



The government will deal with iron hands with the elements involved in terrorist attack on Chinese nationals in Besham

Interior Minister
Syed Mohsin Naqvi

Planning Ministry to undergo digital transformation in next 6 months: Ahsan Iqbal



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives on Wednesday said his ministry would undergo a digital transformation during the next six months under the Intelligent Project

Automation System (iPAS).

Stressing on the importance of digital upgradation of public sector organizations, he shared that the digital revolution currently under process in the global arena would completely revolutionize the world in the next 10 years. "The way we live, work and learn will be fully automated in near future," the minister said during a certificate distribution ceremony organized for officials from different ministries who completed the iPAS training programme to digitize the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) portfolios of respective ministries, a news release said.

Intelligent automation systems have eased everyday processes in all public sector organizations across the developed world. Therefore, there is a pressing need for Pakistan government to automate its processes on priority. In an effort to digitize the PSDP processes of Planning Commission, the iPAS was launched in October 2019 as a joint effort of Pakistan Information Technology Board and Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives. The Intelligent Project Automation System (iPAS), brings together different systems to make project work smoother and get enhanced management efficiency. The iPAS is a joint effort by the Ministry of Planning and Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) launched in 2019 to assist project managers in making smarter choices with the help of geospatial technology. Project Director iPAS Kaiser Zahir Shah briefed the minister about key features of iPAS, launched to digitize the PSDP processes of Planning Commission. Making a proud announcement, the ministry said that the Spatial Decision Support System was now a part of the iPAS. APP

Turbat attack martyr laid to rest with full military honours

RAWALPINDI: Shaheed Sepoy Noman Farid (age 24 years, resident of Muzaffargarh) who was martyred in the terrorist attack on Pakistan Naval Base, PNS Siddique in Turbat on the intervening night of March 25 and 26, was laid to rest in his native area with full military honours on Wednesday. According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, the senior officers of Pakistan Army, soldiers, families and relatives and local people attended the funeral prayer of the martyr. "These sacrifices of our martyrs strengthen our resolve against terrorism and our love for motherland," the ISPR said. PR

Minister discusses bilateral issues with Turkiye Ambassador

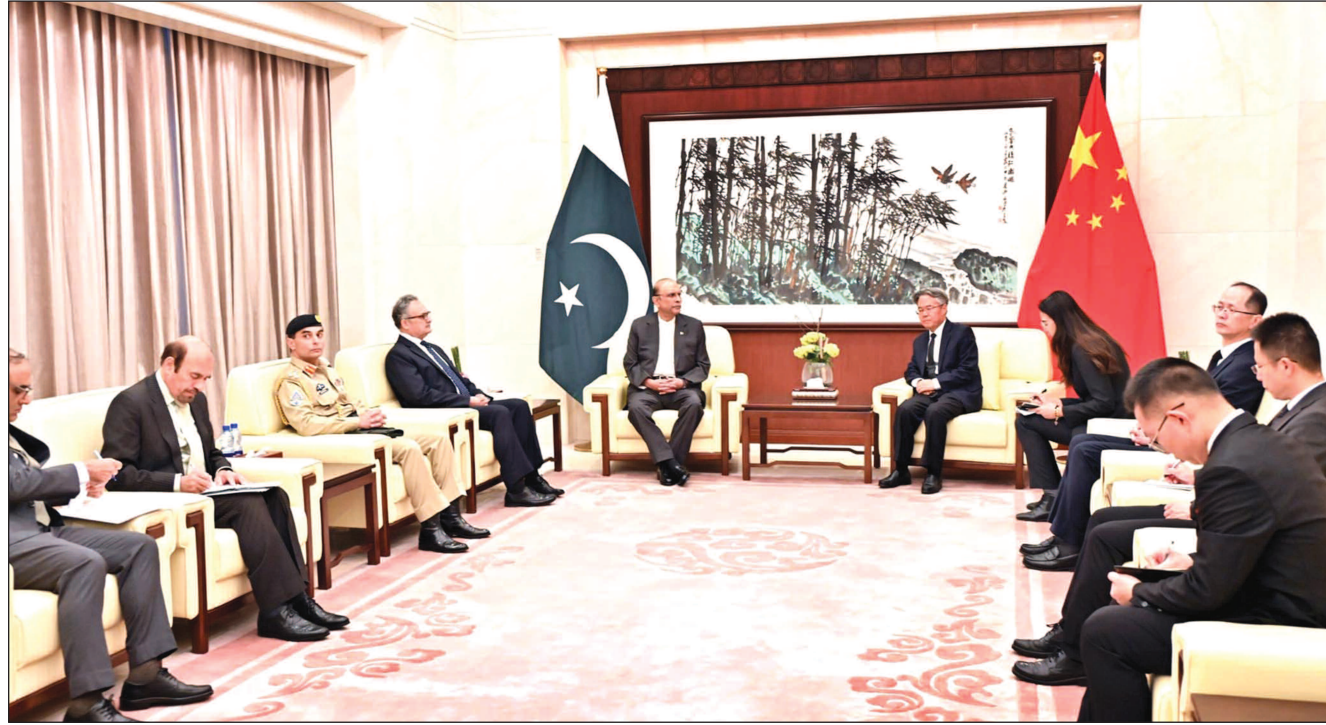


ISLAMABAD: Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Dr. Mehmet Pacaci, paid a courtesy call on Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer at the Law Ministry on Wednesday. In a cordial exchange, both parties underscored the deep-rooted fraternal ties between Turkiye and Pakistan, emphasizing the shared interests and common values that bind the two nations together, said a press release. During the meeting, discussions traversed

various facets of collaboration, with particular attention given to the realms of education and law. The Law Minister assured the Ambassador of Pakistan's unwavering commitment to fostering cooperation in the field of education, affirming full support for initiatives aimed at enhancing educational opportunities.

