



Pakistan's commitment to the Kashmiri cause is a central element of its foreign policy, and it continues to seek a peaceful resolution based on international law, the UN Security Council Resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people

Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani

Kh Asif, Ethiopian Envoy discuss cooperation in defence, aviation



VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence and Defence Production, Khawaja Muhammad Asif held meeting with the Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) on Wednesday during which both dignitaries mulled over various avenues to strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation in different areas such as defence and aviation.

The matter of such utmost importance came under discussion during a meeting between Special Envoy, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of FDR Ethiopia, Jemal Bekir Abdula, and Minister for Defence and Aviation who also holds the portfolio of Defence Production, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, an Ethiopian Embassy news release said.

The two sides also discussed full spectrum of ongoing bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation between the two brotherly countries.

The Defence Minister expressing his condolences for the loss of lives in landslide incidents that took place in Gofa region of Ethiopia reiterated the Government's commitment and support to the people and Government of Ethiopia in difficult times.

He expressed his government's commitment to increase its presence in the African continent of more than 1.4 billion people with untapped resources.

Khawaja Asif recognized pivotal role of the FDR Ethiopia in effective implementation of Look Africa and Engage Africa policy of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan that attached utmost priority to Ethiopia which is a gateway to Africa.

He appreciated arrival of the Ethiopian Airlines in Karachi which has given a major boost to the bilateral relations of the two countries especially people-to-people and business-to-business ties between Ethiopia and Pakistan as well connect the rest of Africa.

The Defence Minister also lauded economic progress achieved by Ethiopia under the leadership of Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, who successfully implemented home-grown economic reforms for peace and prosperity in the country.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Jemal Bekir expressed his gratitude for a continued support of the Government of Pakistan to the Government of Ethiopia at bilateral and multilateral level.

He briefed the minister on ongoing economic reforms carried out by the Government of Ethiopia to achieve macroeconomic stability, attract Foreign Direct Investment, increase productivity and job creation. The Ambassador also apprised the minister about relief and rescue efforts carried out in Gofa region of Ethiopia for permanent relocation of the affected persons.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Asia Internet Coalition calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. APP

Govt resolved for fast, uninterrupted internet connectivity, promotion of AI infrastructure: PM

PM Shehbaz orders to ensure availability of polio vaccine in security risk areas

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that the government was taking all-out measures to provide fast and uninterrupted internet connectivity to the people.

The prime minister, in a meeting with a three-member delegation of Asia Internet Coalition headed by Managing Director Jeff Paine, said that the government was implementing a strategy to attract foreign investment in the information technology infrastructure.

The meeting featured the discussion on data security, code of ethics for internet content, and prevention of electronic crimes.

Prime Minister Shehbaz told the delegation that the government was working to promote a basic infrastructure based on artificial intelligence.

He said the government was resolved to make Pakistan achieve a distinction in AI

infrastructure in the region.

He said under the Digital Pakistan Initiative, the whole system was being digitised and expressed the hope that the digitisation of Federal Board of Revenue would prove to be a milestone towards economic digitisation and automation.

During the briefing, it was told that consultation with all stakeholders on the draft of Personal Data Protection Bill was in progress.

Prime Minister Shehbaz appreciated the services of Asia Internet Coalition in promoting IT and internet infrastructure in the Asia Pacific Region.

The delegation members apprised the prime minister of the Coalition's services in Pakistan's IT sector.

Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunications Shaza Fatima Khawaja, IT expert Tania Aidrus and relevant senior officers attended the meeting. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said all available resources will be used to eliminate polio in the country.

Talking to Anti polio National team in Islamabad on Wednesday, Shehbaz Sharif directed to ensure the availability of polio vaccine in security risk areas. The Prime Minister said Pakistan has made significant progress against polio virus due to the hard work of frontline workers, determination of government and cooperation of partners.

He expressed concerns that Pakistan was included in the list of two countries where polio virus exists. The Prime Minister was informed nine polio cases have been reported in the country this year.

He was informed a countrywide polio campaign will be started in September, October and December this year. He was apprised about the two, four and six months plan for the eradication of polio virus.

The Prime Minister was also informed that the data of children who missed polio vaccination has been digitized in order to ensure their vaccination with the help of digital tracking.

FPCCI delegation to meet President Zardari on today

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry will meet President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday. To be headed by Dr Gohar Ejaz, the delegation will brief the president about the reservations of the business community and the issues being faced by them, a President House press release said.



Attaullah Tarar grieved over death of senior actor, comedian Sardar Kamal

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the death of senior actor and comedian Sardar Kamal.

In a condolence message, the minister expressed his heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the family of the deceased. Terming Sardar Kamal a great artist, Tarar said he was deeply saddened to hear the news of his demise.

