



Emphasized the need for self-monitoring of drainage works in low-laying areas after torrential rains hit Islamabad

Interior Minister
Mohsin Naqvi

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China to support Pakistan securing approval from IMF Board



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb Sunday said that the Chinese Government has commended Pakistan's negotiation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and assured to play its role in securing approval from the Fund's board.

Addressing a press conference, the minister said that he along with the Minister for Energy Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari had visited China and held constructive meetings with the Chinese authorities including the Finance Minister of China and the President Bank of China.

Muhammad Aurangzeb further informed that he also visited China along with the energy minister at the start of last month (June) and held discussions on different aspects of bilateral trade and economic cooperation including local energy requirements and launching of Panda bonds in the Chinese markets.

During the recent visit to China re-profiling of energy sector loans was also discussed, he said adding that the conversion of energy plants into coal and other aspects for affordable energy generation were also discussed during different high-level meetings.

The finance minister said that the Chinese authorities acknowledged and ensured that our issues are registered with the right forum adding that the process has to be followed to take them forward. He said they also wanted to help the country in terms of re-profiling. He added that this would be done through the context of a memorandum of understandings or various working groups which would be formed to take the matters forward during the days to come.

Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb said that China is ranked among the world's biggest capital markets and Pakistan plans to issue these bonds to diversify its funding sources and strengthen its foreign exchange reserves by attracting Chinese investors.

He said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif had also discussed the local energy requirements with the Chinese top leadership urging them to evolve a mechanism for extending their support to overcome power supply needs for the socio-economic development of the country. INP

Royal Court announce death of Prince Abdullah bin Khalid

ISLAMABAD: The Royal Court said in a statement on Sunday that Prince Abdullah bin Khalid bin Turki bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Saud had passed away.

According to Saudi Press Agency (SPA) the funeral prayer will be performed today, Sunday, 28/07/2024, after the Isha prayer at the Grand Mosque in Makkah. APP



File Photo

PM for united efforts to ensure a hepatitis-free future; announces nationwide campaign

New visa policy to boost tourism, trade activities: PM Shehbaz

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: As the international community observed World Hepatitis Day on Sunday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called for united efforts to raise awareness and work towards a hepatitis-free future, also announcing a nationwide campaign to eradicate the disease.

"On this World Hepatitis Day, let us stand united in our efforts to raise awareness, support those affected by viral hepatitis, and work towards a future free from the burden of this disease. Together, we can make a difference and build a healthier and more prosperous nation," the prime minister said in his message to the nation on the Day.

He said the Day was dedicated to raising awareness about hepatitis and its impact on individuals and communities worldwide. He said this year's theme "It's time for action" was a reminder for urgent actions to prevent, diagnose, and treat hepatitis and emphasised necessary actions to help eliminate the disease and ensure a healthier future for all.

The prime minister said that hepatitis was a silent epidemic that affected millions of people around the world, causing liver inflammation and potentially leading to severe complications if left untreated.

"Pakistan has a very high burden of Hepatitis C infection, having 10 million infected cases, out of 60 million hepatitis C cases globally. Our country is facing an epidemic of Hepatitis C and it is feared that we may also see an epidemic of liver cancer if necessary actions to

prevent and eliminate Viral Hepatitis is not taken," he warned.

He highlighted that the country had made significant progress in combating viral hepatitis through awareness campaigns, vaccination programs, and improved access to testing and treatment. However, there is still much work to be done. We must continue to prioritize hepatitis prevention, ensure early diagnosis, and provide affordable and accessible treatment options for all, he added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the government stood firm in its dedication to overcome the challenges posed by hepatitis.

"I am pleased to announce a nationwide campaign aimed at eradicating Hepatitis C. As a part of this noble endeavor, our focus will be on decentralizing testing and treatment centers, ensuring that the services provided are tailored to the needs of our citizens, in alignment with the global strategy," he said. The prime minister reassured that every citizen would have free access to screening and treatment facilities for Hepatitis C.

He recalled that during his tenure as Punjab Chief Minister, the Pakistan Kidney & Liver Transplant Institute project, a milestone in the provision of state-of-the-art medical facilities to kidney and liver patients was established along with modern Hepatitis Filter Clinics that were set up in all the 36 districts of Punjab.

"We have done it before and we will do it again. The core objective remains to uplift the health and well-being of those afflicted with HCV, while simultaneously reducing the detrimental impact it has on work productivity, preventing

liver cancer, and averting premature death," he added.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said the government had introduced significant visa reforms to facilitate foreign investors, business community and tourists.

He said the step would help promoting tourism, boost foreign investment and increase trade activities in the country.

In a statement, the prime minister, terming the initiative a highly positive development, said the government had approved visa-free entry for businessmen from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which will increase investment and business opportunities from these countries.

The businessmen, investors and tourists of 126 countries will be issued visas within 24 hours through an online system, he said.

Additionally, he said the traders and tourists from these countries will be exempted from visa fees. The visa policy reforms will make Pakistan an attractive destination for foreign individuals in terms of business and tourism.

The prime minister highlighted that special arrangements had also been made for Sikh pilgrims having passports of a third country to obtain visas on arrival.

Electronic gates will be installed at Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad airports to facilitate travelers, he said and added that a dashboard would be established at the Ministry of Interior to monitor the implementation of the new visa regime, including visa-free entry, business visa list and tourist visa on arrival.