In his remarks, the Law Minister reiterated Pakistan's profound appreciation for its relations with Turkiye, highlighting Turkiye's enduring presence on Pakistan's priority list. The sentiment of brotherhood and solidarity between the two nations was reaffirmed, reflecting the shared aspirations for peace, prosperity, and progress in the region and beyond.

The meeting concluded on a note of optimism, with both sides expressing their commitment to continue working closely to deepen the bonds of friendship and cooperation between Turkiye and Pakistan. APP



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari meeting with the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Jiang Zaidong, to offer his condolences over the killing of Chinese citizens in Bisham, at the Chinese Embassy.

PM orders thorough probe into Besham incident, vows to bring culprits to justice

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday instructed to conduct a thorough joint investigation of the Besham terrorist attack on Chinese nationals working on Dassu Hydel Power Project, utilizing all resources of the state.

The prime minister, offering deepest condolences to the families of the innocent victims of this barbaric act would be brought to justice swiftly. Chairing a high level emergency meeting in the aftermath of Besham terrorist attack on Chinese nationals, the prime minister appreciated the alacrity with which law enforcement agencies and locals responded to the attack, saving many precious lives which could have been lost.

The meeting was attended by the Federal Ministers, Chief of the Army Staff, Chief Ministers, Chief Secretaries and Inspector Generals of Police of respective provinces, a PM Office press release said.

The meeting discussed in detail the heinous attack on innocent civilians working on a development project, meant to contribute to energy and water security of Pakistan.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif underscored the enduring bond of brotherhood between the people of Pakistan and China and conveyed that the whole nation was saddened by



the loss of Chinese lives.

He stated, "Terrorism is a trans-national threat that has been instrumentalized by the enemies of Pakistan to stymie Pakistan's progress and development. The acts targeting Pakistan-China friendship are particularly aimed at creating mistrust between the two iron brothers".

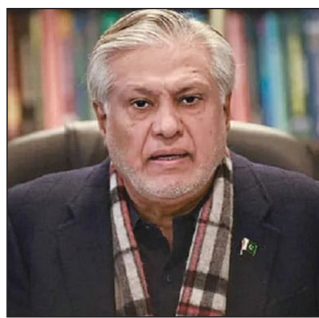
Participants of the meeting expressed resolute commitment to completely rooting out terrorism from the country.

The participants expressed serious concerns over sanctuaries available to terrorists across the borders and emphasized upon the need for a regional approach for countering terrorism. During the meeting, the COAS reiterated the resolve of armed forces to eliminate the scourge of terrorism afflicting the country. COAS stated that the nation had steadfastly

fought the war on terror for the last two decades and had defeated the nefarious designs of Pakistan's adversaries.

Noting the recent surge in terrorist incidents, COAS remarked that the enemies of Pakistan had once again underestimated the resilience and grit of the State and the people of Pakistan. He said, "we shall fight terrorism till every terrorist casting an evil eye on Pakistan, its people and their guests, is eliminated; we shall not leave any stone unturned to ensure that every foreign citizen, especially the Chinese nationals, contributing to the prosperity of Pakistan, is safe and secure in Pakistan. We shall fight terrorism with all our might, to the very end." The meeting concluded with the participants reiterating the resolve to comprehensively combat terrorism employing all resources available to the state.

Ishaq Dar, Jordanian FM discuss Gaza situation; call for unimpeded aid supply



condemned the Israeli brutalities, Foreign Minister Dar wrote on his X timeline.

The two leaders also called for unimpeded provision of aid into Gaza. "I look forward to working closely with Jordanian foreign minister in transforming our bilateral relations with Jordan into multi-tiered partnership," he remarked. APP

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Wednesday received a telephone call from Ayman Safadi, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Jordan. In the conversation, they discussed the situation in Gaza and

Commerce Minister leads session on future planning

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, conducted an in-house presentation on Wednesday to evaluate the government's future plans within the Ministry of Commerce to attain sustainable economic growth and development.

The presentation focused on key areas of development and strategies to moving forward, besides a comprehensive review was undertaken to ensure alignment with the ministry's objectives, said a press release issued by the Ministry of commerce. The session highlighted the government's concerted efforts to prioritize commerce and trade initiatives, aiming to enhance economic growth and prosperity.

Minister for Commerce emphasized the importance of strategic planning and collaboration to capitalize on emerging opportunities and address challenges effectively.

Emphasized the importance of strategic planning and collaboration to capitalize on emerging opportunities and address challenges effectively

Jam Kamal Khan expressed optimism about the upcoming presentation, stating that it would underscore the government's commitment to fostering a conducive environment for commerce and trade.

With the in-house review completed, the ministry is gearing up to present its findings and proposals to Prime Minister, signaling a significant step towards shaping the country's economic agenda. APP

All possible steps to be taken to root out scourge of terrorism: Tarar

ISLAMABAD, March 27 (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday reiterated the commitment of the government that all possible steps would be taken to root out the scourge of terrorism from the soil of the motherland.

Addressing a press conference after a high level meeting on security chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, he said that Prime Minister expressed the firm resolve to eliminate terrorism and make Pakistan a peaceful state.

