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Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives
Ahsan Iqbal

Decision taken in principle to ban PTI, says Attaullah Tarar



ISLAMABAD: Doubling down the stance on banning the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Information Minister Attaullah Tarar has said that the incumbent government has made up its mind to go forward with its "principled" decision which will be carried out after consultations and relevant legal homework.

"[We] have consulted with the Pakistan Peoples Party with regards to the PTI ban and are currently in talks with the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan [...] people are strongly supporting [the idea of banning PTI], Tarar said while speaking to a private TV news channel on Tuesday.

The minister's remarks follow his last week's announcement regarding imposing a ban on Imran Khan-founded party stressing that the "PTI and Pakistan could not co-exist".

The decisions, as per Tarar, were taken in light of the former ruling party's involvement in the May 9 events and the PTI's former or current leaders' attempts to sabotage Pakistan's deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Furthermore, he also said that treason cases would be filed under Article 6 of the Constitution against Khan, then-president Arif Alvi and then National Assembly deputy speaker Qasim Suri.

However, the announcement drew a strong reaction from various political parties who termed the move as "childish" and "unconstitutional".

Multiple senior PPP leaders, which is a key ally of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), also voiced their opposition to the ban move with Farhatullah Babar terming the decision as "absurd".

Various party leaders, including Senator Sherry Rehman and Information Secretary Shazia Atta Marri, also complained about the party not being consulted on the said matter.

Meanwhile, former Senate chairman Raza Rabbani said the talk of banning a political party by the government "is against all the norms of democracy".

However, the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians later distanced itself from the Bilawal Bhutto-led PPP with PPPP Secretary General Nayyar Hussain Bokhari saying that the party leader's remarks did not reflect the party's policy.

Additionally, the prospects of banning the PTI were also criticised by recently launched Awam Pakistan's Shahid Khaqan Abbasi — the former prime minister and senior leader of the PMI-N.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRC) and the US State Department also expressed concerns over PM Shehbaz's government's move to ban the former ruling party as well. INP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the Federal Cabinet.

TTP's Afghan-based terror attacks unacceptable; Pakistan fully prepared to protect citizens: PM

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday denounced the terror attacks in Pakistan involving Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) using Afghan soil saying that was "unacceptable" as Pakistan was fully prepared to protect its citizens but desired to resolve the matter peacefully.

The prime minister, in his remarks at the meeting of the federal cabinet chaired by him, pointed out the surge in terror incidents, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan causing the killing of the personnel of the army, police and civil armed forces.

He called the terrorism wave a machination against Pakistan as it was taking place at a time when the coalition government was making efforts for the country's development as it reached a Staff Level Agreement with IMF despite challenges and announced a three-month relief package for 96% of domestic power consumers.

Highlighting the role of Afghanistan in the surged wave of terrorism, the prime minister said the government was in interaction with them as Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif also visited there.

"But how is it possible that we hosted mil-

lions of their people here without any complaint? We treated them like our brothers and never considered them as a burden. But we were rewarded in the form of TTP attacks on our citizens to mar the country's peace and business. This is not acceptable," he remarked.

He said Pakistan was ready to face any kind of situation as its valiant armed forces had sacrificed their lives to safeguard the country and its people.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also highlighted that the perpetrators of the May 9 riots, who had also attacked parliament, PTV and besieged the PM House in the past, had resorted to new tactics to malign the country and its armed forces as a malicious campaign was run against Army Chief General Asim Munir from the official website of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.

"We will not tolerate any such steps against the country, its innocent people, and armed forces," he said and called for national unity to protect the national interest.

The prime minister apprised the members of a decision to abolish the visa fees for 126 countries as a "quantum jump" to bring ease of doing business and attract businessmen, tourists and travelers to Pakistan. The decision, made after a threadbare discussion, would be tabled before the cabinet for its

consideration, he added. He said the deficiency of the visa fees would be made up by foreign exchange earned through investment and tourism, including religious tourism of which Pakistan has immense potential.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the visitors would get visas within 24 hours through the electronic travel authorization form. Besides, the E-gates would be established at Gwadar Port and nine airports - initially in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi airports.

The prime minister strongly condemned the unprecedented human rights abuses of Israel against Palestinians as around 40,000 Palestinians had been killed including thousands of children and women.

He said despite the resolutions passed by the United Nations Security Council and UN General Assembly and the decision by the International Court of Justice, Israel was unbudged from its oppression which was highly condemnable.

The prime minister drew attention to the attacks on Pakistan's missions in Germany and London. He said the Foreign Office had timely taken up the matter and that the envoys of the countries concerned should be given demarches to seek the protection of Pakistan's missions.

Aleem invites Chinese companies to invest in different sectors of economy

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister of Investment Board, Privatization and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Wednesday said that Pakistan is extending business visa facility to investors from 124 countries including China and invited more Chinese companies to invest in different sector of national economy.

Abdul Aleem Khan along with Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal and Special Assistant to Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi briefed the Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong on the investment opportunities existing in different sector of the economy, said a press release.

In this session, the details of the establishment of industries from China to Pakistan under matchmaking industry were presented. During the briefing, seven major sectors were finalized, which include medical equipment, plastic industry, textile, leather, edible meat, fruit & vegetables and waste.

While giving briefing to Ambassador of China Jiang Zaidong and the Chinese delegation, Abdul Aleem Khan said that there are opportunities in Pakistan to invest in infrastructure, housing and other important sectors. He invited more Chinese companies to come to Pakistan and invest here. He assured that the Chinese brothers are our guests and their fool proof security would be assured at all costs and welcomed the participation of Chinese Ambassador in the briefing session.

Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong assured all possible support for investment in Pakistan and said that business organizations from China will fully participate in the promotion of trade here.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi said that with China Friendship, brotherly relations, investment is always the top priority for Pakistan. Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan said that Pakistan-China investment is a joint responsibility of the Board of Investment and the Ministry of Commerce, which will be fulfilled efficiently.

The Chinese Ambassador was accompanied by Minister of Commerce, Consul, Second Secretary and other Chinese officials. Meanwhile, French Ambassador to Pakistan Nicolas Galey called on Federal Minister for Investment Board, Privatization and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan and discuss bilateral cooperation and trade activities between both the countries.

Abdul Aleem Khan told Nicolas Galey that work is being done on road network from Karachi to Sukkur and China including Central Asian states which will help to promote business volume. He said that European countries are very important in terms of investment and economic activities in Pakistan.

He further said that for the strengthening of the country's economy, the privatization of loss-burdened institutions already in process while all these institutions have the potential to earn profits and work in good manner.



Ahsan Iqbal chairs meeting of provincial planning ministers



ISLAMABAD: In a bid to revitalize the spirit of federalism and promote economic and social development, Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting with provincial planning ministers.

This initiative marks a significant revival of the consultative sessions, started by the previous PMLN government in 2013-2018, aimed at harmonizing provincial economic policies with federal goals, said a press release.

The meeting focused on aligning development projects with the Annual National Development Plan, optimizing utilization of allocated funds for higher education, and strategies for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Ahsan Iqbal emphasized the imperative of fed-

eral-provincial collaboration to address pressing challenges, including rapid population growth, healthcare sector deficiencies, and education sector shortcomings.

He stressed the need for collective efforts to achieve national development goals, particularly in the wake of the seventh census results, which predict a doubling of the population within 24-30 years.

The minister expressed concern over Pakistan's lagging position in healthcare and education, citing issues like diabetes, hepatitis, tuberculosis, malnutrition, stunting, and out-of-school children. He directed the Federal Bureau of Statistics to collect data on out-of-school children and emphasized the need for federal-provincial collaboration in healthcare and education.

Despite fiscal constraints, the minister committed to funding federal universities through the Federal Government and Provincial universities through Provincial Governments. He acknowledged the brain-drain due to lack of incentives for university faculty and called for consultative workshops on the five-year plan, involving provinces, stakeholders, think tanks, and experts. — VOM Report

Pakistan Army commandos rescue foreign climbers from K2



ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Army commandos has successfully rescued foreign climbers from Holland, Singapore, and Ecuador on Wednesday who fell ill due to severe weather conditions while attempting to summit K2. According to a private news channel, the climbers experienced health issues during their expedition, prompting an urgent rescue operation.

The mountaineers expressed deep gratitude to the Pakistan Army for their timely intervention, which provided crucial medical aid and ensured their safe evacuation from the treacherous environment.

The climbers praised the swift response of the Pakistan Army personnel, emphasizing that their lives were saved thanks to the efficient rescue operation.

"We are grateful to the Pakistan Army for rescuing us in such dire circumstances," one of the climbers stated. "The bad weather made it impossible to continue, and we fell ill. The timely action of the Pakistan Army saved our lives." INP

Tanveer stresses to focus skill training in addition with promoting higher education

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Industries, Production, and National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain emphasized the need for focusing on skills education and vocational training, in addition to promoting higher education, to achieve economic development and social prosperity in the country. Addressing a ceremony held to unveil commemorative postage stamps marking the golden jubilee of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU), the minister stated that alongside higher education, skill training would enable graduating students to secure dignified employment upon completion of their education.

Minister Hussain also called for integrating 2.5 million out-of-school children into the educational network to cultivate their productivity as citizens of the country, stressing that education is crucial for economic growth and social prosperity.

He commended AIU's role in advancing the education sector in Pakistan and reiterated the

commitment to providing all necessary resources for promoting quality education.

Speaking at the event, Dr Nasir Mahmood highlighted the university's golden jubilee celebration, emphasizing the significance of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's contribution in establishing AIU as a national asset. Dr. Nasir mentioned the recent declaration of an education emergency by the prime minister and underscored the university's potential role in this national initiative. He outlined a plan involving 200,000 registered teachers with AIU nationwide, each responsible for a group of 30 children, aiming to educate 5 million children over the next five years. During the ceremony, Director General Pakistan Post Samiullah Khan and Additional Director General Rizwan Javed Hashmi noted the fruitful collaboration between AIU and Pakistan Post, sharing a common vision and mission.



Pakistan, Turkmenistan agree to expedite TAPI pipeline project

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Turkmenistan have agreed to expedite the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project, affirming their resolve for continuous engagement.

This agreement was reached during a meeting on Wednesday between Pakistan's Federal Minister for Petroleum, Dr Musadik Malik, and Turkmenistan's Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rashid Meredov, who is on a two-day visit to Pakistan.

The Turkmen delegation accompanying Rashid Meredov included Ata Haljanov, head of the International Economic Cooperation Division at Turkmenistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Eziz Nazarov,



head of the Legal Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Muhammetmyrat Amanov, Chairman of the Board and CEO of TAPI Pipeline Company Ltd; Atadjan Movlamov, Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan; and Eldar Permanov, Third Secretary of the Embassy

of Turkmenistan. Pakistani officials present at the meeting included Additional Secretary Hasan Yousafzai, Joint Secretary Shahbaz Tahir, and MD of Interstate Gas Systems Limited, Nadeem Bajwa. Dr Musadik Malik welcomed the Turkmen delegation and expressed his grati-

tude for the hospitality offered by the Turkmen side during his last visit to Turkmenistan.