'Fake news'

FO denies report of Germany handing over suspects involved in consulate attack

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office (FO) on Sunday denied authenticity in the report circulating on social media about Germany handing over of those involved in the attack on Pakistani consulate in Frankfurt.

When asked whether the suspects involved in the vandalism were handed over to Pakistan, as being claimed in a report on social media, FO Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch termed the report "fake news". Dozens of miscreants had attacked the Pakistani consulate during a protest in Frankfurt on July 20. Following which, the German police had arrested two suspects. Reports indicated that German authorities had allowed Afghan nationals to hold a peaceful protest. However, the demonstration's participants turned violent, lobbed stones at the consulate building, and removed the country's flag, leading to heightened tensions.

After arresting two Afghan nationals, German police had anticipated more arrests as they continued to identify additional protesters with the help of video footage. A day after the incident, Pakistan condemned the attack by the gang of extremists on its consulate as well as the failure of the German authorities to protect the sanctity and security of the premises of its consular mission.

Meanwhile, Pakistan had summoned Germany's senior diplomat to register a strong protest over the incident. The FO statement had said that the responsibility to protect the premises and ensure the security of diplomats falls under the host government under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, 1963.

"We are conveying our strong protest to the German government and urge to take immediate measures to fulfill its responsibilities under the Vienna Conventions," the Foreign Office had said.

Pakistan had also sought the German authorities to take immediate measures to arrest and prosecute those involved in the instance and hold to account those responsible for the lapses in security.

According to media reports, the situation had drawn significant attention among the international communities, raising concerns about the diplomatic security of the installations. However, the German authorities had assured the officials of a thorough investigation. They have also detained and quizzed several people after the video went viral. Defense Minister Khawaja Asif had asked whether Afghans should be hosted after the incident in Germany.

In a conversation with a private TV channel, Asif had termed the Afghans thankless and said that Pakistan was still hosting four million Afghans.

He had said that Pakistan fought a war with Russia for Afghans and was now fighting against terrorism.

Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, while addressing a press conference about the attack on the Pakistani consulate, had said that the National Database and Registration Authority's chairman had been tasked to review the attack's footage and check whether any Pakistani citizen was involved or was just one nation's people who attacked. INP

Debt Reprofile and local coal conversion, Minister Outlines energy reforms

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division), Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, on Sunday said that the government has proposed its reform plans and energy vision to the National Energy Administration of China. In an interview with a private news channel, the Minister mentioned discussions on the possibility of long-term cooperation among all stakeholders. Minister highlighted that one important aspect of these talks involved the re-profiling of debt amounting to \$8.5 to \$9 billion, which is expected to reduce electricity prices and increase demand for electricity.

He further stated that the finance minister and other officials have engaged with Chinese bankers for potential investments in Pakistan's power sector.

Another key component of these reforms, he said, involves converting electricity generation plants from imported coal to local coal, which

could significantly lower the cost per unit of electricity.

He noted that four coal plants, including the government-owned Jamshoro plant, were being considered for conversion to local coal, aiming to reduce electricity costs from approximately 24 rupees per unit to around 8 rupees per unit. The Minister also mentioned ongoing efforts to phase out older furnace oil plants, under policies from 1994 and 2002, which could have an annual financial impact of around 80 billion rupees. He acknowledged the challenges posed by the devaluation of the rupee and high-interest rates, particularly concerning capacity charges in the power sector.

Minister emphasized the government's commitment to power sector reforms and expressed confidence that these measures would address ongoing challenges and stabilize the financial structure of the sector. APP

Minister for swift drainage of rainwater in low-laying areas

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi emphasized the need for self-monitoring of drainage works in low-laying areas after torrential rains hit Islamabad on Sunday morning.

The minister has stressed that these works should be completed as soon as possible to prevent water accumulation. Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) teams are working around the clock to ensure swift drainage and mitigate potential flooding, said a news release.

To ensure smooth water flow, teams were instructed to monitor drains and waterways 24/7. Additional staff and machinery were deployed as needed to facilitate the process.

A comprehensive response was mobilized, with Assistant Commissioners, Capital Development Authority (CDA) officers, MCI teams, and emergency responders from 1122 working together to address the situation. DNA

PTI have to show seriousness for dialogue: Musadik Malik



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik on Sunday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) must demonstrate a genuine willingness to engage seriously before the government considers further talks. Speaking to a private news channel, he stressed that PTI needs to adopt democratic norms if they are serious about political dialogue.

He noted that while the government has extended numerous invitations for dialogue, the responsibility now lies with PTI to show a real commitment to the process.

Malik highlighted that the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) had initiated dialogues and consultations with the opposition multiple times, but these efforts were repeatedly rejected by PTI. Shahbaz Sharif, the then opposition

leader, reiterated the need for a Charter of Economy to stabilize Pakistan's economy.

When asked about the Jamaat-e-Islami sit-in, he said that the government was trying to engage with them as their protest was conducted within the democratic framework.

In contrast, PTI, under Inran Khan's leadership, consistently avoided dialogue, undermining the parliament and democracy by opting for a path of chaos. Minister said that the government was committed to serve the people alongside its allies and will complete the constitutional term. Regarding the potential ban on PTI, he noted that the constitution provides clear guidelines on issues such as embezzlement, treason, and foreign funding, and the law will take its course if charges were proven.