"With the death of Sardar Kamal, the Pakistani showbiz industry has lost a great artist," he maintained. Sardar Kamal was an artist who always brought smiles to the faces of others, he said adding the services Sardar Kamal to the showbiz industry will always be remembered. He said shared the grief of the bereaved family in this hour of sorrow.

He prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude.

Pakistan condemns assassination of Chief of Hamas Political Bureau Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran: Mumtaz Zahra Baloch

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, in a statement, said Pakistan condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations including extrajudicial and extraterritorial killings irrespective of the motives.

She said Pakistan is deeply shocked by the timing of this reckless act, coinciding with the inauguration of the President of Iran, an event attended by several foreign dignitaries, including the Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar. The spokesperson said Pakistan views with serious concern the growing Israeli adventurism in the region. She said its latest acts constitute a dangerous escalation in an already volatile region and undermine efforts for peace. SABAH

Finance Minister reiterates support for GB development

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday reiterated government's commitment to support development of Gilgit-Baltistan for the overall economic growth. The minister was chairing a meeting of the Committee on the issues of Gilgit-Baltistan, according to press release issued by finance ministry.

Aurangzeb expressed his appreciation for the well-thought-out proposals presented in the meeting and underscored the importance of reforming GB's administrative and fiscal frameworks. He emphasized that these reforms were vital for both the welfare of the local population and the stimulation of tourism. According to the press release, the meeting commenced with a detailed briefing by the Chief Secretary, who outlined the issues faced by the GB govt.

Some of these issues were related to insufficient fund allocations and delays in Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) projects, which lead to employee related and other liabilities. The Chief Secretary advocated for solar



power projects designed to address the region's growing energy requirements. He also proposed initiatives for the digitization of land records and the expansion of airports to enhance tourism potential. These proposals aim to modernize GB's infrastructure and capitalize on its natural beauty, further contributing to the region's economic development. Among others, the meeting was attended by Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Engineer Amir Muqam; Minister for Finance-GB, Muhammad Ismail; Minister for Agriculture-GB, Mohammad Anwar; Ex CM GB Hafiz, Hafeez Ur Rehman; Chief Secretary GB; Member WAPDA and other officials from relevant Ministries. APP

Pakistan's stance on Kashmir issue consistent, resolute: Gilani

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Wednesday reiterated that Pakistan's stance on the Kashmir issue has been consistent and resolute. He condemned Indian brutal use of force against the innocent Kashmiris. He was leading a delegation of the members of Senate and NA which held a meeting with UK based representatives of Jammu & Kashmir Self Determination Movement, International Lobby on Kashmir and International Students Society based in UK.

Yousaf Raza Gilani said that Indian army has blatantly violated international law by denying the people their just right. He acknowledged the efforts of the UK based platforms working for raising voice for Kashmiri people. He said that Pakistan has highlighted the Kashmir issue at all international forums such as the United Nations, the OIC, and other global platforms to garner international support and put pressure on India to address the human rights violations in the region. The Chairman Senate said that Pakistan's commitment to the Kashmiri cause is a central element of its foreign policy, and it continues to seek a peaceful resolution based on international law, the UN Security Council Resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. INP

UAE Ambassador, Commerce minister discuss bilateral trade, investment

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to enhance bilateral trade and investment opportunities between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Pakistan, the UAE Ambassador to Pakistan, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi, met with Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, to discuss bilateral trade, investment, and the way forward on the Pakistan-UAE Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) signed. Minister Jam Kamal Khan underscored the longstanding and amicable relations between Pakistan and the UAE, emphasizing the need to expedite key investment projects, said a press release issued on Wednesday.

He welcomed the expansion of DP World, a multinational logistics company, and Abu Dhabi Port, affirming the government's ongoing support for such initiatives. Expressing his views, Minister Jam Kamal high-



lighted the manifold benefits that the Karachi-Pipri Freight Corridor Project would bring to Pakistan. The Ambassador emphasized that the two countries have enjoyed long-standing, fraternal relations and expressed confidence that these ties will continue to grow stronger over time. APP

Law minister chairs meeting of body for drug pricing



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar on Wednesday chaired the first meeting of the committee formed to give recommendations for independent drug pricing in the country. Under the directions of the prime minister, a committee has been con-

stituted to address drug pricing in Pakistan, said a press release. The meeting was attended by relevant stakeholders who presented an overview of the operations of independent price authorities and their functions worldwide, highlighting

The committee deliberated on the best model for Pakistan, considering various viewpoints from all stakeholders. It was decided that a detailed working paper will be prepared for the next meeting. This paper will identify the current issues related to the pharmaceutical indus-

try, with a focus on pricing in the market.