He said the visit of the Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan marks a significant milestone in the strengthening of diplomatic and economic ties between the two nations.

TAPI pipeline project, the minister said, will lower energy costs, which can boost industrial growth, create jobs, and foster economic development. Reliable and affordable energy supplies are vital for industrial sectors and overall economic stability, he added.

This project, he said, aimed at fostering economic integration and energy security, has witnessed substantial progress through collaborative efforts and

resolved continuous engagement among both countries.

He further added that Pakistan is fully committed to this project which is significant for regional energy cooperation and infrastructure development.

Rashid Meredov expressed his profound appreciation for the warm welcome extended by the Pakistani side. "Together we will chalk out a roadmap for cooperation between both countries," he added.

Muhammetmyrat Amanov, CEO of TAPI Pipeline Company Limited mentioned that with the special interest of Petroleum Minister and Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) TAPI has seen significant progress and is on the right track.

Speaking on the developments, officials from both Pakistan and Turkmenistan emphasized the project's strategic importance in enhancing regional connectivity, promoting economic growth, and meeting the energy demands of participating nations. They underscored their commitment to continued cooperation and mutual support to overcome any remaining challenges. Continuous diplomatic efforts and political commitments are beneficial for ensuring a conducive environment for project advancement. The TAPI project remains a testament to the enduring partnership between Pakistan and Turkmenistan, reflecting shared goals of regional stability and prosperity through sustainable energy solutions. APP

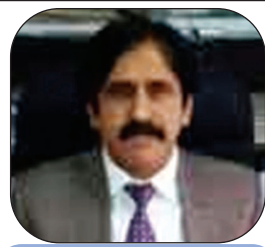
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The education gap

SIMRA SOHAIL

Pakistan's education crisis stands as a formidable barrier to the nation's socio-economic development, casting a shadow over its aspirations for progress and prosperity. Despite decades of policy interventions and international assistance, the country still grapples with persistent issues that undermine its educational infrastructure. The 18th Amendment introduced Article 25-A, ensuring the right to education: "The state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to 16 years in such manner as may be determined by law." Over a decade later, this constitutional promise remains unfulfilled, with declining education quality starkly evident. According to Unicef, Pakistan has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children (OOSC), with an estimated 22.8 million children aged 5-16 not attending school, representing 44 per cent of the total population in this age group. In the 5-9 age group, five million children are not enrolled in schools. After primary school age, the number of OOSC doubles, with 11.4 million children between the ages of 10 and 14 not receiving formal education. Economic challenges significantly influence Pakistan's education crisis. Poverty is a major hurdle, with many families opting for the immediate financial benefits of child labour over the long-term advantages of education. This economic strain is compounded by the government's inadequate investment in education. According to the Economic Survey 2023-24, Pakistan allocates only about 1.5 per cent of its GDP to education, far below the Unesco recommended 4-6 per cent. In 2022, the government spent a mere 1.7 per cent of its GDP on education, compared to the global average of 4.4 per cent. This chronic underfunding results in a severe shortage of resources for schools, teachers, and education programmes. Pakistan's education crisis is also deeply intertwined with socio-cultural factors that significantly hinder educational progress. Gender disparities are pronounced, with cultural norms and practices often prioritizing boys' education over that of girls. In some regions, girls are kept out of school due to early marriages, domestic responsibilities, or safety concerns. According to Unesco, nearly 10.7 million boys and 8.6 million girls are enrolled at the primary level, but this number drops drastically to 3.6 million boys and 2.8 million girls at the lower secondary level. Traditional mindsets and a lack of awareness about the benefits of education contribute to low enrollment rates, perpetuating the cycle of educational neglect and socio-economic disadvantage. The education crisis is exacerbated by stark regional disparities, creating an uneven educational landscape. Rural areas lag significantly behind urban centres in both resources and outcomes. Provinces vary in their commitment to education, leading to unequal achievements across the country. For example, Sindh and Balochistan have some of the lowest literacy rates and highest dropout rates. According to Unicef, in Sindh, 52 per cent of the most disadvantaged children are out of school, with girls constituting 58 per cent of this figure. In Balochistan, the situation is even more dire, with 78 per cent of girls out of school. These disparities underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions and equitable resource allocation to ensure quality education for all children, regardless of their geographic location. This education crisis also has far-reaching socio-economic repercussions, perpetuating poverty and escalating unemployment. Higher education levels are directly linked to increased income, according to the World Bank. However, the nation's low literacy rate of 59 per cent signifies that a significant portion of the population lacks essential skills, hindering national advancement. Gender disparities exacerbate the current crisis, with only 22 per cent of women participating in the labour force compared to 82 per cent of men, according to data from the Pakistan Labour Force Survey, 2020-21. This stark inequality not only impedes economic growth but also impacts social empowerment and community wellbeing. Addressing these educational deficiencies is imperative for Pakistan's socio-economic stability and sustainable development. To address Pakistan's education crisis, a comprehensive and robust strategy is essential. The government must prioritize infrastructure development, ensuring that all schools, especially in underserved areas like Sindh and Balochistan, have reliable electricity and adequate sanitation. This requires significant investment and intergovernmental coordination, with policies mandating regular monitoring and maintenance. Expanding classroom facilities to reduce overcrowding is crucial. Establishing standards for classroom sizes and securing funds for construction and maintenance will enhance the learning environment. Enhancing support for both teachers and students is paramount. Reducing the teacher-student ratio through strategic recruitment, offering competitive salaries, and ensuring continuous professional development are necessary steps to deal with the crisis. Implementing policies for mandatory training and periodic evaluations will help maintain high teaching standards. Curriculum reforms should emphasize modern subjects such as AI and robotics while shifting from rote learning to skill-based education. Regular curriculum updates and promoting practical learning experiences will prepare students for contemporary challenges. Early childhood education (ECE) policies must be supported and enforced across all provinces to ensure that every child has access to quality early learning. Developing a national ECE framework with clear guidelines and standards, along with adequate funding and resources, is essential for effective implementation. Scaling up alternative learning pathways (ALPs) to reach OOSC, particularly adolescent girls and marginalized groups, is also critical. Policies must facilitate the integration of ALP graduates into the formal education system and provide flexible learning options to meet diverse needs.

