Sunday claimed to have arrested a total of seven individuals, including four wanted culprits, allegedly involved in human trafficking and operating illegal money exchange business. As per FIA spokesperson, revealed that the individuals were arrested from different cities across the country including Multan, DG Khan, and Bahawalpur.

The FIA spokesperson reported that the apprehended individuals were found to be in possession of a substantial amount of local currency, exceeding Rs 1 million in cash, while a significant sum of foreign currency, amounting to 4562 Saudi Riyals, was also seized from the suspects. The FIA has vowed to continue its efforts to root out such unlawful practices and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Earlier in the day, responding to the report of the Libya and Greece boat accident, the FIA blacklisted 87 officers across the country from being posted in the immigration department. According to directives issued by the FIA, officials, and officers from constable to assistant director level have been blacklisted to be posted in the immigration and anti-human trafficking cell across Pakistan. The officers and personnel mentioned in FIA's blacklist and ban list were included following a formal inquiry. Among these directives, 13 officers from the Karachi zone and 2 officers from FIA Sukkur have been included in the blacklisting orders. Meanwhile, the other officials belong to different cities across the country including Gujranwala, Peshawar, Kohat, Multan, Islamabad, Lahore, Faisalabad, and Balochistan. INP

Aseefa Bhutto submits nomination for NA-207 by-polls

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move marking her debut in the political arena, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, the youngest daughter of President Asif Ali Zardari, has submitted her nomination papers for the National Assembly seat NA-207 in Shaheed Benazirabad.

The seat became vacant following her father's elevation to the presidency.

Accompanied by provincial health minister Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho and a team of legal advisors, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari presented her nomination form to the returning officer, Sher Ali Jamali, private news channels reported. This marks her first foray into contesting for a public office, reflecting the continuation of the Bhutto-Zardari legacy in Pakistani politics.

As the political landscape evolves with this new entrant, all eyes are on Aseefa Bhutto Zardari as she embarks on this journey to represent her constituency in the by-election. With her family's deep-rooted history in Pakistani politics, her candidacy adds a fresh dimension to the upcoming electoral process in NA-207. APP

Govt to transform varsities into centers of promotion of technical education: Minister

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Industries and Commerce, Chaudhry Shafay Hussain has said that the provincial government would transform technical universities into real centers of promotion of technical education.

This was stated by him while talking to Vice Chancellors (VCs) of Technical universities, who called on him here at TEVTA (Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority) Secretariat on Sunday.

Chaudhry Shafay Hussain and the VCs discussed the matters relating to teaching process, development issues and future plans of the universities. The VCs informed about the problems of technical universities.

The minister assured of resolving the problems of technical universities and said, "I will visit the universities soon to review the teaching process and

problems." He said the usefulness and importance of technical education cannot be denied in the present era, there is a need to develop skilled manpower according to the demand of the global market. By solving the problems of technical universities, the universities would be made true centers of promotion of technical education, Chaudhry Shafay said and vowed, "We will change the destiny of the country by equipping the youth with modern sciences."

Provincial Secretary Industries and Commerce Ehsan Bhutta, Senior Economic Advisor Javed Iqbal and relevant officers also attended the meeting. The VCs who met with the minister included Vice Chancellor of Mir Chakar Khan Rind University of Technology DG Khan Dr. Mahmood Saleem and Vice Chancellor of Ranoor Technology University of Mandi Bahauddin. INP

Sirajul Haq asks govt to take practical measures for ending dacoits rule

Says dacoits regularly upload videos & messages on social media

SADIQ ABAD: Emir Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Sirajul Haq has asked the government to take practical measures for ending dacoits rule. He said that the dacoits regularly upload videos and messages on social media and they have held the entire area hostage.

Talking to media persons, Sirajul Haq said that such incidents take place on daily basis and warned the government to take tangible measures for wiping out dacoits as people will become out of control if the government does not take measures to wipe out the dacoits.

He led a funeral prayer of a worker of Jamaat-e-Islami and Alkhidmat Foundation Pakistan Ahsan Farooq, who was murdered by a dacoit's gang, in a local marriage hall of tehsil Sadiq Abad, district Rahim Yar Khan on Sunday. Emir Jamaat-e-Islami Sirajul Haq appealed to Prime Minister of Pakistan, Army Chief, Inspector

General of Punjab Police and government of Punjab to take practical measures to eradicate dacoits as addresses of dacoits have been written in FIR, adding "you have planes, helicopter, tank rocket and each and everything".

"I ask the government of Pakistan that if you understand yourself responsible then take practical measures for ending this dacoits rule. During the previous days, the interim government consumed billions of rupees on operation and said that dacoits rule has been ended but practically they became more powerful. In the entire Sindh, these people are active. They are active in Punjab. Such incidents take place on daily basis," he said.

He said, "Ahsan Farooq and Shaizad Ahmed were abducted on March 5. Since March 5 the families of both persons remained in contact with the government. They also remained

in contact with the local political leaders. At last sisters of abducted persons went to the dacoits but they were killed. Only dead body of one person could be found. They have tiny children. This is not first incident of this kind. People were abducted from Bahawalpur, Rawalpindi and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa too."

Sirajul Haq has asked the government to take practical measures for ending dacoits rule. He said that the dacoits regularly upload videos and messages on social media and they have held the entire area hostage. People large in number participated in the funeral prayer.

Emir Jamaat-e-Islami also met with the heirs and children of the persons who were killed. Later on the dead body of the second killed person Shahzad Ahmed was recovered on Sunday from Sindh River in the limits of the Machka Police station. SABAH

Faisal Masjid to host 300 individuals for Aitekaf

ISLAMABAD: During last Ashra of Ramadan, as many as 300 Muslim will execute Aitekaf at Faisal Masjid this year in a bid to deepen their spiritual connection. Aitekaf is a revered Islamic tradition of seclusion and devotion.

Faisal Masjid administration has opened its doors to those seeking this profound spiritual experience in the last Ashra (10 days) of the holy month. It has announced that applications for Aitekaf will be accepted until the 10th of Ramadan, allowing eager devotees to secure their spots in advance. Applicants are advised that the process operates on a first-come, first-served basis, emphasizing the importance of prompt submission. Prospective participants are required to obtain an application form from the Faisal Masjid Islamic Centre office. Alongside the application, individuals must provide two passport-sized photographs and a copy of their national identity card, ensuring all necessary documentation is in order.

With the responsibility of Suhoor and Iftar arrangements falling upon the participants, individuals are urged to prepare accordingly for the duration of their Aitekaf. It's worth noting that the opportunity for Aitekaf is open to individuals up to 60 years of age, fostering inclusivity within the spiritual community. Moreover, participants are reminded of the necessity to arrive before Iftar on the 20th of Ramadan, marking the commencement of their seclusion. In anticipation of this sacred undertaking, Faisal Masjid has made special arrangements to accommodate the devotees embarking on this spiritual journey. INP