Key areas to be addressed include, issues related to pricing in the market, medicine imports and the market distortions they cause and categories of drugs that fall outside the domain of government pricing. Additionally, efforts and plans will be made to create a favorable environment to attract back international pharmaceutical companies that previously operated in Pakistan.

The committee emphasized that the functions of pricing and regulation are distinct. The regulator's role is to ensure the standards of medicine, whereas pricing should be driven by market mechanisms without state control.

Further updates will be shared as the committee progresses in its efforts to improve the pharmaceutical industry's framework in Pakistan. APP

Mohsin Naqvi condemns firing incident on police personnel in Khyber

Kurram delegation calls on interior minister

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi strongly condemned the firing on police personnel in the Khyber, expressing deep sorrow over the martyrdom of two police personnel and a citizen. He said that the martyred personnel were brave sons of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police and prayed for the swift recovery of the injured. He conveyed heartfelt condolences to the families of the martyrs. He said the brave police personnel of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police have sacrificed their precious lives for the peace and security of the nation. He said that the entire nation greatly values the sacrifices of its martyrs. Meanwhile, a delegation from Kurram, led by MNA Hamid Hussain called on Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday. The delegation included Mumir Hussain, Professor Shabbir Bangash, Muhammad Bashir Bangash, Rahim Gul, and Haji Noor Rahman. Federal Secretary Interior Khurram Ali Agha was also present on the occasion. The minister expressed concern over the unfor-



tunate incidents in Kurram and discussed a comprehensive strategy to prevent such incidents in the future. Mohsin Naqvi expressed profound grief and sorrow over the loss of precious human lives and prayed for the swift recovery of the injured. He said that the clash between two groups was given a wrong interpretation. He emphasized that leading personalities of the area should play their positive role for lasting solution to this issue and the government will provide all possible assistance in this regard. The minister reiterated that everyone needs to play his role in maintaining brotherhood and harmony in the area.

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What next after enrolment?

ZAHRA MUGHIS

Twenty-six million. This figure has been doing the rounds in print and digital media for quite some time now. This is the total number of out-of-school children and adolescents (OOSCA) in Pakistan, the second highest in the world, according to the Pakistan Education Statistics. This number is 39 per cent of the country's population of school-going children – 5-16-year-olds. These children ought to be in school, not at home, on the street, or at workshops. More importantly, they ought to be learning.

To bring 26.2 million OOSCA to school, the government has declared a national education emergency. However, increasing enrolments should not be the only objective. And the discourse must not leave out those who are left out by the system. There are two types of out-of-school children and adolescents: those who have never set foot inside a school and those who came and saw but could not conquer – the dropouts (children who got enrolled at some time but left without completing the full 10 years of schooling).

Data from all available sources, pre- and post-Covid-19 pandemic, shows that children who have never attended school outnumber dropouts at every grade level. Bringing first-timers to school is important. And it may also be easier than bringing back the ones who left. Keeping them in school until they attain their secondary school certification is equally important but quite difficult. That's what the nationally representative data tells us.

The estimated number of dropouts as the share of OOSCA increases from virtually zero per cent for five-year-olds to almost 49 per cent for 16-year-olds. The trend is consistent across provinces. Dropouts account for over 61 per cent of OOSCA in Punjab for 16-year-olds, 44 per cent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and approximately 35 per cent in Sindh and Balochistan (versus 1.0 per cent or less for OOSCA aged five).

Thus, the country's 81 per cent gross intake ratio for primary education – the number of first-time enrolments in primary grades as a percentage of total primary school-aged children – is not such an encouraging number. In other words, ramping up enrolments is necessary but not sufficient. The reasons for children not attending school explain why.

There is a consensus that economic constraints and social norms deprive most children of their fundamental right to education. Data also shows that over 80 per cent of the OOSCA across Pakistan, who have never attended school cite high cost as a constraint. Less than 5.0 per cent have not attended school because either they had to help with work or the school was too far away. Thus, the calls for increasing education spending (currently it is a meagre 1.5 per cent of the GDP), introducing enrolment and attendance incentives, setting up mobile schools, etc, have their merits. However, according to the data, the major reason for quitting school after enrolment is not cost or distance, but the child's unwillingness (over 30 per cent of dropouts). Given these unwilling children went to school at least once, they have most likely been left out by the system.

A system that does not support learning for a vast majority of its intended beneficiaries is bound to push out the most vulnerable ones. Pakistan's education crisis is dual in nature, as both the number of OOSCA and the learning poverty rate are high – over 75 per cent of the children in school are unable to read and understand a simple piece of text by the age of 10.