The writer is a freelance contributor.



Hassan Baig

The problem with power

Pakistan's power sector currently faces a severe crisis owing to multiple reasons, right from generation to transmission and distribution. Circular debt is at its peak and apparently seems insurmountable. This sector has never been in such bad shape as it is today. Inefficiencies, political interference, and outdated infrastructure, along with soaring fuel costs, are some of the problems being faced by the sector. The root cause of this crisis lies in the inconsistent policy framework, which changes from time to time, and allied governance issues. Independent power producers (IPPs) have marred the system, making it impossible for ordinary Pakistanis to pay their dues, especially due to their ever-increasing capacity charges. These charges have touched the Rs2.5 trillion figure, which is the main reason for a hike in electricity charges. The IMF programme also emphasizes reducing circular debt by reforming the power sector, for which necessary steps need to be taken by the Ministry of Power. Power generation companies (GenCos) and distribution companies (DISCOs) need to undertake reforms at the earliest, right from their infrastructure development to distribution losses and theft, which is common in far-flung rural areas. The National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) also needs to be reformed, as it cannot take on the load of the installed generation capacity due to its old infrastructure. Inconsistent power policies have made a mess. The 1994 Power Policy introduced the concept of IPPs, affecting electricity tariffs due to fluctuating oil prices in the international market. The departure from hydel power development was the

first unfortunate step towards creating difficulties for people, as we had the potential to create cheap hydel power by building dams in Pakistan. The second power policy, in 1998, introduced competitive bidding among IPPs along with pre-determined tariffs; this was a relatively better proposition than the first one. The third policy was introduced in 2002, underscoring the concept of renewable energy. The fourth such policy was introduced in the backdrop of CPEC to attract investment in this sector. Issues in the regulatory framework have also shaken the confidence of investors as well as consumers. Nepra policies have also been inconsistent when it comes to determining tariffs and taxes. Power bills now carry multiple taxes due to these issues. The concept of public-private partnerships (PPPs) is another issue affecting the power policy framework. There should have been a consistent regulatory framework while determining tariffs and taxes for IPPs, Wapda-related hydel projects, and renewable energy projects. Now there is a lot of confusion regarding power tariff distribution. There has been no investment in the transmission and distribution (T&D) network maintained and looked after by the NTDC. T&D losses and theft have been a permanent problem, ranging from almost 20-30 per cent. The NTDC's T&D infrastructure cannot afford a load of more than 25,000MW, while we have an installed capacity of around 42,000MW. That is one of the reasons we are paying capacity charges to those IPPs that are not producing electricity. That is ridiculous. We need investment to develop and strengthen the NTDC infrastructure. Pakistan uses power from the non-renewable energy mix produced by IPPs running on furnace oil and LNG. Equity charges, besides capacity charges, are also our concern, which need to be negotiated with IPPs working for the last 25-26 years. They have already earned a lot of profits due to a favourable power policy framework. The PTI

government tried to renegotiate these contracts, and there was some sort of compromise. While CPEC projects could not be renegotiated owing to multiple reasons, there was some progress with other IPPs. The only solution now for the government is to renegotiate with IPPs to reduce the burden of capacity charges. There are also governance issues. Some CEOs of DISCOs are political appointees working on an ad-hoc basis, which has marred the system. This is a big reason for rampant inefficiencies, low recovery of electricity bills, and continuous theft and leakages causing high losses. Circular debt is ballooning due to these inefficiencies, hindering economic activities and breaking investor confidence. Circular debt could have been avoided if we had successfully utilized our full generation capacity. Similarly, this would have led to economic growth had we managed to develop special economic zones (SEZs) in the next phase of CPEC. Initially, 27 SEZs were proposed, of which nine priority zones were to be developed for the possible relocation of Chinese industries. The installed capacity of CPEC-affiliated IPPs was initially enhanced to be utilized for these relocated industries in SEZs. Unfortunately, these industries could not be relocated until today due to the unavailability of the required facilities at these SEZs. This is why we are paying capacity charges to IPPs, facing the burden of price hikes. The power sector's crisis is exacerbated by multiple power policies that offer a high rate of return to IPPs, along with dollar indexation. Power plants run on imported oil with fluctuating prices and exchange rates, raising the cost of production. On top of it, there are capacity payments; all in all, this makes a disastrous policy decision. These power policies do not seem to be well-thought-out and are tilted towards IPPs. A return of 25-30 per cent on top of capacity charges is again disastrous. Some argue that political appointees made such decisions in exchange for personal