Addressing the recent electricity crisis and rising bills, he mentioned that the Prime Minister had already allocated 50 billion rupees to protect 86 percent of households, ensuring relief amidst the crisis. APP

Tarar says technical committee to discuss JI's demands

RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture, Attaullah Tarar has said that the technical committee will discuss the demands put forth by the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). Speaking to media persons on Sunday after interacting with delegation of Jamaat-e-Islami delegation at Commissioner Office, he said that the government was making all-out efforts to provide relief to the people and in this regard, it was making earnest efforts to attract foreign investment which would help generate employment.

Attaullah Tarar said that the government attempting to convince the foreign investors that cost of production is very low in Pakistan, so factories should be established here which would help end unemployment. "Fluctuations in exchange rates were controlled and stabilized. We succeeded in bringing the country out of economic default situation," he said adding that the government's solid steps would help enhance exports and control the inflation. He said the government was focusing on improving the investment climate and added, if



petroleum prices remain stable in international market then we would be able to provide relief to the people in the rates of petroleum products.

In his remarks regarding the sit-in by Jamaat e-Islami in Rawalpindi, he said the location of Liaquat Bagh was fixed, adding that the people were facing difficulties due to road closure. The minister informed that a technical committee comprising Minister of Power, Secretary Power, FBR and Finance Ministry representatives, had been formed which would hold next round of

talks with the representatives of Jamaat-e-Islami. "We will make efforts to resolve the issue amicably tomorrow," he informed.

Attaullah Tarar while providing details of steps being taken by the government regarding solarization said that the Prime Minister had already launched the Solar Tube Wells project under which 38,000 solar tube wells were being installed in Balochistan. Steps are being taken to shift the tube wells on solar energy through bank financing mechanism in collaboration with the govern-

ments of Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he added. The information minister said that the government was taking all possible measures to reduce the electricity tariff by generating economic and quality electricity. He said that Rs. 50 billion subsidy was already given to electricity consumers using up to 200 units. "The government is also starting various solar projects replacing fuel powered plants" he said and added that installation of solar tube wells would reduce electricity consumption.

Tarar said that no change had been made in the government's negotiation team. He informed that the Minister for Power, Awais Leghari was in China. The government's team will sit and hold talks with the leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami which had some issues particularly related to electricity. "We talked to the delegation of Jamaat-e-Islami in a pleasant atmosphere, we all want that the inflation could be controlled so that the issue of unemployment can be addressed, electricity can be provided at a cheaper rates," he said and informed that the technical committee would dis-

cuss the issues with the Jamaat-e-Islami and try to address them.

"We are moving towards green renewable energy," he said. The minister highlighted that people had been given relief in electricity bills by cutting the development budget.

Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Engineer Amir Maqam who was accompanying the information minister during talks with Jamaat-e-Islami said, "We want to reduce the price of electricity to give relief to the people. We respect Jamaat-e-Islami's desire to provide relief to the people".

PML-N leader Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on the occasion, said that PM's personal and heartfelt desire was to provide relief to the people. Murree Road is the main artery of Rawalpindi and Islamabad which have a population of more than 10 million. The citizens are facing difficulties due to the road closure, Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said and expressed the hope that things would improve in the next round of negotiations with Jamaat-e-Islami. INP

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

Thank heavens for the Olympics

HAZI SALAHUDDIN

It was well past midnight on Friday, and I sat glued to the live coverage of the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics. And I was truly overwhelmed by this spectacle. In a world of so much stress and hate and conflict and violence, here was a manifestation of hope and joy. It was, by all means, an extraordinary event. It is beyond me to express in words the emotions that this ceremony has evoked. I say this not just because of the glory and the pomp of the ceremony. Opening ceremonies of some previous Games have also been spectacular and unique artistic achievements. Yes, this was Paris, the city of love, and the show was staged not in a stadium but on the River Seine and around the great landmarks of the city. France showcased its cultural and artistic creativity. Incidentally, when it rained the enthusiasm seemed to rise. Let me make a confession. I almost had tears in my eyes when the John Lennon song 'Imagine' was sung. It was a very thoughtful and imaginative presentation. It concluded with the message: "We stand and call for peace". I need not retell the lyrics of the song and wonder if the message can be faithfully grasped by the educated youth of Pakistan. Just a bit of it: "Imagine all the people / Livin' life in peace". Actually, my emotional response to this exhilarating experience is dictated by the contrast that it portrays with the real world. This world was thrown into the background, momentarily, by a grand display of universal brotherhood. Here, 200 countries can come together to compete in an arena of peace. As for the real world that I alluded to at the outset, it is too ugly and fearsome to even look at. Speaking as a Pakistani, I am utterly shaken by what is happening on many different levels of national existence. Why can't we be more rational, more humane, more civilized? For that matter, why is there so much pain and suffering and injustice in so many parts of the world? Where does the spirit of the Olympics belong in this scenario? Obviously, it is my defence against mental distress that I want to be distracted by this opening ceremony of the Olympic Summer Games. We may remain engaged with the Games until August 11 – the closing ceremony. Frankly, I am not a sports person, though I am often diverted by live coverage of a match or sporting contest. It is true that I know more about cricket than any other game. But I am writing this column on the Olympics to highlight the values and the spirit that the Games embody. Here is something for the world to think about. It may be worth recalling that the modern Olympic Movement was founded by Pierre de Coubertin, a Frenchman. He presented the concept of Olympism more than 120 years ago. He was passionate about making the world a better place through sport. He believed that sport could help bring communities together, stop war and promote healthy competition free from cheating and discrimination. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create "a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical values". There, naturally, is a history of the Olympic Games and I was reminded of it by the documentary that was shown as a build-up to the opening ceremony. The idea of building a Village to house the athletes was born in Paris with the 1924 Olympics. A general sense of participation is generated with the relay of the Olympic torch that is finally used to light the Olympic Flame at the venue of the Games. I was touched by the clip of Muhammad Ali, not really in good health, lighting the flame with the torch during the opening ceremony of the Games in Atlanta in 1996. It is one of the most inspirational memories in Olympic history. Now, I am hesitating to talk about our participation in the Games. It is a sad story that we may ignore on this occasion. As many as 10,500 athletes are participating in the Paris Olympics. We have sent seven, with 11 officials. Our only hope for a gold medal is Arshad Nadeem, in the category of men's javelin throw. If we are lucky, it will be one of 329 gold medals to be won. The last time we won an Olympic gold was in 1984. Don't ask what happened to the hockey giant that Pakistan once was. Finally, I want to tell you a happy recollection of Pakistan's association with the Olympic Games, though it does not relate to the domain of sport or contest for winning a medal. It is to be noted that art has always been a cornerstone of the modern Olympic Games. Just look at how France has used its cultural treasures in the opening ceremony. In the early 20th century, the founder spoke about the importance of combining "muscle and mind". Anyhow, the Seoul Olympics were held in 1988 and they had invited international and local sculptors and artists to contribute to a special exhibition for the Olympic Park and this exhibition was made permanent. It so happened that I visited Seoul in 1991 and was taken to see the Olympic Park and its sculpture garden. Imagine my surprise and sense of pride when I noticed something I had been very familiar with. It was a wood sculpture by Shahid Sajjad. A piece I had seen in his house because Shahid was a dear friend. When I returned to Karachi and told Shahid about my 'find', he recalled how he had been invited to participate in that exhibition and it was a big honour for him. But he forgot to tell us about it. This memory was revived when I was watching the great show enacted in Paris.