And research shows that lower levels of learning at any given grade level are strongly related to dropout risk, particularly at the end of the school year or level (primary, secondary, or high). Lower learning levels may reflect a child's abilities but also the education system's capabilities, such as the one of teaching in a language that children can understand.

Most education boards and schools in Pakistan have English or Urdu as the language of curriculum and instruction, neither of which is the first language of a vast majority of the country's population. Anecdotes from across the country and research-based evidence from across the globe show that language can serve as a tool of disenfranchisement in an education system. Children learn best in the language they speak at home, their mother tongue, regional language, or a lingua franca. They struggle to follow instructions and understand concepts in languages alien to them. Language barriers, coupled with poor teacher training, inadequate resources, and uninteresting content form a system that pushes children out of a classroom by design. When children learn little, they tend to lose interest in studies, consider education 'useless' and grow unwilling to attend school. As they fall behind their peers, score low on tests, and get highlighted for their learning gaps, they struggle to survive in the classroom. The opportunity cost in terms of income (primarily for boys) or helping with housework or care work (particularly for girls) becomes too high. Thus, it is only natural that cash incentives, free meals, evening programmes, and other such interventions remain ineffective in keeping children in school. Lastly, a child's unwillingness to attend school may also be linked to their social conditioning, environment, and experiences – personal and collective. What the data provides is only a profile summary of out-of-school children and adolescents. What is required to bring them to school and keep them learning is an understanding of their lived realities. As we reiterate Article 25-A's promise, we must remember those who have previously been left out by the system. Beyond enrolments, education reforms addressing systematic disenfranchisement should be pursued. Because the promise shall only be fulfilled when every child has access to a classroom where s/he can truly learn – learn to read, write, add, subtract, abstract, and think.

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Atta-ur-Rahman

The knowledge economy imperative

Knowledge has now become the key factor in determining socio-economic development. The failure of governance in Pakistan is exemplified by a comparison to Singapore.

Singapore has hardly any natural resources and a population of only 5.5 million, about one-fourth of Karachi. Yet its exports last year were a stupendous \$390 billion, due to its visionary leadership that realized that in a knowledge-driven world, the road to progress lies in innovation. Pakistan's exports, alas, stagnate at only about \$35 billion, far lower than even those of Bangladesh, justifying the urgent need for change.

We need an honest, visionary and technologically competent leadership that realizes that our country cannot develop without massive investments in education, science, technology, and innovation (ESTI). The 'triple helix' model for a knowledge economy requires dynamic interaction between proper government policies, high-quality universities and research institutions, and the private sector. It is only through tapping into the huge potential of our 120 million youth that Pakistan can leap forward.

A few examples of how innovation is impacting economies are presented here. Let us first look at the agricultural sector. There are growing global water shortages and decreasing availability of cultivable land caused by the huge increases in the world population (which has now crossed seven billion). This is resulting in increasing efforts by scientists to come up with new, more efficient ways of growing food plants that have higher productivity but need lower amounts of water, fertilizer, nutrients, and pesticides to grow.

In this connection, scientists at Purdue University have discovered that a certain chemical can be used to reduce the size of the plant without reducing its yield. They found that a common fungicide, propiconazole,

can create smaller and sturdier corn plants that produce more kernels but consume less water, fertilizer, and nutrients. The fungicide is claimed to be harmless to humans as it is commonly sprayed on golf courses to treat fungal dollar spot disease. Advanced agriculture is resulting in huge increases in yields with the aid of sensors that can predict and optimize the use of water, fertilizers and pesticides.

In another interesting development, seawater is beginning to be used for cultivating food crops. One way to convert saline water (seawater or brackish underground water) into salt-free fresh water, useful for

drinking or farming, is by a process known as 'reverse osmosis'. This involves pumping the saline water through a special polymeric membrane that allows only water molecules to pass through the pores of the membrane but prevents salt, bacteria, and dirt from doing so.

However, a drawback of this process is that over time, these particles clog up the expensive membrane and damage it. This results in the need for regular costly membrane replacements, increasing costs. Scientists at the University of California, Los Angeles, have now used nanotechnology to develop a new type of reverse osmosis membrane covered with small polymeric hairs. These surface hairs move around rapidly in the water-pumping process, thereby acting as a brush that prevents the deposition of impurities on the membrane surface.

Turning now to health sciences, an important recent development is in the field of aging. How do we age? Can we slow the aging process and prolong life spans? These are questions that have attracted the attention of many medicinal chemists and biochemists. In adults, about 50 to 70 billion cells die each day by a pro-

cess of programmed cell death built into the structure of each cell ('apoptosis'). In children between the ages of 8 to 14, some 20 to 30 billion cells die every day, and even more are replaced by new cells. Over a year, this amounts to about the complete body weight of the child. Oxygen, so vital for our survival, is its reactive form (oxygen radicals), is intriguingly also responsible for the aging process by causing damage to our DNA molecules. That is why antioxidants, such as vitamin C or certain compounds present in red grapes and certain vegetables, are thought to be good for us. Science

portive government policies, and a strong private sector. By fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, India has been able to compete on the world stage, with its IT exports reaching over \$150 billion.