favours, completely neglecting how this could impact the entire nation. There are also other issues affecting people at large, especially tariffs and taxes being passed on to end consumers. Decision-makers are the direct beneficiaries of the system, so they do not bother to think about the suffering of the poor, who are left to bear the brunt of price hikes and high inflation. Incompetence is the hallmark of political appointees, and they often express their lack of knowledge about tariffs and taxes proposed by GenCos and DISCOs owing to multiple unaccounted-for losses resulting from an old and obsolete T&D infrastructure. Pakistan needs hydel projects, as it has an electricity generation capacity of about 150,000MW from hydel. The power produced would also be cheaper. But the government has failed to develop and construct dams for water and electricity needs, which is unfortunate. Without wasting any more time, we must move to other sources of renewable energy like solar and wind. Solar energy has a lot of scope in Pakistan, where the sun shines brightly for long hours. This can contribute a lot to meeting our energy needs. At present, an unfortunate situation is that China seems reluctant to shift its industries to Pakistan due to various factors, especially the security of Chinese nationals, which is why the hope of utilizing the full capacity of plants installed by IPPs is diminishing. What the country currently needs to do is renegotiate with IPPs on multiple points, including, but not limited to, their heat audit, fuel cost consumption, and real generation capacity. The discussion should also move to power plants that are producing and supplying no electricity but receiving hefty capacity payments. We must renegotiate with IPPs today to resolve the issue, lest it become the cause of our economic meltdown.

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History of Pakistan

Today in History

A few specialist financial institutions provide medium- and long-term credit for industrial, agricultural, and housing purposes and include the Pakistan Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation (1957; since 2001, PICIC Commercial Bank, Ltd.), the Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan (1961), the Agricultural Development Bank of Pakistan (1961), and the House Building Finance Corporation (1952). There are a number of private banks, many of which operate from Karachi. Habib Bank, Ltd., is

one of the oldest. The Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) was founded in Pakistan in 1972; BCCI's collapse in 1991 precipitated a major international banking scandal. The Karachi Stock Exchange (Guarantee) Limited (1947), Lahore Stock Exchange (Guarantee) Limited (1970), and Islamabad Stock Exchange (Guarantee) Limited (1989) are the largest such institutions in the country; each deals in stocks and shares of registered companies. The Investment Corporation

of Pakistan (1966) and the National Investment Trust (1962) were founded by the state to help channel domestic savings into the capital market; both have since been partly privatized. As part of the development of the "Islamic" economy, interest-free banking and financing practices have been instituted in many specialized banks. Trade has grown into one of the major sectors of the Pakistani economy and employs a significant proportion of the workforce. Although

To be continued....

Ryan Reynolds, Hugh Jackman dish on their unbreakable bond

Hugh Jackman reveals the best thing about his friendship with Ryan Reynolds

Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman offered an inside scoop on their long-lasting friendship just days ahead of the release of their joint project, *Deadpool & Wolverine*. During an exclusive conversation with Entertainment Tonight's Spilling the E-Tea, Hugh, who first met Ryan in 2008 on the set of *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, revealed the best thing about their friendship. He said, "I could literally tell you anything and also how I feel both of us - I'm stealing a little bit 'cause you described this perfectly - we are genuinely rooting for each other in every aspect of our lives."



Ryan nodded in agreement as he pointed out that their bond is the "hallmark of a truly great friendship"

that most people look up to. The Greatest Showman actor didn't miss out on the chance to pull his friend's leg as he reflected on another favourite aspect of their friendship. He inquired, "And your movie, if I could say that." To which, Ryan quickly replied, "Yes, of course." Hugh went on to tease his friend, adding, "You have a lot of money and if I'm ever short - which is often - [you spot me]." Ryan recently opened up to People Magazine about friendship, comparing it to "having a partner or a marriage." He told the outlet at the time, "I think the secret sauce to a long-lasting Hollywood friendship is not too dissimilar to having a partner or a marriage."

How to get through with cancer diagnosis?

A lot of people can experience shock and get triggered upon coming to know about their cancer diagnosis especially when they are not expecting it. As per the World Health Organisation (WHO), cancer is one of the most widespread conditions worldwide. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) estimates that in the United States alone, there were around 1,806,590 new cases in 2020. One important way of coping with a diagnosis of cancer is to be well informed as receiving it can come as a shock to anyone. Cancer is often surrounded by an aura of myth and much of what people think they know can often just be hearsay. As a result, an important first step is to get as much information as possible from doctors and other reliable sources. Dany Bell, a specialist advisor on treatment and recovery at Macmillan Cancer Support in the

Cancer diagnosis can shock, trigger a lot of people as WHO describes it as one of most widespread conditions

United Kingdom, told Medical News Today: "Being diagnosed with cancer can be a big shock, even if you already suspected you might have it." "Cancer is a word that can stir up many fears and emotions," added Bell, "but making sure you fully understand your diagnosis can help you feel more in control of the situation." As the subject of a cancer diagnosis is always a heavily loaded one, so communicating with a doc-

tor might feel challenging. It might be difficult for both the person and the doctor to communicate efficiently. Dr Ann O'Mara, head of palliative care research in the NCI's Division of Cancer Prevention, told Medical News Today that there is no magical recipe for success in these cases. However, she said that open communication is very important to ensure that people get the information they need and that the doctor knows how they are coping with the diagnosis. "If the communication with that physician is causing you to be more stressed out, you have to communicate that to the physician," she said. Moreover, after receiving a cancer diagnosis, symptoms of depression and anxiety are often a natural outcome. A strong support network is also important to be able to count on.