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



By Ambassador Jemal Beker Abdula

Exploring Pakistan-Ethiopia Cooperative Ties

The cooperative ties between Islamabad and Addis Ababa have been refreshed by the Ethiopian government's decision to open the embassy in Islamabad on May 11, 2023, to strengthen the economic cooperation between the two states formally. The Ethiopian government is highly ambitious to join Pakistan's efforts to explore the untapped potential of African nations in the contemporary international system parallel to singing various bilateral cooperative agreements with different African nations. During the inaugural ceremony of the embassy, the two-sided formal state authorities showed their commitment to working together in various areas of common interests, such as climate change, immigration, security and terrorism. While appreciating the Addis Ababa's choice of formalizing the ambassadorial relations with Pakistan, and the government of Pakistan accepted the need for boosting multidimensional cooperative ties between Pakistan and African nations. The Islamabad-based decision-makers also acknowledge that the Ethiopian and Pakistani governments have common economic and development problems in the contemporary global order. In the welcoming remarks, Pakistan's state representatives dubbed the opening of the embassy in Islamabad as a new beginning in the bilateral cooperative interactions between the two states, and it has facilitated the two-sided leaderships in expanding the conventional patterns of their bilateral interactions in the diplomatic, political, economic, and social dimensions. On a reciprocal basis, the representatives of Ethiopia showed a keen interest in their government in deepening bilateral cooperation with Islamabad, which would enable the

leaders of both sides to diversify their formal ties. In this way, the decision to open an embassy in Pakistan has marked a significant development in the bilateral ties, and it exhibits the increasing values of diplomatic, trading, and cultural relations between the two nations. In cultural terms, the common ideological foundations provide solid grounds for the growth of cultural ties, and the prominent role of Ethiopians in Islamic history creates solid connections between Islamabad and Addis Ababa. The recent development of opening an embassy in Islamabad cannot be divorced from a comprehensive account of Pakistan-Ethiopia relations, which started in the 1950s when the leaders of both nations realized their shared values of mutual respect and bilateral cooperation in diverse directions. The major turn in the bilateral ties occurred in 1973 with the formal opening of the Pakistan's Embassy in Addis Ababa under Islamabad's broader framework of Engage Africa Policy. The Engage Africa approach focused on various African states and preferred Ethiopia as one of the prominent nations appropriate for establishing collaborative connections with Islamabad in the areas of agriculture, education, and healthcare. In this way, the governments of both nations witnessed a brief era of strong political coordination, diplomatic support, and economic cooperation throughout history. However, Addis Ababa's launching of formal ambassadorial services in Islamabad started facilitating the two-sided governments in exploring new platforms for trading collaborations. The signing of the Bilateral Trade Agreement in May 2023 is important in this regard because it led the two-sided business communities to establish their partnerships. The trading connections have already been established between both nations, and these relations made Pakistan a recipient of Ethiopian red kidney beans, chickpeas, pulses, hides and skins, tea, and coffee, whereas the Ethiopian government receives Pakistani healthcare products, chemicals, machinery, sugar, rice, and textiles. In this way, a smooth trading connection based on a commendable volume of import-export enabled the Pakistani and Ethiopian governments to recognize their potential for working together for mutual trade benefits. It has widened the scope of trade and investment opportunities between their respective business communities while encouraging their mainstream leaders to consider each other as reliable business partners in the contemporary international system. The quest to augment the existing level of people-to-people contact between the two nations has led Ethiopian and Pakistani formal state authorities to take several practical measures to deepen the two-sided societal acquaintances. To overcome the challenge of certain social disconnects, direct flights between Karachi and Addis Ababa have started recently, and it enabled Pakistan to receive four direct Ethiopian flights. The launching of direct flights plays a credible role in promoting the mutual interests of two states to foster economic growth with the promotion of bilateral cultural ties. This step started leaving positive impacts on the shared interests of trade, tourism, and pleasant societal contacts between Islamabad and Ethiopia. Direct flights create easy chances for business professionals and potential investors to travel between both states while availing the benefits of reduced travel time and reasonable costs. In this way, the Ethiopian government has proved that its wealth of precious natural resources needs appropriate welcoming destinations around the world, where Pakistan has become an exception due to the non-existence of major disagreements between Addis Ababa and Islamabad. The absence of any political difference between two-sided governments provides additional support to the ongoing mutually collaborative patterns of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Ethiopia. Through developing special formats of regular interactions between Islamabad-based diplomatically community and leading circles of Pakistan's business communities, the government of Ethiopia has conveyed an explicit message for fostering commercial ties between Pakistan and Ethiopia with the support of regular cultural and social contact. Therefore, the ongoing designs of political communication, diplomatic support, economic cooperation, and social interaction validate the determination of Addis Ababa to work with Islamabad in various unexplored dimensions of their bilateral cooperation. This pattern of multidimensional cooperative bilateralism contains substantial potential for convincing two-sided leadership to work on certain strategic extents. The strategic communication between both states has already witnessed teamwork in the training and capacity-building programs of United Nations international peace-keeping operations. Addis Ababa and Islamabad have established a comprehensive framework to enhance their bilateral partnerships in various areas. The leadership of both nations is strongly committed to expanding their collaborative potential. Over the past two years, since the opening of ambassadorial services in Islamabad, significant progress has been made, indicating that the two nations could work towards a more stable and cooperative future. This cooperation aligns with their shared goals of social prosperity and economic development.