Similarly, Estonia, a small Baltic nation, has emerged as one of the most digitally advanced countries in the world. Through its e-Estonia initiative, the country has digitized nearly all government services, creating a seamless and efficient digital society. This digital transformation has not only improved the quality of life for its citizens but also attracted foreign investment and boosted the economy. Estonia's success highlights the importance of integrating technology into governance and public services to drive socio-economic development.

Education and science remain badly neglected in Pakistan because of corrupt or incompetent leaders who have failed to invest in our real wealth: our children. There needs to be a radical change in our system of governance and a different form of democracy installed before it is too late, as suggested in this weekly series of articles.

Pakistan must prioritize investment in education, science, technology, and innovation to foster a knowledge-driven economy. By learning from the successes of countries like Singapore, India, and Estonia, Pakistan can develop a strategic vision to harness the potential of its youth and create a prosperous future.

The government must implement policies that support the development of high-quality educational institutions, promote research and innovation, and encourage collaboration between academia and the private sector. Only then can Pakistan unlock its true potential and achieve sustainable socio-economic development.

The writer is a former federal minister, Unesco science laureate and founding chairperson of the Higher Education Commission (HEC). He can be reached at: ibne_sina@hotmail.com

In another interesting development, seawater is beginning to be used for cultivating food crops

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



The country's several constitutions reflected more the preeminence of the person holding the highest office than the restrictions imposed on authority, and the national government consistently has been more personalized than institutionalized. The viceregalism of the colonial past has haunted Pakistan from its inception, and struggles for

power are therefore more personal than constitutional. In addition, given the ever-present external threat posed by India, the military not only improved and modernized its fighting capability, but it also felt compelled to intervene in the country's political affairs when it perceived that civilian leadership was unable to govern. The result has been

several military administrations (1958-69, 1969-71, 1977-88, and 1999-2008), which ruled Pakistan for roughly half of its history. A second conflict has taken place between regional groups. The regions that originally made up Pakistan had to be fitted into a design not of their own choosing. The different cultural and historical cir-

cumstances, as well as natural and human endowments of those regions, have tested the unity of Pakistan time and again; the loss of East Pakistan demonstrated the failure of Pakistan's leaders to orchestrate a workable program of national integration.

To be continued....

Showbiz

Elizabeth Banks details 'super scary' near-death experience on set

Elizabeth Banks nearly choked to death while filming her new movie 'Skincare'

Elizabeth Banks feels lucky to be alive. During her recent appearance on Good Morning America, the 55-year-old actress recounted a frightening experience on set of her new movie, Skincare, where she nearly choked to death while "alone" in her trailer during her lunch break. The Hunger Games star explained that a "little green pea" became lodged in her throat, rendering her unable to breathe. Panicked and unable to make any noise, she threw open her trailer door in hopes of finding help. Luckily for Banks, a crew member named Julius quickly came to her



aid and calmly performed the Heimlich manoeuvre, which ultimately saved her life. "He had to do it twice," Banks recalled. "His name is Julius. He is my guardian angel. Julius, I love you," she further gushed with gratitude. The Emmy-nominated actress emphasised the importance of knowing this life-saving technique, clarifying certain misconceptions about the safety of the manoeuvre. "They're dying, so crack a rib if you have to," she urged, adding, "I would've been fine with a cracked rib. I literally couldn't breathe, and it was super scary."

Tech

PTCL internet services hit snag across Pakistan

The Pakistan Telecommunication Company Ltd (PTCL) has said that its internet services faced disruption in various cities across the country. "Currently, the PTCL network is facing data outage in various cities due to which connectivity has been affected," a PTCL spokesperson said in a statement on Wednesday. "Our teams are actively working to resolve and rectify the issue at the earliest," the spokesperson added. In a statement on X, Netblocks that tracks internet outages, digital governance and connectivity, confirmed the widespread internet disruption in Pakistan. "Live network data show a nation-scale disruption to internet connectivity in Pakistan," Netblocks said. It stated that metrics show national connectivity at 24% of ordinary levels, corroborating user reports of a "widespread outage". The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) also confirmed the disruption in inter-



net services in the country. In its announcement on social media, the PTA reiterated that internet services have suffered "up to some extent" in some parts of the country owing to some "fault in PTCL system". In a statement, the telecommunication regulator said that the authorities were monitoring the situation till internet/broadband services are back to normal for all users and work was underway to resolve the issue at the earliest.