Tarar said that all the participants of the meeting were on the same page regarding ensuring security for all. He said today's high level meeting was attended by Federal Ministers, Chief of Army Staff, Chief Ministers of all four provinces, Chief Secretaries, Inspector Generals of the provinces, Chief Secretaries and IGs of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Attaullah Tarar said that the meeting had

the consensus that an integrated strategy should be adopted to wipe out terrorism from this country. "A message of unity was given to the nation today that all units are on the same page with the Federation", he informed the media. All were on the same page on the integrity and national interest of Pakistan, he said adding, "We know how to defend ourselves and our old friends".

He disclosed that regarding the investigation of the incident, there was also a consultation on the establishment of Joint Investigation Team. The minister said that morale of all participants was high in the meeting and they had a unity of thought on tackling the issue. He recalled that in 2018, the Pakistan Muslim League-N had left a peaceful Pakistan free from terrorism.

He said yesterday's sad incident in Bisham resulted in loss of six precious lives including Chinese citizens. He said



that China was a time tested friend of Pakistan that has always stood by Islamabad at all difficult times and at international forums. He said that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was the guarantor of economic development in the country. The minister said after the launch of the CPEC about 64 billion dollar investment was done in Pakistan and

its GDP had increased significantly. "Millions of new employment opportunities will be created in the country in future due to CPEC", he added. Tarar said after the tragic incident, the PM set aside all his engagements and visited the Chinese Embassy and expressed his condolences to the Chinese Ambassador.

He said that the Prime Minister not only condemned the incident but also assured about investigation of the incident. A message, he said was given to the Chinese leadership through the ambassador that effective action will be taken against the terrorists involved in the dastardly act.

The Prime Minister assured the Ambassador of China that the Government of Pakistan will leave no stone unturned to eradicate terrorism and bring to book the culprits involved in killing of Chinese citizens.

Expressing heartfelt condolences to Chinese nation, the minister said, such incidents were an attempt to harm Pakistan-China friendship but Pakistan-China friendship will continue forever. He said when the PML-N came to power in 2013, incidents of terrorism were a routine matter but when it's tenure ended in 2018, Pakistan had become terrorism free area.

Attaullah Tarar said that Pakistani nation equally shared the grief of the Chinese nation and leadership. He added that all possible steps will be taken for prevention of such incidents in future. The minister said Pakistan had formulated a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) for the security of Chinese citizens in the country. All the arrangements and steps were being taken to ensure security of all the Chinese working on CPEC and non-CPEC projects in the country. He vowed effective implementation of the SOPs in this regard.

Tarar said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had a special place for China in his heart and the bilateral relations between the two countries flourished during the tenure of PML-N. He said when the CPEC project was underway, the Chinese President told the prime minister that "it is a gift for him and his elder brother Nawaz Sharif". APP

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Moral suasion isn't the answer

HUSSAIN H ZAIDI

Whenever the economy is up the creek, as at present, messages start doing the rounds that if each Pakistani shuns foreign products and buys only locally made goods for at least a few months, it will set the stage for putting the economy back on track. Preference for domestic over imported products, the argument goes, is a sure recipe for cutting back on imports, saving valuable foreign exchange, driving up the local currency, and putting life back into the domestic industry. As a result, the nation will not have to dance to the tune of hard-nosed foreign creditors. The logical question is: how can we cut down on imports? This can be done in two ways. One, the government may restrict imports through administrative measures ranging from imposing high customs duties to clamping outright prohibitions on imports. Being in charge of a sovereign state, the Pakistani government can resort to such a remedy without much ado. In fact, this remedy seems so obvious that the man in the street and pseudo-economists alike cannot help wondering what is holding back the people calling the shots from waving the magic wand. Be that as it may, given the country's commitments arising out of legally binding international treaties and protocols, only a narrow policy space is available to the government to scale down imports. Besides, the restrictive measures may force our trading partners to retaliate by subjecting our exports to similar treatment. The result will be a zero-sum game. That is one reason that efforts to substantially curtail imports through punitive measures normally come a cropper. While the government may have its hands tied by the compulsions of international law and the niceties of diplomatic norms, the same does not apply to the people. In the end, every industrial buyer and final consumer is the judge of where to procure from. So if they decide to purchase only domestically made goods, no one can force their hand to do otherwise. Thus, on the face of it, the argument to stop buying foreign goods makes a lot of sense. But then why do we each year spend billions of dollars on foreign goods? Are we short on patriotism? Are we too xenocentric to reject foreign goods? Or do we have the incorrigible habit of cutting our own throats? The answer is that buying foreign or local products is not a question of patriotism or xenocentrism or, for that matter, of having irrepensible collective suicidal tendencies; instead, it's simply a matter of satisfying consumer needs and wants. Imports represent the difference between domestic demand and domestic output (minus exports); the wider the gap, the higher the import volume. All else equal, high imports are undergirded by low productive capacity relative to domestic demand. Pakistan has a rather narrow production or manufacturing base. We are essentially a producer of primary products, such as wheat, cotton, sugarcane, and rice, and low value-added manufactures, such as textiles and leather articles, and processed food that are derived from these primary products. A wide range of the products that our households and factories use are either not manufactured locally at all or are produced on a scale too small to meet the demand. Such products include fossil fuels, chemicals and fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, iron and steel, machinery and electronic equipment, vehicles, consumer durables, and aircraft. In case the manufacturing concerns or households insist on buying only homemade or locally grown products out of sheer patriotism, the resulting scenario is not difficult to construct. Our homes and factories, schools and hospitals, will be without electricity, as well as other facilities deemed essential for decent living or working conditions. Automobiles will not be plying on the roads – it may be noted in passing that despite having one of the most heavily protected automobile industries in the world, we are only an assembler of vehicles – and offices will have to work without the necessary equipment. There will be no internet, no social or electronic media – not even newspapers, as newsprint is imported. In a word, we will be thrown at least a century back. Domestic supply-side constraints are well brought out by the import profile. During the last financial year (FY2022-23), the import bill amounted to \$55 billion, which included \$17 billion in petroleum products, \$11 billion in machinery and appliances, \$9 billion in chemicals and pharmaceuticals, \$6.5 billion in metals, \$1.8 billion in vehicles and auto parts, and \$3 billion in raw materials. The cumulative size of these products comes to \$48.3 billion, which accounts for nearly 88 per cent of the total imports. The import of these goods is essential for running our offices and factories and expanding the economy. Even in industries where we have sufficient productive capacity, the efficiency of the production processes and the quality of products are below the mark. Customers, whether they are households or industrial users, want the best value for their hard-earned money. While making purchase decisions, they are guided by the utility maximization rule: buying within their budget constraints that basket of goods and services that will afford them the highest possible satisfaction. While 'satisfaction' is subjective and each buyer may look for different product characteristics, consumer behaviour is not all that arbitrary. While shopping, customers have some expectations of manufacturers or suppliers in terms of product reliability, performance, safety, conformity to standards, and after-sales service. No one expects their new refrigerator to go kaput when the mercury rises. When fulfilled, the expectations create brand loyalty. The principal reason for the preference for foreign brands is that few local brands command customer loyalty. Despite being an agricultural economy – agriculture accounts for some one-fifth of the GDP – Pakistan is a net food importer. In FY2022-2023, our net food imports (the difference between food exports and imports) exceeded \$5 billion. Of these, palm oil had the largest share (\$3.6 billion), followed by wheat (\$0.1 billion), pulses (\$946 million) and tea (\$569 million).