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

History of Pakistan

Today in History



Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), established in 1954, is the national carrier; until the mid-1990s it was the sole domestic carrier, but since then a number of small regional airlines and charter services have been established. (PIA also runs international flights to Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and East Asia, as well as to neighbouring Afghanistan.) The principal airports are located at Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Quetta, and Peshawar. Karachi, Port Qasim, and Gwadar are the principal port cities. Since 2012 management and modernization of Gwadar's port have been handled by a Chinese state-owned firm. A number of small harbours along the Makran Coast handle the small boats that ply between

Pakistan and the Persian Gulf states. In the early 1990s the limitations of the transportation system emerged as a major constraint on the modernization of the economy, prompting the government to undertake large-scale investments in the highway sector. Private entrepreneurs were invited to participate on the basis of a "build-operate-transfer" (BOT)

approach, which subsequently became popular in other developing countries. (In the BOT system, private entrepreneurs build and operate infrastructure facilities such as ports, highways, and power plants and then recover their costs by charging tariffs from the users.

To be continued....

Showbiz

Robert Downey Jr. returns to Avengers for 2 new films—But not as Iron Man

Robert Downey Jr. to star as Doctor Doom in Avengers directed by Russo Brothers

Robert Downey Jr. is set to make a return to the Avengers universe in two upcoming films, though he will not be reprising his iconic role as Iron Man. Marvel Studios President Kevin Feige confirmed Downey Jr.'s return during Marvel's panel at San Diego Comic-Con on Saturday. The actor will take on the role of supervillain Victor von Doom, also known as Doctor Doom, in the fifth and sixth Avengers films, titled Avengers: Doomsday and Avengers: Secret Wars. Downey Jr. made a dramatic entrance at the convention, appearing in a full Doctor Doom costume and flanked by replica Doombots.



He then removed his silver mask to reveal his face, eliciting a standing ovation from the surprised audience. In a clip shared by Variety, he addressed the crowd, stating, "New mask, same task. What can I tell you, I like playing complicated characters." Directed by Anthony and Joe Russo, who previously helmed Avengers: Endgame in 2019. The films are titled Avengers: Doomsday, set to premiere in May 2026, and Avengers: Secret Wars, expected to be released in 2027. Marvel Studios confirmed the news during their panel at San Diego Comic-Con, with the announcement also shared on Twitter.

Tech

Russia, China to collaborate on joint scientific station on Moon

Russia and China aim to build a joint Moon station in three stages, and work on five missions to Earth's satellite has already begun, according to an official agreement published on the Russian governmental portal on Thursday. The Russian-Chinese International Scientific Lunar Station (ISLS) will be built in three stages, including research, creation, and operations, the agreement read. The second stage will include the establishment of a control center, bulk cargo delivery, and a safe high-precision soft landing on the Moon's surface, as well as the beginning of joint operations, the statement said. The document also says the purpose of the third phase, operation, is "the study and exploration of the Moon, verification of technologies, assistance to international partners in landing a man on the Moon with the help of a completed ISLS," and it also suggests landing a man on the Moon. Russia and China have planned to launch five joint missions to place modules in orbit and

Russia and China have planned to launch five joint missions to place modules in orbit and on the surface of the Moon

on the surface of the Moon, it noted. Moscow and Beijing invite international partners to participate in the construction of the lunar station – the Russian Roscosmos State Corporation and the Chinese National Space Administration will sign separate bilateral agreements for this purpose. "This agreement is valid for 20 years. Its validity is automatically extended for subsequent 5-year periods, unless either party notifies the other party in writing through diplomatic channels of its intention to terminate this agreement at least one year before the expiration of the initial validity period or the expiration of any subsequent validity period."