Health

Consistent eight-week vegan diet may help to reduce biological age

A recent study carried out by the Stanford Prevention Research Center and TruDiagnostic has revealed the effects an eight-week vegan diet versus an omnivorous diet can have on the biological age of a human body. The researchers aimed to know how a short-term vegan diet would affect a human age and health compared to a non-vegan diet. The results were drawn after assessing the blood DNA methylation and epigenetic aging and how the diet affected them. The minds behind the research divided participants in two groups. The omnivorous group was assigned to eat protein and dairy like meat, eggs and milk while the other group was told to avoid all animal products. Those who strictly complied with the vegan diet for eight weeks showed a decrease in the biolog-

ical ages of five organs including the human heart, hormonal, liver, inflammatory and metabolic systems. As for the omnivorous diet group, an increase was apparent in their tryptophan which is known to elevate serotonin levels indirectly helping in regulating moods. Director of Bioinformatics at TruDiagnostic Varun Dwaraka, PhD told Medical News Today that, "these results were surprising, even among interventions using epigenetic tests." He further added that in other studies involving the epigenetic clocks, changes typically occur after three to six months; however, during this study, they observed massive changes in just eight weeks. Raghav Sehgal who is a PhD candidate in Computational biology and Bioinformatics at Yale University, scientific advisor at TruDiagnostic, and Director of Bioinformatics at the

Healthy Longevity Clinic also shared his remarks on the newest epigenetic study while talking to Medical News Today. "When we look at multiple vegan diets and green Mediterranean (similar to vegan diets except for having milk in them) the common thread we see is that the epigenetic scores for inflammation, metabolic and musculoskeletal aging are all improving. In other words, these diets may be specifically targeting inflammatory and metabolic aging pathways via epigenetics in the body and slowing them down," Sehgal explained. "At the end of the day, the exact mechanism of how these diets are providing benefits might turn out to be through multiple different pathways in the body but the fact that they are providing benefits is very clear to us," Sehgal concluded.



Sindh students spend a day with Pakistan Army at Malir Garrison

Students visited Martyrs' Memorial, offered prayers for deceased, observed various small and large weapons



MALIR GARRISON: Students from various educational institutes of Sindh, including colleges and universities, spent a day with the Pakistan Army at Malir Garrison. The students visited the Martyrs' Memorial and offered prayers for the deceased. They observed various small and large weapons used by the Pakistan Army, including the Khalid tanks. The weapons used by the army sparked particular interest among the students. Students paid tribute to the exemplary sacrifices of the Pakistan Army in defending the homeland and reaffirmed their commitment to stand by their armed forces. "Today, we were able to closely witness military combat capabilities many misconceptions were cleared, and we learned a lot," said a student. Another said: "We are enjoying it a lot and feel a sense of pride in the courageous sacrifices our military makes to defend our country. This country and this army are ours, and we stand with our armed forces." Yet another said: "The propaganda on social media has caused significant damage to our country I have come to the realization that the truth is actually quite different today. While at the Martyrs' Memorial, we placed flowers and honoured our martyrs, experiencing profound sadness that the sacrifices that led to the creation of Pakistan are being misrepresented by shameful propaganda on social platforms."

Minister asks opposition for addressing national challenges

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh Wednesday has made a heartfelt appeal to the opposition parties to join hands with the government and work towards healing the nation's deep-seated wounds. Talking to a Private news channel, he stressed that the government is willing to listen to the opposition's ideas and work together to find solutions that benefit the people, adding, in the leadership of Mian Shabbaz Sharif, the government is fully determined to bring betterment in the economy of the country and we are working day and night to achieve our target goals. He further said that the government has reaffirmed its commitment to boosting the country's value-added exports by establishing industries that drive value-added growth. DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui inaugurated a new building for the Pakistan Education Endowment Fund (PEEF).

UNSC report spotlights TTP-Afghan Taliban collaboration in growing attacks inside Pakistan

UNITED NATIONS: A new United Nations Security Council report has underscored the grave threat to Pakistan's security posed by the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), saying there is an increased collaboration between the TTP and Afghan Taliban in the cross-border terrorist attacks mainly against Pakistani military posts.

"With Taliban acquiescence, and at times support, TTP has intensified attacks inside Pakistan primarily targeting military installations," said the report from the Council's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaeda and associate groups, pointing out that Pakistan suffered more than 800 attacks in the past several months.

"TTP camps with Al-Qaeda and Taliban involvement focus on training local Afghan fighters and TTP operatives," it said, noting that TTP has 6,000 and 6,500 fighters who continue to use NATO weapons obtained in Afghanistan, while also emphasizing the role of night vision capability. "Al-Qaeda is funding purchases of weapons and suicide vests for TTP," the report added.