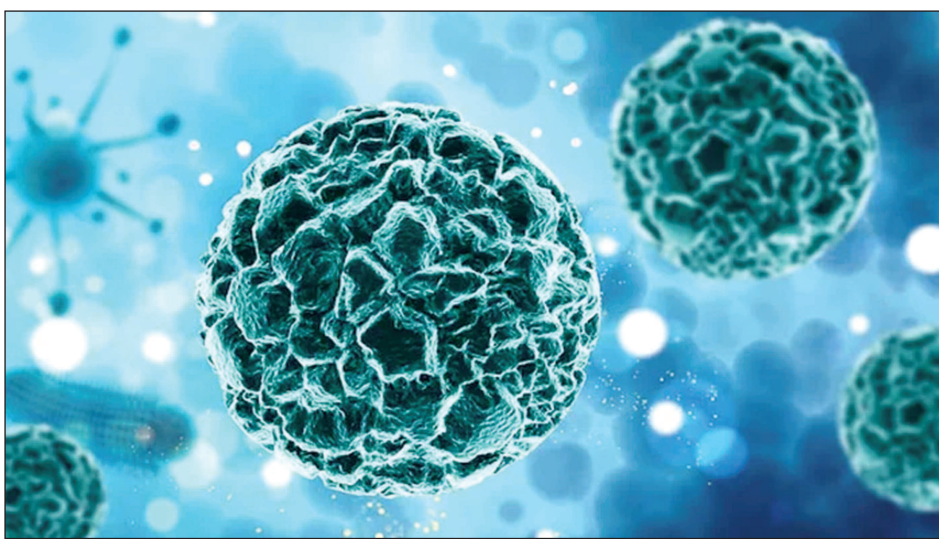
Google opts for user choice over blocking tracking cookies on Chrome

In a statement on Monday, Alphabet's Google announced that it was withdrawing from its widely-discussed proposal regarding blocking 'cookies' on the Chrome browser. This decision came after refusal on the part of online publishers increasing on the one hand with pressure from the internet users on the other hand. "Cookies" are small programs that enable third-party organizations to track the movement of people who use the Chrome browser. They are also employed by third-party publishers and websites for promotional purposes. Cookies have long been considered as being invasive of the privacy of the users and therefore applications have suffered discrimination in the EU and other regions where the use is only acceptable if done with the consent of the users. The main conflict started with Google's official announcement of the "Privacy Sandbox" in January 2020; while claiming that it would provide the advertising industry with a solution that is 'better for the open Internet, and



for everyone, including publishers and users,' it would not include tracking individual users. However, this process of preparing trainers/consultants was found to have a lot of challenges during implementation. This was said to extend the powers of Google since the latter has more knowledge about how consumers employ the web than other online publishers who depend on cookies were poised to lose. Just as expected, instead of fettering the third-party cookies, Google will be introducing a new feature in Chrome that will allow individuals to select by browsing that they never used before, according to Anthony Chavez, Google's VP, and head of privacy via the company's blog.

Health



Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland KC to visit Pakistan from 28 July to 2 August 2024: FO Spokesperson



ISLAMABAD: The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland KC, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, will pay her first official visit to Pakistan from 28 July to 2 August 2024 on the invitation of the Government of Pakistan.

According to a statement issued by Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch on Wednesday, during her five-day visit, 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, who has been a staunch advocate for supporting Pakistan in meeting the adverse impacts of climate change, will reaffirm her solidarity with Pakistan, as it marks 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.

With 2023/24 designated the "Year of Youth" by the Commonwealth and Pakistan chairing the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting, the Secretary-General will receive extensive briefings on the Prime Minister's Youth Programme and highlight the opportunities Commonwealth membership brings to young people.

As one of the organisation's founding members, Pakistan values the Commonwealth as an important forum for forging consensus on global issues and challenges. The visit of the Commonwealth Secretary-General would provide an important opportunity to further strengthen the longstanding partnership between Pakistan and the Commonwealth. SABAH



BADIN: Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah addressing to public gathering during inauguration ceremony of newly constructed regulator of spinal drain of LBOD at RD210 near Shadi Large. APP

Rana Sanaullah advocates for sports' role in social legacies

PARIS: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaullah Khan, emphasized the significant impact of physical education and sports on creating enduring social legacies during his attendance at the "Change the Game!" Ministerial Forum at UNESCO, Paris.

Participating in the discussion focused on 'Leveraging Quality Physical Education & Sport for Sustainable Social Legacies,' he highlighted Pakistan's commitment to empowering youth through initiatives such as the Prime Minister's Youth Programme and the Youth Talent Hunt Programme, aimed at not only identifying future athletes but also instilling long-lasting social values.

Apart from participating in the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympics and visiting UNESCO headquarters, Rana Sanaullah Khan actively engaged in discussions at the forum on utilizing high-quality physical education and sports to achieve sustainable social outcomes. He commended UNESCO for organizing such a critical event ahead of the Paris Olympic Games, emphasizing how large-scale sports events unite people globally in healthy competition.

Acknowledging Pakistan's youthful demographic, with two-thirds of its population under 24 years old, Rana Sanaullah Khan underscored the Prime Minister's efforts to empower young people through education and active participation.

He stressed that sports not only foster individual resilience and essential skills like leadership and teamwork but also promote interna-



national friendships, mutual understanding, cultural diversity celebration, and improve the physical and mental well-being of youth. The advisor to prime minister appreciated UNESCO for organizing this high-level forum in the run-up to the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. He added that mega sports events, like Olympics, act as a unifying force in bringing together the entire world in healthy competition - where all of us are winners. The advisor said that Pakistan is a country of 240 million people and two-thirds of the population is below the age of 24 - making Pakistan one of the youngest countries in the world. Keeping this in view, the prime minister launched a special initiative, called "Prime Minister's Youth Programme", to engage, educate, and empower youth.