Urgent warning over side effects of pills that half are unaware of

Health experts have issued a warning to Brits who take multiple medications following findings that half are unaware of the potentially harmful side effects. Data from TakingCare reveals that half of Brits are unaware of the side effects of the medicine combinations they take, with common medications for conditions such as high blood pressure, heart problems and blood sugar control all being identified as having potentially life-threatening side effects. With the average 70-year-old in the UK taking around eight medications a day, elderly people are at increased risk of facing severe side effects. Lauren Frake, Elderly Care Expert at TakingCare has teamed up with Peter Thnoia, Prescribing Pharmacist and the Chief Product and Innovation Officer at PillTime, to issue guidance on the common medicine combina-

tions that could have deadly side effects for the elderly population. "Medication used for heart conditions such as heart failure or high blood pressure, for example furosemide or indapamide, can cause rapid drops in blood pressure and require the patient to maintain a steady water intake," Peter explains. "For example, if an elderly person taking one of these medications finds themselves sweating more than normal, they may quickly reach a state where their blood pressure is very low and which will drastically increase their chance of a fall. These types of tablets are taken by around 30% of our patients at PillTime." Lauren said: "More than 40% of elderly falls recorded by TakingCare are from people who take medication for a heart condition, likely

linked to the potential side effects of some of their medication, which can involve an increased risk of falling." This, combined with the fact that a person's risk of having a fall drastically increases once they enter the 70+ age bracket, creates the perfect storm for older people who take multiple heart condition medications, as they are more likely to get dehydrated, dizzy and consequently have an accident. Our research shows that a person's health can severely deteriorate after they've had a fall, so accident prevention is key here." "Type 2 Diabetes medication metformin can also cause a condition called Lactic acidosis in cases where a patient becomes dehydrated. This can lead to them feeling exhausted, weak, experiencing a burning feeling in their muscles, as well as nausea, and cramps."



Health

President emphasises mass awareness a hepatitis-free Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Sunday called for carrying out awareness and large-scale screening for timely diagnosis of hepatitis to reduce the burden on the healthcare system and rid the country of the disease.

The president, in a message to the nation on World Hepatitis Day, annually observed on July 28, said hepatitis, being a silent killer, was a great challenge for the world because the lack of symptoms increased the risk of its spread, thus leading to a huge number of deaths globally. He noted that Pakistan's public health sector faced serious threats from the disease as a huge number of patients put a serious burden on the healthcare system. President Zardari warned that any failure to take timely steps could multiply the hepatitis cases in the country, therefore decisive measures to protect the citizens' health were inevitable. He called for public awareness on promoting precautionary measures to ensure prevention, large-scale screening and testing, besides highlighting the significance of treatment and increasing the number of facilities. DNA

Commonwealth secretary general in Islamabad on a maiden five-day visit



ISLAMABAD: Secretary-General of Commonwealth Patricia Scotland KC arrived here in the early hours of Sunday on her first official visit to Pakistan, at the invitation of the Government of Pakistan.

On her arrival at Islamabad Airport, she was received by Additional Foreign Secretary (Europe) Ambassador Shafiqat Ali Khan.

During her five-day visit from July 28 to August 2, 2024, Secretary-General Scotland will meet with Pakistan's leadership, members of the cabinet, youth leaders, civil society representatives and other stakeholders. The Commonwealth secretary-general will reaffirm her solidarity with Pakistan on the second anniversary of the catastrophic 2022 floods that submerged a third of the country and caused more than \$30 billion in damage. She is also likely to tour some of the areas that were affected by the floods.

During the Secretary-General's visit, the two sides would also discuss avenues to enhance cooperation between Pakistan and the Commonwealth in other areas of shared interest, including supporting Pakistan's national development plan, empowering youth, and boosting trade and investment.

As one of the organisation's founding members, Pakistan values the Commonwealth as an important forum for forging consensus on global issues and challenges. APP



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people visiting famous Faisal Masjid to spend their holiday during cloudy weather in Federal Capital. APP

At least 30 dead, over 100 injured in Gaza school airstrike, Israel says targeted militants

CAIRO: At least 30 Palestinians were killed in an Israeli airstrike on a school housing displaced people in Gaza, Palestinian health officials said, an attack that Israel said targeted militants who were using the compound.

The Hamas-run government media office said 15 children and eight women were among those killed in the strike in the central town of Deir Al-Balah. More than 100 people were wounded, the media office and the Gaza health ministry said. Israel's military said it had targeted militants operating there and that it had taken steps to reduce the risk to civilians.

At Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah, ambulances rushed the wounded in for treatment. Some people arrived on foot, their clothes stained with blood.

Footage showed people returning to the site of the bombing to check on their belongings, and fires burning in the area. Walls were blasted and debris scattered in the schoolyard, where some cars were damaged.

Um Hasan Ali, a displaced woman living at the school, said it had only been a couple of months since she returned to Gaza from Egypt with her daughter who had been taken there for medical treatment. Now her daughter had been wounded in the strike and taken to hospital, she said. Another woman, Ibtihal Ahmed, told Reuters she was sitting in a neighbour's tent when she heard heavy bombing. "I started running, my daughter was one place and I was at another, I saw people run-

ning towards the place that was struck. The people sheltering in Khadija school are all wounded people, they are innocent and this should not happen to them," she said.

Israel says Hamas uses Gaza's civilians as human shields by operating within densely populated areas, humanitarian zones, schools and hospitals, which Hamas denies.