"The terrorist threat emanating from Afghanistan is causing heightened concern in many (UN) member states," according to the report.

Pakistan has consistently drawn the attention of the international community to the security threat it faces from the TTP terrorists who it says also have external support.

The report said, "There is heightened concern among member states about the terrorist threat emanating regionally from Afghanistan from ISIL-Khorassan and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in particular; new inward travel to Afghanistan of some Al-Qaeda personnel and training, recruitment and reorganization activities."

It cites several UN member states as saying that the Al-Qaeda figure Abu Ikhlas-al Masri was actively collaborating with Jamaat-ul-Ahrar in providing suicide bomber training to TTP in Kunar Province, with two states holding TTP responsible for the March 26 attack against Chinese nationals working on a hydropower dam project near Besham in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"There is increased support and collaboration between TTP and the Taliban, sharing manpower and training camps in Afghanistan and conducting more lethal attacks under the banner of Tehrik-e-Jihad Pakistan (TJP). Therefore, TTP could transform into an umbrella organization for other terrorist groups," the report said.

ISIL-K or Da'esh, it said, remains the most serious threat, projecting terror beyond Afghanistan, while Al-Qaeda exercises strategic patience, prioritizing its relationship with the Taliban.

"Some Member States estimate that ISIL-K has increased from 4,000 to 6,000 fighters, despite the loss of territory and attrition among leadership, while others assess its strength remain-

ing at between 2,000 and 3,500 fighters," the report said, adding it was difficult to estimate an accurate figure.

"ISIL-K has relocated some personnel away from its core area of Kunar and Nangarhar, with factions migrating to Badakhshan, Herat and Nimroz Provinces, adopting an asymmetric warfare strategy better suited to local conditions and to resist Taliban pressure," it said, adding, "The group aspires to control Afghan territory from which to infiltrate neighbouring countries, expanding the terrorist threat to Central Asia, the Russian Federation and Iran." At the same time, the report said that ISIL-K perceives the Taliban as an ideological enemy and opposes the notion of a Pashtun-centric Taliban governance. "The group's narrative aims to reduce the Taliban's credibility among the Afghan population and trigger sectarian fault lines, promoting the idea that the Taliban has deviated from Islamic principles, while portraying itself as advancing the 'wider Khorasan'."

As regards Al-Qaeda, its status, location, and strength in Afghanistan have not changed, remaining dormant, according to the report, noting that this group remains strictly hierarchical. "Despite lacking current capacity to conduct large-scale operations externally, Al-Qaeda seeks to strengthen cooperation with regional terrorist organizations of non-Afghan origin, such as ET/IM/TIP, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Jamaat Ansarullah (JA) for expansion to Central Asia." APP

Rana Tanveer for increasing exports to stabilize country's economy

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Industries, Production, Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Husain on Wednesday emphasized to make the Department of Plant Protection more viable so that export target could be increased for stabilization of the economy. He expressed these views during his visit to Department of Plant Protection, where he also held meeting with senior officers of the department and the stakeholders. The Minister also heard grievances of the stakeholders and assured for addressing their genuine issues.

Director General of Department of Plant Protection Tariq Khan and other senior officers also briefed the Federal Minister regarding the internal processes and operations of the department.

"The Minister said there was a need of quality production so that exports could be increased as compared to our imports. Enhancing our exports could stabilize Pakistan's economy, Rana Tanveer said, adding that inefficient methods of agriculture management caused a lot of damage to the economy and now these methods be replaced with modern one to achieve required goals. He stressed the need of restoring trust of the investors so that they come forward and invest their capital in agriculture and other sectors. Rana Tanveer urged the stakeholders to devise relevant strategies to counter a global concerns of the food security which posed severe challenges.

He stated that there was popular demand of the 'Halal' meat even from non Muslim countries, this shows that there exist markets for our products and through structural strategies and long term analysis of markets, we should aim to tap into these areas and broaden the base of exports.

The stakeholders, in their grievances, demanded to ensure ease of doing business so that they could perform at the highest possible level. The Director General of Plant Protection Department Tariq Khan pressed the need for aversion of ban on export products from Pakistan to European countries as this was matter of great concern for the industry. He said the digitisation of the Plant Protection Department and integration with Pakistan Single window, inter agency coordination and real time data exchange would be improved and led to maintaining transparency and accountability. Tariq Khan said on the directions of Federal Minister, the Plant Protection Department and stakeholders were tasked to maximize Methyl Bromide registration to ensure conducive environment for fumigators, who are in turn directly responsible for plant yield and export quality products.