He appraised all that under this Programme, a 'Youth Talent Hunt Programme' was organized across Pakistan for 12 different games to shortlist future athletes and to impart social values that would be an asset for them for life.

Further a national conference was also organized on 'Revival of Sports' to foster a merit-based culture within sports, ensuring that young athletes are selected, trained, and promoted based on their talent and hard work.

Rana Sanaullah said that physical education and sports provide productive pathways for individuals as well as societies to build resilience and skills, such as leadership, communication, team-building, and critical thinking. He acknowledged that sports also teaches discipline, develops friendship across borders and plays a positive role in promoting mutual understanding; celebrating cultural diversity; and enhancing physical and mental health of youth. Social legacies, therefore, such as fostering inclusion, community building, volunteerism, and physical activities, are by-product of sports that ensure improvements in our societies, he added.

The advisor said UNESCO has a central role to play in this field and can assist Member States through its capacity building programs on physical education and sports. Rana Sanaullah emphasized that we all need to support international efforts focused on sports for peace and development and build a bright future for our generations to come. Ambassador of Pakistan to France and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO Asim Iftikhar Ahmad also attended the event. APP

Finance minister vows to protect consumers' rights

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance Ali Pervaiz Malik Wednesday reiterated the government's unwavering commitment to consumer protection, assuring that it will remain a top priority where Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was taking aggressive measures to not only end power outages but also uplift the most vulnerable segments of society.

Talking to a private news channel, he while elaborating on the government's strategy explained that efforts are underway to create a conducive business environment for the power sector to flourish. "We are not just focusing on privatization, but also on building a robust framework that encourages investment, innovation, and competition," he said.

This multi-pronged approach, he added, will not only enhance the efficiency and reliability of power supply but also attract private sector participation, driving economic growth and job creation, he mentioned. He said that Power and Finance ministry working together and consulting with neighboring countries how to control these power crises effectively. Malik emphasized that consumer protection will remain at the forefront of these efforts, ensuring that vulnerable segments are shielded from exploitation and receive fair, quality services. Ali Pervaiz Malik said with the consultation of the World Bank, work on the privatization of power distribution companies is also under process. Responding a query, he said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has announced billion of energy subsidy package for low-income households that consume less than 200 units of electricity which is admirable. "My government is totally committed to bringing huge reforms and huge structural changes, he said, adding, we are inching towards that direction. Otherwise, it will be a futile exercise and will not produce proportionate results. We are absolutely focused on the agenda of short as well as long-term policies, he added.

Bilawal for recovery of three Pakistanis in Myanmar

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Wednesday, taking notice of reported kidnapping of three Pakistanis in Myanmar, called upon the concerned authorities to take measures for their recovery and repatriation.

In a statement issued from Media Cell Bilawal House, he stressed for utilizing diplomat channels to locate and recover three boys namely Kashif Hussain, Faraz Khan and Shehroz Khan of Hyderabad, who travelled to Thailand from where they were allegedly taken to Myanmar and held hostage.

Bilawal Bhutto expressed sympathy with the loved ones of these boys and assured PPP will raise voice at all relevant forums for the recovery of these boys. DNA



ECP reserve decision over non-submission of election expense details by Parties

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission has reserved its decision on the issue of several political parties failing to submit their election expense details. The matter was reviewed by a four-member bench led by Member Nisar Durani.

Parties such as ANP, Move on Pakistan, People's Muslim League Pakistan, Pakistan Awami Raj, Awami Jamhoori Party Pakistan, Haq Du Tehreek Balochistan, and Pakistan People's League have yet to provide the required financial disclosures for their election campaigns.

Election Commission officials reported that ANP's Mian Iftikhar Hussain Shah was contacted multiple times without success. The People's Muslim League argued that they did not incur expenses as they did not participate in the elections, while Haq Du Tehreek Balochistan claimed to have sent their details on June

28, although the Election Commission did not receive them.

With 149 parties participating in the elections, the Commission issued election symbols and noted that seven parties still have not submitted their expense reports. The Commission pointed out that despite claims from some parties of not running a campaign, they had accepted election symbols and thus are required to report their expenses.

The Election Commission has issued a final show-cause notice to these parties, with a potential penalty of having their election symbols withdrawn. The Commission previously discussed this issue following the 2018 elections, where similar actions were considered necessary for compliance. The Commission has yet to make a final ruling on the matter, which remains under deliberation. INP

Govt determined to protect rights of every citizen irrespective of caste, creed, says AJK PM



MIRPUR: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chudhary Anwar ul Haq Wednesday said that all resources would be utilized to provide the people with basic amenities of life. He expressed these views while speaking to a public delegation, which called on him under the leadership of Advisor to the State Government, Sabiha Siddique in Kotli district.

Speaking on the occasion, PM Haq said, "It is the responsibility of the government to protect the rights of every citizen irrespective of caste and creed". He maintained that the provision of all the basic amenities to the masses including education and health would be ensured. The prime minister praised Sabiha Siddique for her political activism and commitment towards

the people. Speaking on the occasion, Sabiha that she would continue to strive for the rights of the people at every forum. Earlier, AJK PM Anwar ul Haq attended the cake-cutting ceremony to mark 37th anniversary of District Press Club Kotli.