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Atta-ur-Rahman

Building high-tech industries

Pakistan's development strategy should be primarily focused on the sustainable and equitable socio-economic development of world economies. We must realize this and change the direction of our development programmes to meet this new world order. Knowledge today is the single biggest power engine for the highest national priority to education, science, technology, and innovation by implementing similar policies as done by other fast developing countries in Asia and elsewhere. The funds that we are getting from the IMF, China, and other donors should be directed to help Pakistan manufacture and export products such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, IT products, automobiles, defence goods, etc. We must reach \$50 billion in our exports by 2030 and \$100 billion by 2040 to extricate ourselves from our existing economic mess. This can best be done by entering into joint manufacturing ventures with Chinese firms as part of the CPEC programme. The request from our PM directly to the Chinese president, accompanied by suitable tax and other incentives, will help attract Chinese industry to shift some of its operations to Pakistan. Let us consider an example from South Korea: the development of the semiconductor industry. South Korea made significant investments in basic sciences relevant to semiconductor technology, including materials science, device physics, and manufacturing processes. Universities and research institutes were encouraged to develop specialized programmes in semiconductor engineering and related disciplines, ensuring a steady supply of talent to the industry. The country fostered strategic partnerships between government agencies, research institutions, and private corporations to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing. Semiconductor clusters, such as the Gumi Industrial Complex, emerged as hubs of innovation, where companies could access shared infrastructure, research facilities, and talent pools. Domestic companies, such as Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix, successfully localized semiconduc-

men and women will soon turn into a tsunami and become uncontrollable. To extract ourselves from this vicious circle of poverty and corruption, the only way forward is industrial growth, particularly aimed at enhancing high-tech value-added exports. For this, we must give the highest national priority to education, science, technology, and innovation by implementing similar policies as done by other fast developing countries in Asia and elsewhere. The funds that we are getting from the IMF, China, and other donors should be directed to help Pakistan manufacture and export products such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, IT products, automobiles, defence goods, etc. We must reach \$50 billion in our exports by 2030 and \$100 billion by 2040 to extricate ourselves from our existing economic mess. This can best be done by entering into joint manufacturing ventures with Chinese firms as part of the CPEC programme. The request from our PM directly to the Chinese president, accompanied by suitable tax and other incentives, will help attract Chinese industry to shift some of its operations to Pakistan. Let us consider an example from South Korea: the development of the semiconductor industry. South Korea made significant investments in basic sciences relevant to semiconductor technology, including materials science, device physics, and manufacturing processes. Universities and research institutes were encouraged to develop specialized programmes in semiconductor engineering and related disciplines, ensuring a steady supply of talent to the industry. The country fostered strategic partnerships between government agencies, research institutions, and private corporations to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing. Semiconductor clusters, such as the Gumi Industrial Complex, emerged as hubs of innovation, where companies could access shared infrastructure, research facilities, and talent pools. Domestic companies, such as Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix, successfully localized semiconduc-