"Hamas terrorists used the (school) compound as a hiding place to direct and plan numerous attacks against IDF troops and the State of Israel. In parallel, the terrorists developed and stored large quantities of weapons inside the compound," the military said in a statement.

CIA Director William Burns was expected to meet this weekend in Rome with his Israeli and Egyptian counterparts and Qatar's prime minister for talks on a Gaza ceasefire and the release of hostages by Hamas.

Israeli public broadcaster Kan said Israel's response to the latest proposal was handed to Washington on Saturday ahead of the expected meeting - the latest effort to reach agreement after months in which Israel and Hamas have blamed each other for the stalemate. More than 39,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli offensive in Gaza, according to the local health authorities, who do not distinguish between fighters and non-combatants. Israel, which has lost 328 soldiers in Gaza combat, estimates that fighters account for about a third of the Palestinians

killed since it launched its military offensive in response to a Hamas-led attack in southern Israel in October.

About 1,200 people were killed and 250 were taken hostage in the Oct. 7 attack, according to Israeli tallies.

On Saturday, the military said it had instructed Palestinians to evacuate the southern neighborhoods of Khan Younis, where it was going to "forcefully operate" against the groups, and move to the Al-Mawasi humanitarian zone.

Israeli attacks in Khan Younis on Saturday killed 14 people, health officials said. The military said it had killed fighters in the area and seized many weapons.

Earlier, five Palestinians were killed in an Israeli airstrike on a house in al-Bureij, in central Gaza, and four others were killed in a strike on a house in Rafah, near the border with Egypt, medics said.

UN and humanitarian officials accuse Israel of using disproportionate force in the war and of failing to ensure civilians have safe places to go, which it denies.

In the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesperson for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, blamed the Israeli attacks on the support of the United States.

Violence in the West Bank had been increasing before the Gaza war began and it has escalated since then, with frequent Israeli raids and Palestinian street attacks. INP

CDA Chairman leads tree plantation drive at Trail 5



VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa on Sunday visited Trail 5 at Margalla Hills with a group of children to promote a tree plantation drive.

The initiative aims to raise awareness about the importance of planting trees and encourage children to take an active role in environmental conservation. During the visit, Chairman Randhawa planted trees alongside the children and took a selfie with them to promote the campaign. He emphasized the significance of children planting trees for themselves, their families, and future generations. To encourage public participation, the CDA is providing free plants and seedballs to visitors of the Margalla Trails, inviting them to upload a selfie on their social media handles after planting trees with hashtag #selfiewithtree.

Chairman Randhawa appealed to all visitors to join the campaign and track the progress of their planted trees. The CDA Chairman stressed the need for collective efforts to make the campaign successful, urging the corporate sector, civil society, and individuals to play their part in promoting environmental sustainability. The event was attended by staff from the Environment, Forestry, and CDA departments, who expressed their commitment to making the tree plantation drive a success. This initiative is part of the CDA's efforts to promote a green and sustainable environment in the capital city. By engaging children in tree planting activities, the authority aims to instill a sense of responsibility and ownership among the younger generation to protect the environment.

No one can become revolutionary leaders with judiciary help: Azma Bokhari

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Information and Culture Punjab Azma Bokhari said on Sunday that no one could become revolutionary leaders like Che Guevara and Nelson Mandela by using the judicial shoulders. In a statement issued here, she said the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government's letter to the Peshawar High Court to form a judicial commission on May-9 incidents was a failed attempt to hide under the judicial hammer. She said judicial commissions were always formed on hidden and unexplained matters. INP

Punjab Govt launches prosperity survey to collect data of deserving families



LAHORE: In continuation of socio-economic registry project, Punjab government has launched prosperity survey "Ab Ho Ga Sub Ka Shumar" in the province.

Chairing a meeting in this regard in Lahore today, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz emphasized authentic data so that the funds are allocated for deserving individuals.

www.pser.punjab.gov.pk or by the helpline at 0800-02345.

Registered citizens will be eligible to apply for various programs, including the e-bike scheme, Roshan Gharana Solar Program, Himat Card, Kisan Card, health card, livestock card, and scholarship programs.

She said five thousand registration centers have been established across the province to provide ease of access for the public.

She said people can register via online portal at

Pakistan highlights Kashmir and Gaza at ASEAN regional forum

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi represented Pakistan at the 31st ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Ministerial meeting, held in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

During the meeting, Qazi emphasized Pakistan's dedication to regional peace, security, and cooperation, and highlighted its strong ties with ASEAN and its member states. Qazi appreciated ASEAN's role in fostering regional integration and prosperity. He shared Pakistan's stance on various regional conflicts, advocating for dialogue and inclusiveness over bloc politics. He particularly stressed the plight of people in Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, calling for the resolution of the dispute in line with United Nations Security Council resolutions and the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

Additionally, he presented Pakistan's views on other regional issues, including the situations in Gaza and Afghanistan.

On the sidelines of the ARF Ministerial meeting, Qazi held discussions with Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dato' Astaah Abdul Aziz; Vice Foreign Minister of China, Sun Weidong; and Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, Dato' Sri Amran Mohamed Zin. INP

Talks between govt team, JI begin in Rawalpindi



RAWALPINDI: Negotiations between the government and Jamaat-e-Islami teams over electricity issues began here on Sunday.

Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar, Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Balochistan Engineer Amir Muqam, senior leader of Muslim League (N) Tariq Fazal Chaudhry and Prime Minister's Media Coordinator Badr Shahbaz comprised the government team.