The AJK PM was accompanied by his cabinet colleagues including Colonel (ret'd) Waqar Ahmed Noor, Javed Iqbal Badhanvi, Minister of Rehabilitation, Minister of Higher Education Zafar Iqbal Malik, Minister of Public Health Dr. Nisar Ansar Abdali and Director of Information, Raja Shahid Hussain Khokhar. Whereas Presidential Adviser, Chaudhry Muhammad Mehboob, and District Press Club Shah Nawaz Butt and other office bearers were also present.

CDA chairman chairs meeting to review sectors development

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa chaired an important meeting to discuss the key issues regarding the sector development of Islamabad, the Islamabad Development Plan, and the financial position of authority. The meeting was attended by members of CDA Board, Administrator MCI and other concerned formations. The Member Finance provided a detailed briefing on the CDA's fiscal status and revenue generation efforts. It was decided that revenue generation status will be presented on a weekly basis, detailing both targets and achievements to ensure transparency and accountability. Progress on directives issued was shared by all members, reflecting upon the status of these directives. Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa emphasized the need for regular oversight by instructing that weekly board meetings be held to track progress and make necessary decisions promptly. Several major initiatives were discussed in detail during the meeting. These included the computerization of land and property records, the operationalization of a smart app for essential services, and the beautification of the Diplomatic Enclave and parks. DNA

Maryam, German Ambassador reiterate commitment to strengthen mutual relations



LAHORE: The Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, Alfred Granas, met Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, in which they reiterated their determination to strengthen mutual relations. Maryam Nawaz appreciated the immediate action of the German authorities to the attack of terrorists on the Pakistani embassy in Germany. The promotion of bilateral relations was discussed in the meeting, while economic cooperation and cooperation in technical education were also discussed. Chief Minister Punjab appreciated Germany's ongoing collaboration and investment in the development sectors of Punjab, while possibilities of further cooperation in various sectors including renewable energy, vocational training, and information technol-

ogy were also reviewed. German Ambassador Alfred Granas reiterated his commitment to strengthen mutual relations with Punjab and appreciated the efforts of the provincial government in creating a favorable environment for foreign investment in Punjab. Cooperation in promoting technological development was agreed upon.

In the meeting between the two leaders, the possibilities of partnerships in health, education, and other sectors were reviewed. Measures to enhance education and vocational training programs were also discussed. Talking about the Germany incident, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam expressed hope that the people involved in the Germany incident will be brought to justice and such incidents will not happen in the future. The Chief Minister of Punjab said that they want to equip the youth with skills that meet the requirements of the job market. Germany is a global leader in renewable energy issues and has served humanity by taking environment-friendly measures. A solarization project has been launched to provide clean and green energy to the citizens. INP

NA Committee passes 'The Establishment of Telecommunication Appellate Tribunal Bill, 2024' without any amendment

Committee expresses concern that four districts of Baluchistan have been deprived from the facility of mobile data for last three years

ISLAMABAD: The 3rd meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Information Technology & Telecommunication was held on Wednesday under the Chairmanship of Syed Aminul Haq, MNA, in Committee Room No. 07, Parliament House, Islamabad.

The Committee discussed "The Establishment of Telecommunication Appellate Tribunal Bill, 2024" (Government Bill) in detail. The representative from Ministry of Law & Justice briefly apprised the Committee that under Rule of Business the constitution of all the tribunals are purely the subject of Ministry of Law & Justice. While briefing about the procedure for appointment of Chairpersons for the said tribunal, he told the Committee that M/o Law & Justice publish advertisement in the newspaper and thereafter the Search Committee headed by 20 Grade Officer in the Ministry of Law & Justice scrutinize the candidature as per prescribed criteria. The Search Committee short listed the candidates and forwarded it to the Federal Council

headed by the Law Minister and 2 Federal Secretaries as its members, interviews the shortlisted candidates and forward its recommendations to the Federal Cabinet, which then appoints a Chairperson and members of tribunals. The Committee agreed with the representative of the Ministry of Law & Justice and thereafter unanimously passed "The Establishment of Telecommunication Appellate Tribunal Bill, 2024" without any amendment. The Committee expressed concern that E-Office has been launched for last four years, and still not been properly implemented within the Ministries, even though, the Prime Minister has also conducted a meeting on it to clarify the methodology and removal of barriers towards paperless environment. The Federal Minister expressed that ministry initiated steps for its

implementation and this system should start from the top level which is Federal Secretaries and Ministers and then it will automatically be implemented step by step downwards to digitize the entire system. Further she said that it is very important to align all the Ministries to play their role for implement E-office within all Ministries and offices to promote paperless environment and improve efficiency. The Committee also recommended that Ministry may devise a policy to ensure the security of official correspondence and documents.

The Committee was further briefed by Chairman NITB, regarding the launching of Aportille application on the request of Foreign Office to cater the needs of overseas employees and their documents processing. The Committee stressed upon the need of said

application and directed them to ensure it's launching with 15 days so that the problems and difficulties faced by them could be resolved, immediately. The Committee further expressed that basic mandate of the Ministry is to formulate policies and vision and Ministry should collaborate with the Provincial Ministers for Information Technology regarding implementation of these policies in other provinces. The Committee also expressed concern that four districts of Baluchistan have been deprived from the facility of mobile data for last three years. The Committee decided to call Chairman PTA, in its next meeting to brief the Committee about the issue with the comment that the provision of Internet facility is a fundamental right of every citizen. The following MNAs namely Mukhtar Ahmad Malik, Ahmad Atteeq Anwar, Ammar Ahmad Khan Leghari, Dr. Mahesh Kumar Malani, Syed Mustafa Kamal, Pullain, Sher Ali Arbab and Unair Khan Niazi, besides the officials of the Ministry attended the meeting. SABAH