tor production processes, gradually reducing dependence on foreign technology and becoming global leaders in semiconductor manufacturing. Another excellent example is that of Brazil. The country's biofuel programme, notably its sugarcane ethanol industry, represents a successful model of renewable energy development, agricultural innovation, and sustainable economic growth. Brazil has invested in research and development to improve sugarcane cultivation techniques, ethanol production processes, and biofuel technologies. Brazil pioneered the development and adoption of flex-fuel vehicles (FFVs), which can run on gasoline, ethanol, or any blend of the two. The widespread deployment of FFVs has created a flexible and consumer-friendly market for biofuels, enabling consumers to choose between ethanol and gasoline based on price and availability. Advancements made by our neighbour India in several fields, such as pharmaceuticals and manufacturing, serve as a reminder of the benefits of a product-oriented and highly focused development approach. India's pharmaceutical industry has emerged as a global powerhouse in the production and export of generic drugs, vaccines, and active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs). Indian-made generic drugs are often significantly cheaper than their brand-name counterparts, making them accessible to patients who would otherwise be unable to afford treatment. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Indian-made vaccines, such as Covaxin and Covishield (the Indian version of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine), were distributed globally through initiatives like Covax. Another excellent example is the development of high-speed bullet train manufacturing in China. This high-speed rail (HSR) infrastructure represents one of the most remarkable engineering achievements of the 21st century. The country's ambitious HSR programme has not only transformed its transportation system but also spurred economic growth, regional integration and technological innovation on a massive scale. To kick-start its HSR programme, China entered into technology transfer agreements with foreign companies, particularly those from Japan, Germany, and France, which had already established high-speed rail systems. This facilitated the acquisition of the expertise, equipment, and know-how necessary for developing indigenous high-speed rail technology. Pakistan is today in the process of establishing a centre of excellence at the Pakistan-Austria University of Applied Science and Engineering in Haripur, Hazara for the indigenous manufacture of bullet trains in collaboration with China. This exciting new entrepreneurial university, the first of its kind in the world, has nine foreign engineering universities from Austria, Germany and China deeply involved in teaching and research programmes, and it was set up under my supervision. The centre of excellence in bullet train technologies is in partnership with Beijing Jiaotong University in China, which is ranked as the top world university in high-speed railway engineering. Our planning ministry needs to come forward with a completely fresh approach, focused largely on the manufacture and export of high-tech (high value-added) products for the socio-economic development of Pakistan. The ministry will need to set up training programmes to supply a qualified workforce to high-tech industries and arrange joint ventures with industrial partners in China and elsewhere. The qualified technical workforce can be provided by strengthening the existing centres of excellence and establishing a network of entrepreneurial universities on the pattern of Pakistan-Austria Fachhochschule so that university training can have a direct impact on socio-economic development.

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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

History of Pakistan



British leaders including Mounbatten did not support the creation of Pakistan but failed to convince Jinnah.[34][35] Mounbatten later confessed that he would most probably have sabotaged the creation of Pakistan had he known that Jinnah was dying of tuberculosis.[36] Soon after he arrived, Mounbatten concluded that the situation was too volatile for even that short a wait. Although his advisers favoured a gradual transfer of independence, Mounbatten decided the only way forward was a quick and orderly

transfer of independence before 1947 was out. In his view, any longer would mean civil war.[37] The Viceroy also hurried so he could return to his senior technical Navy courses.[38][39] In a meeting in June, Nehru and Abul Kalam Azad representing the Congress, Jinnah representing the Muslim League, B. R. Ambedkar representing the Untouchable community, and Master Tara Singh representing the Sikhs, agreed to partition India along religious lines. Creation of Pakistan

Main articles: Indian Independence Act 1947, Partition of India, and Independence Day of Pakistan On 14 August 1947 (27th of Ramadan in 1366 of the Islamic Calendar) Pakistan gained independence. India gained independence the following day. Two of the provinces of British India, Punjab and Bengal, were divided along religious lines by the Radcliffe Commission. Lord Mounbatten is alleged to have influenced the Radcliffe Commission to draw the lines in India's favour.[40][41][42] Punjab's mostly

Muslim western part went to Pakistan and its mostly Hindu and Sikh eastern part went to India, but there were significant Muslim minorities in Punjab's eastern section and light Hindus and Sikhs minorities living in Punjab's western areas. There was no conception that population transfers would be necessary because of the partitioning. Religious minorities were expected to stay put in the states they found themselves residing in.

To be continued....

Showbiz

Fans heap praise on Drew Barrymore's surprisingly 'delightful' house

Drew Barrymore offered an insight into her home in a recent video on TikTok

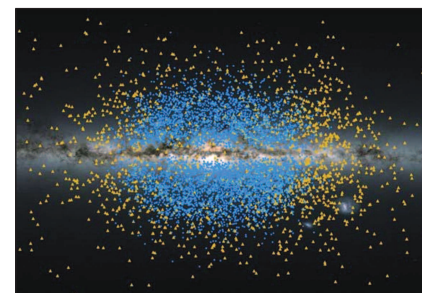
Drew Barrymore recently garnered praise online for owning a 'delightfully' normal home. The 49-year-old TV personality took to TikTok on March 12, offering an insight into her home as she performed some typical home tasks and household chores. In the video that the Drew Barrymore Show host shared, she could be heard admitting how much she likes 'staying in' in the background. The video showcased Barrymore's life as she could also be seen cooking some sunny-side eggs on her medium-sized stove. The voiceover claimed: "I know everyone thinks it's boring, but it's really



not." "It's the least boring thing. I am really happy being a happy little hermit. I love being at home. I never wanna go anywhere," she confessed. The actress then modeled some dresses in her walk-in-closet, with photos of her daughters in the back. The host further shared a funny clip and a shot of herself, enjoying meals in her dining room. She captioned the video as: "I love staying in." Meanwhile, fans absolutely loved the host's "comfort space," leaving heartfelt comments under her post to heap praise on her. One user commented: "I love that your house looks like a home and not just a show piece."