Earlier, talking to media after arrival at Commissioner Rawalpindi office, Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Her-

itage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said that the government was taking all possible measures to reduce the electricity tariff by generating cheap and quality electricity.

He said that Jamaat-e-Islami leaders would be provided complete information about

power sector issues. He said Rs 50 billion subsidy has already been given to electricity consumers using up to 200 units.

"The government is also starting solar projects and diesel and oil-powered plants will be closed," he said and added, installation of solar tubewells will reduce electricity consumption. Tarar said that no change had been made in the government's negotiation team. He said that Minister for Power Awais Laghari was in China. He said the government's team will sit and hold talks with the leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami which had some issues related to electricity. APP

'PPP to play its role if Imran Khan is ready to talk'

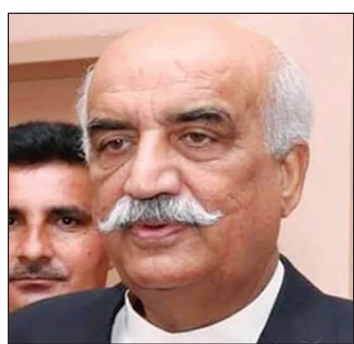
President Asif Ali Zardari has always tried to solve problems through negotiations, says Khurshid Shah

QUETTA: Senior Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Khurshid Shah has said that the Bilawal Bhutto-led party would play its role if Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan is ready to talk.

"It is being said that the PTI founder is ready to talk. If [Imran] Khan is ready to talk then that's a positive thing. President Asif Ali Zardari has always tried to solve the problems through negotiations [and] the PPP would play its role if needed [in this regard]" Shah said while speaking to media in Quetta.

The politico's remarks come as the Khan-founded party has time again taken a hard-line stance against the incumbent Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led government which is supported by the PPP, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) and others.

The Khan-founded party ever since his ouster via a vote of no confidence in 2022 has continued its volley against the PPP-PML-N alliance. The political polarisation was further exacerbated after the February



8 polls which saw the two parties joining hands once again and reaching a power-sharing agreement to form a government in the Centre. Amid calls from various sections of society and political parties for reconciliation amid heightened political instability, the party has previously turned down negotiations with the "Form-47 government" — a reference to alleged manipulation of election results — and instead has expressed its willingness to engage with the military establishment instead.

In April, PTI stalwart Shehryar Afridi, while speaking on the 'TV programme said that the former ruling party would prefer to hold "dialogues with the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and the Director General of the Inter-Services Intelligence (DG ISI) soon" instead of the "rejected rulers".

He also alleged that the incumbent rulers were a bunch of "rejected people" who were being "controlled through remote" and reached parliament via "Form 47".

The following month, the party's Secretary General and National Assembly Opposition Leader Omar Ayub revealed that Khan had in fact assigned "important responsibility" to former president Dr Arif Alvi.

Commenting on Ayub's comments, Alvi said that "those having real powers" should initiate the dialogue process.

However, last month, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar said that the party founder had given his nod for holding talks with the government.

On Saturday, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur called on "state institutions" to become "neutral" to allow the country to move forward.

Gandapur's statement echoed with PTI founder's message, as conveyed by his sister Aleema Khan, who while speaking outside Adiala jail after meeting ex-PM said: "We can only request you that for the country's sake you become neutral. You stay neutral and let the country move forward and make progress on its own."

Meanwhile, the government too has called on the Khan-founded party to come to the table and hold talks.

A day earlier, addressing a press conference in Islamabad, Federal Minister for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik said: "If you want to remove us then do it. You don't want to resolve issues but to further complicate them. You should do talks instead of destroying everything."

Continuing on the prospects of talks, Shah said that it's a good thing if Khan feels and accepts that politicians need to sit together. Web Desk

Supreme Leader officially endorses Pezeshkian as Islamic Republic of Iran's president

TEHRAN: In a ceremony at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Hosseiniyeh on Sunday morning, the Supreme Leader endorsed Pezeshkian as the 9th president of the Islamic Republic, based on Article 110 of the Constitution.

"I endorse Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian as the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran", said a decree by Ayatollah Khamenei, which was read out by the chairman of his office. The Supreme Leader, in his decree, hailed the 14th presidential election as one of the honors of the Islamic Republic, and thanked Iranian people and officials for holding the vote in a calm environment. President Pezeshkian made a speech as well. He thanked the Supreme Leader for his wisdom which opened the way for the nation's effective participation and meaningful competition between different political views.

Pezeshkian also said he has been assigned a heavy responsibility as the Iranian nation has voted for him. He said that adhering to the law is the only means that helps the government resolve problems and fulfill people's expectations.

The president added that interaction between the government and people also helps the country develop, noting that his administration

intends to achieve the goal by remaining committed to general policies announced by the Supreme Leader.

Unity and adhering to religious values are other key factors as well, Pezeshkian said, giving the pledge that his administration will serve the people as much as it can and will "take no path but the path of justice and fairness".

Prior to the endorsement, Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi gave a briefing about the process of the presidential election. He said that the election fulfilled the main principles set by law, as it was held without any irregularities in a safe and secure environment, and with people's participation.

The ceremony was attended by top officials including former acting president Mohammad Mokher, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Judiciary Chief Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i.

Pezeshkian was elected president in the runoff vote held on July 5, winning against Saeed Jalili. The runoff was held a week after the first round of the snap presidential election held to choose a successor to the late president Ebrahim Raisi who lost his life in a helicopter crash in western Iran on May 19. SABAH