Tech

Milky Way's parent stars finally discovered after 13 billion years by Gaia spacecraft



Astronomers have tracked down two streams of stars that likely formed the foundation of the Milky Way, using ESA's Gaia spacecraft. The two streams named "Shakti and Shiva" contain about 10 million stars, all of which are 12 to 13 billion years old, according to Universe Today. These stars likely came together even before the spiral arms and disk were formed. They are moving in roughly similar orbits and have similar compositions. Moreover, they can probably be separate galaxies that merged

into the Milky Way shortly after the Big Bang. "What's truly amazing is that we can detect these ancient structures at all," said lead author Khyati Malhan of the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy (MPIA) in Heidelberg, Germany, in an ESA press release. "The Milky Way has changed so significantly since these stars were born that we wouldn't expect to recognise them so clearly as a group – but the unprecedented data we're getting from Gaia made it possible." Gaia uses Astrometry, the precise measurements of the positions and movements of stars and other celestial bodies, is used by Gaia. It is building the largest, most precise three-dimensional map of our Galaxy by surveying nearly two billion objects. "Shakti and Shiva populations possess an unconventional combination of orbital and abundance properties that have not been observed previously," the researchers wrote in their paper, published in the Astrophysical Journal.

Health

Epidemic: Dengue outbreak forces imposition of health emergency in US territory

As many as 549 cases have been reported in the island of 3.2 million people

Officials in the US territory of Puerto Rico have declared an epidemic after a massive rise in dengue infections, Time.com reported. As many as 549 cases have been reported in the island of 3.2 million people and around half of the infections have been detected in San Juan. Dengue, also known as breakbone fever, can cause soreness, fever, rashes, headaches. In extreme circumstances, it can also cause

death. The health department said more than 340 people have been hospitalized for the mosquito-borne virus. The island nation last declared dengue an epidemic in 2012. AP reported that the The World Health Organization said that over five million dengue infections were reported across the globe in 2023. Around 80% of the cases were reported in the Western Hemisphere.

The region is getting more cases this year due to heavy rainfall, humidity, and heat, all linked to climate change. "This year, cases of dengue have surpassed historical records," Health Secretary Carlos Mellado said in a statement. The secretary noted that the imposition of an emergency does not prohibit travel, but will allow the health department to access funding for detection and prevention.



Awais Leghari vows to combat electricity theft

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Power, Sardar Awais Ahmed Leghari, on Wednesday, expressed his unwavering resolve to combat electricity theft across all DISCOS.

Addressing the Chairmen and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of Power Distribution Companies (Discos) via video link, he underscored the urgent need to address electricity theft.

During the event, the discussion primarily focused on combating electricity theft, which the Minister described as a form of economic terrorism severely impacting the country's economy.

He urged Discos officials to harness technology and innovation in their endeavors to eradicate power theft, aiming to minimize indiscriminate power outages, particularly affecting consumers who diligently pay their bills. Leghari called for the removal of all obstacles hindering efforts to prevent electricity theft and warned that employees and officers involved in such illegal activities would face firm and decisive action. He reiterated that there would be no political interference in the campaign against electricity theft, emphasizing decisions based on merit for a transparent and impartial approach.

The Minister instructed all Discos to establish modern customer service centers nationwide and appoint competent officers to ensure the timely resolution of customer complaints. He stressed the importance of kindness towards consumers and emphasized a policy where the "customer is always right."

He mandated the management of Distribution Companies (Discos) to maintain up-to-date financial records diligently and compile detailed information regarding the company's assets. APP

SC restrains FIA from arrests of journalists

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday restrained the FIA from arrests of journalists till the next hearing of the case.

"Is it the violation of the law?", Chief Justice of Pakistan asked. "This notice has been under section 160 of the Criminal Procedure Code, it is a notice prior to registration of the FIR," CJP said. "This notice can be served to me tomorrow, why you presume that they will register the FIR. At a time, an officer after comes under heavy pressure from above, issues notice but not registers an FIR, or arrest the person. In this notice they could also summon someone as a witness," CJP said. "When you show us something illegal than we can declare it void, we will not declare a legal act as null and void," chief justice said.

"It is necessary to provide complete details of the case with the notice," Barrister Salahuddin argued. "I will be informed of the reason first, if I am being summoned to the police station," he said. "You are saying the FIR has been compulsory before being summoned. The officer may call you for verification of facts before registration of the FIR," chief justice said. Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan said that registration of the FIR comes first and summons after it. "Do you want notice under section 157, instead of section 160," he asked. "The notice can be served after registration of the FIR," Barrister Salahuddin said. INP



ISLAMABAD: Turkish Ambassador H.E Dr. Mehmet Paçacı along with delegation called on Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain.

Pak-Ethiopia enjoy booming bilateral relations, says Ambassador Atif

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Pakistan to Ethiopia, Atif Sharif has said that their existing booming bilateral relation between two countries which have been tinted through opening of Ethiopian Embassy in Islamabad, inauguration of direct flights and rising trade flows. Speaking during an Iftar-dinner reception organized to mark the 84th National Day of Pakistan at the Hilton Hotel, Addis Ababa, the ambassador underscored the historical significance of Pakistan Day and paid tribute to the founding fathers of the country.

Atif Sharif also reiterated Pakistan's principled support for right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir and Palestine facing brutal occupation. Over 170 guests including Ambassadors from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Kuwait, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, Brazil, Oman, Sri Lanka, Cuba, Chile, Finland, Spain, New Zealand and deputies Ambassadors from US, UK, Germany, France, Russia as well as Ethiopian dignitaries, businessmen and Pakistani expatriates attended the event. Ambassador Gebeyehu Ganga, Director-General (Middle East and Asia Pacific) graced the event as the chief guest.

To share a glimpse of Pakistan's diverse beauty with the participants, the venue was



tastefully adorned with vibrant portraits and banners depicting the splendid heritage, dazzling landscapes, and fauna of Pakistan.

Mesmerizing cultural dances of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Balochistan were presented by Pakistani youth which earned deep praise from the audience.

An enchanting documentary highlighting Pakistan's culture, tourism, food and industry was also played. Ambassador Gebeyehu Ganga, in his speech, expressed profound felicitations to the embassy and the people of Pakistan on the National Day.

He lauded Pakistan's innumerable advances in all spheres of life turning the country into a strong, self-reliant, and influential member of world community.

Ambassador Ganga also commended Pakistan's role to uphold UN Charter, and international law and contribution to world peace and security.

About Ethiopia-Pakistan cooperation at multilateral fora, he expressed Ethiopian government's commitment to forge strong partnership with Pakistan and assured complete cooperation to the Ambassador Atif Sharif towards this end.

Pakistan's foreign policy is deeply rooted in the principles of peace, equality & justice: Dar

Says Pakistan will continue to champion multilateralism, peace, development & mutual prosperity

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar has said that Pakistan's foreign policy is deeply rooted in the principles of peace, equality, and justice. He said that Pakistan will continue to champion multilateralism, peace, development and mutual prosperity. This was stated by Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar at Inter-Faith Iftar Dinner hosted by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and attended by Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Federal Ministers and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps.

"It is my great privilege and honour to welcome Prime Minister of Pakistan to Ministry of Foreign Affairs for this special inter-faith iftar dinner. Am grateful for the presence of the Islamabad-based diplomatic community at this inter-faith iftar dinner. I would like to express our deep appreciation for their contribution in promoting dialogue and cooperation between their countries and Pakistan" Ishaq Dar said. Ishaq Dar said that for Muslims across the world, the holy month of Ramadan holds a special religious and social significance. It is a time for reflection, unity, and compassion. As we gather here tonight, representing diverse nations and cultures, it is important to appreciate the power of dialogue and cooperation in fostering mutual understanding and harmony, he said.

"As you may be aware, Pakistan is a candidate for the non-permanent seat of the United Nations Security Council for the years 2025 and 2026. Our Security Council candidature has been endorsed by Asia Pacific Group of countries. We are extremely grateful to the countries that have already expressed their support and we seek the invaluable support of all other countries as well" he said.

Ishaq Dar said that during its term at the Council, Pakistan will promote the Council's mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security and help revitalize the Council to address contemporary challenges; reach across political divides; and promote multilateralism.

Ishaq Dar said that in this holy month of peace and fasting, we must not forget the people of Gaza who are faced with starvation and war awaiting an end to the last six months of bloodshed and misery. Time has come for an urgent and unconditional ceasefire, as called for by the United Nations Security Council, he said. Ishaq Dar said that our collective dream of peace and prosperity cannot be realized without settlement of outstanding regional disputes. It is therefore, important to resolve long-standing disputes on the agenda of the UNSC including Palestine and Kashmir, he said.

"This week's terror attack in Moscow and the deadly attack in Besham remind us that terrorism is a collective and persistent threat for everyone across the globe. Pakistan will continue to promote regional and global partnerships in combating this menace" he said. "Let me share with you that in Holy Quran it is stated that "whoever takes a life it will be as if they killed all of humanity; and whoever saves a life, it will be as if they saved all the humanity." Therefore, our war against terrorism will not end till peace wins" he said. SABA

Protection against harassment of women Act 2010 welcomed



ISLAMABAD: Federal Ombudsman Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi has said that the Parliament adopted an Act for Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace in 2010 with a view to implementing the

relevant provisions in the Constitution and ensuring equal opportunity for men and women and the right to earn a livelihood without fear or any discrimination.

He was inaugurating a Webinar on Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace, organized under the aegis of Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA), here Wednesday. It was attended by the members of the AOA besides the human rights practitioners and activists in addition to the members of the OIC Ombudsman Association (OICOA) and the Forum of Pakistan's Ombudsmen (FPO).

Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, who is also the President of the 47-member strong Asian Ombudsman Association, said that the Constitution of Pakistan upholds the principle of equality and dignity along with explicitly prohibiting gender discrimination in all spheres of national life. He further stated that the enactment of the relevant law against harassment in 2010 was followed by two more Acts of the Parliament in 2020 and 2022 respectively, expanding the scope of its legal provision to include men, women and transgenders alike.

Enforcement of the Women's Property Rights was also brought within the purview of these legislative provisions, he added. He said that the Webinar is intended to share the Pakistan's experiences, best practices and the exchange of information with a view to promoting gender equality and the right to work with dignity for all.

Later Ms. Fauzia Viqar, Federal Ombudsperson Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace (FOSPAH) also made a presentation on the scope of work and operational framework of the FOSPAH, which was established in 2011. She said that FOSPAH was playing a vital role in upholding the constitutional provision of equality and dignity alongwith striving to create an environment free of harassment and discrimination.

She further added that Pakistan has the distinction as being the only country with a dedicated Ombudsperson Institution to deal with the challenges of women empowerment and denial of rights, thereby emphasizing the need for support to over 49% of the population. The presentation was followed by a lively Q/A session, wherein international participants asked searching questions about Pakistan's experiences in these fields and requested for sharing of best practices to move forward.

Organized in the backdrop of the International Women's Day, the webinar holds special significance for the member states as these are striving to overcome identical challenges particularly with regard to women empowerment and protection. So far, the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat has received nearly 75 confirmations to attend the Webinar online.

The nominations received from the AOA members included, the People's Republic of China, Thailand, Japan, Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Korea, Türkiye and Indonesia, apart from the Provincial Ombudsmen in Pakistan and representatives from the Regional Offices of the Wafaqi Mohtasib. APP

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KSrelief distributes 625 food baskets in Pakistan



ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia's King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief) distributed 625 food baskets in Rahim Yar Khan district in Punjab province, SPA reported on Wednesday.

The assistance programme benefiting 4,375 individuals from the most vulnerable and needy groups in flood-affected areas, as part of the Food Security Support Project in Pakistan. This comes within the framework of a series of relief and humanitarian projects implemented by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through KSRelief, to help the needy and affected wherever they are to alleviate their suffering. VOM Report

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Sardar Masood Khan felicitates new APPNA President Dr. Asif Mohiuddin

Lauds APPNA's professional, philanthropic & charitable works

WASHINGTON: "I extend my warmest congratulations to you on assuming the role of President of the Association of Physicians of Pakistani Descent of North America (APPNA)."

"Your election to this prestigious position is a recognition of your professional accomplishments over the years and I am confident that under your leadership APPNA will continue to thrive and excel," said Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Sardar Muhammad Masood Khan.

Ambassador Masood Khan made these remarks felicitating Dr. Asif Mohiuddin, the new President of Association of Physicians of Pakistani Descent of North America, the largest diaspora organization of Pakistanis abroad. Commending the organization, Sardar Masood Khan observed that APPNA's commitments to serving the Pakistani-American community, providing healthcare support to Pakistan, philanthropic and charitable initiatives

across the globe, and fostering unity among healthcare professionals were truly commendable.

"We look forward to the positive impact you will undoubtedly make during your tenure as President," he added. "Your passion for excellence and your unwavering dedication to the mission of APPNA inspires growing Pakistani-American community. As you embark on this new role, you will have our fullest cooperation," he said.

Sardar Masood Khan also paid a glowing tribute to the outgoing president Dr. Arshad Rehan for his valuable contributions to the organization. Dr. Mohiuddin is a gastroenterologist in Orlando, Florida and is affiliated with multiple hospitals in the area. He received his medical degree from Dow Medical College in Karachi, Pakistan in 1989. The Ambassador wished success to the new president in his leadership role. SABA

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Bar associations call meetings to assess judges' plaint about interference

KARACHI: Bar associations across country on Wednesday expressing grave concerns regarding allegations of six Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges about interference of intelligence agencies in judicial affairs have demanded thorough investigation into the issue.

Responding to demands of the legal fraternity, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa convened a full court session.

Supporting the stances of the IHC judges, the Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan (SCBAP) reiterated its "unwavering support for the judiciary as an institution and for the Honorable Judges of the Islamabad High Court."

President SCBAP Shahzad Shaukat and Secretary Syed Ali Imran expressed their extreme anguish and concerns regarding the incidents reported in the letter issued by six Honorable Judges of the Islamabad High Court.

The SCBAP not only condemned the alleged interference but also stated that it "requires serious actions by the judiciary as an institution".

Sindh High Court Bar Association, in an emergency meeting today, reviewed the letter written by the IHC judges.

The association demanded the formation of a three-member judicial commission — comprising Supreme Court judges — to investigate the letter.

"Interference in the affairs of the judiciary is tantamount to attacking the judicial system," it said, while lauding the IHC judges for exposing the interference, terming it a commendable act. Meanwhile, the Islamabad High Court Bar Association also expressed concern, stating that it fully believes in the independence and autonomy of the judiciary as the main feature of the Constitution.

"Public confidence in the justice system is linked to the independence and autonomy of the judiciary," the bar said, adding that a question mark on the judiciary harms the justice system and society.

The lawyer's body said it stands with the principles of the rule of law, independence of judiciary and autonomy. The bar "strongly" condemned the interference by any institution in the affairs of another institution.

The bar demanded assurance that the judges should be able to perform their duty while adhering to the constitutional principle of an independent and autonomous judiciary.

The Balochistan Bar Council also stated that the allegations levelled by the IHC judges are worrisome and that former judge Shaukat Siddiqui had also expressed concerns regarding intervention by the country's spy agencies. The Council demanded that the apex court take suo motu notice of the letter and urged the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) to call an immediate lawyers convention to put forward a future course of action.

A day earlier, six serving judges of Islamabad High Court (IHC) penned a letter to Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), urging it to summon a judicial convention to review matter of "interference of intelligence agencies with judicial functions".

Six IHC top judges — including Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani, Justice

Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, Justice Baqir Sattar, Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir, and Justice Salman Rafat Intiaz — penned the letter to SJC in the aftermath of Supreme Court's March 22 judgement on Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui's dismissal case.

In the letter, the top judges sought guidance from the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) with regard to the duty of a "judge to report and respond to actions on part of members of the executive, including operatives of intelligence agencies, that seek to interfere with discharge of his/her official functions and qualify as intimidation".

The IHC judges, in their letter, noted that the code of conduct for judges prescribed by SJC provides no guidance on how they "must react to and report incidents that are tantamount to intimidation and interfere with judicial independence".

The judges said that they "believe it is imperative to inquire into and determine whether there exists a continuing policy on the part of the executive branch of the state" to meddle in judicial affairs. INP

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