The Federal Minister concluded by urging Plant Protection Department and the stakeholders to remain steadfast in transparent practices. Rana Tanveer urged them to perform diligently and honestly to achieve the desired results. The meeting was attended by senior officers of Plant Protection Department, representatives from Crop Life Pakistan Association, Fumigation Department of the Plant Protection Department, Rice Export Association of Pakistan, APSEA and Customs Department. The meeting was attended by senior officers of Plant Protection Department, representatives from Crop Life Pakistan Association, Fumigation Department of the Plant Protection Department, Rice Export Association of Pakistan, APSEA and Customs Department. APP

Baz takes oath as CEC of GB



(R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah Supreme Appellate Court Gilgit-Baltistan, Chairman PAC Gilgit Baltistan Iqbal Naseer, Chairman Standing Committee Gilgit Baltistan Ayub Shah, Muhammad Ali Member Gilgit Baltistan Council, Syed Shabi ul Hasnain Member Gilgit-Baltistan Council and Provincial Election Commissioner

ISLAMABAD: Chief Judge of Gilgit Baltistan Supreme Appellate Court Hon. Justice Sardar Muhammad Shamim Khan administered the oath of newly appointed Chief Election Commissioner Gilgit Baltistan Judge (R) Raja Shah Baz Khan (T'st) here at Gilgit Baltistan Council on Wednesday. The oath taking ceremony took place here at Gilgit-Baltistan Council Secretariat was attended by distinguished guests, including Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Engr Amir Muqam, Coordinator Prime Minister Shabir Ahmad Usmani, Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan, Secretary Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry, Joint Secretary Gilgit Baltistan Council Sudheer Khan Khattak, Chief Justice

Abid Raza. Registrar of Supreme Appellate Court Gilgit Baltistan Aqil Hassan Chohan conducted the proceedings of oath taking ceremony. The Officers and Staff of the Supreme Appellate Court were also present on the occasion.

After the ceremony, the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Engr Amir Muqam, Coordinator to Prime Minister for Kashmir Affairs Shabir Ahmad Usmani, Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan felicitated the newly appointed Chief Election Commissioner of Gilgit Baltistan.

Federal Minister including all the distinguished guests extended their best wishes to the newly appointed Chief Election Commissioner of Gilgit Baltistan. DNA

CM felicitates police on successful operation in Kacha

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif congratulated the Punjab Police on carrying out a successful operation against the dacoits in the Kacha area.



The CM paid tribute to Inspector Muhammad Rizwan on embracing martyrdom during

carrying out the operation due to heart attack.

The CM expressed her heartfelt sympathies and condole with the bereaved family.

She directed to provide the best treatment facilities to the injured constable. She said, "It is the first and foremost duty of the Punjab government to protect life and property of people and we will fulfill it under any circumstance." PR

Inordinate delay in completion of Kachhi Canal Project irks Musadik Malik

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Water Resources Dr Musadik Malik on Wednesday expressed displeasure over inordinate delay in completion of Kachhi Canal Project.

Chairing a high level meeting on Kachhi Canal Project, the minister directed the concerned quarters to expedite work on the project, said a statement issued here.

He said that the projects faced delay in name of procedural process. However, he said that now the project would not remain in mere papers.

During the briefing, the minister inquired about approval of revised PC-1 of the project from the Planning Commission of Pakistan.

Provincial Irrigation minister Sadiq Inrani informed the meeting that Balochistan was getting less water. The province suffered billion of rupees loss due to provision of less water, he said and asked for taking action in this regard.

He also urged for appointing WAPDA as third party for addressing this issue.

Participating in the meeting through video link, Chief Minister Balochistan Sarfraz Bugti said



that an agreed formula was devised for provision of water during a meeting held in the President House which should be implemented.

Dr Musadik Malik said that they would make all out efforts to sort out this issue. This meeting would be the first step for confidence building, he added.

In the meeting, it was decided to set up a committee, comprising all stakeholders under the chairmanship of Secretary Water Resources. Minister of Irrigation Sindh also participated in the meeting. — VOM Report

Pakistan Wildlife Protection Awards honour collective resolve for biodiversity conservation: Romina

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Coordinator for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam on Wednesday said the Pakistan Wildlife Protection Awards conferred upon six exemplary wildlife protectors from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan symbolise the collective resolve for biodiversity conservation.

She was addressing the Pakistan Wildlife Protection Awards as chief guest to mark the World Ranger Day here at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) jointly organized by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Snow Leopard Foundation, and Devcom-Pakistan with the support of Snow Leopard Trust, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, PNCA, and the provincial wildlife and forest departments of Gilgit-Baltistan, AJK, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Romina Khurshid Alam said these individuals have shown extraordinary courage and dedication in protecting the precious wildlife and natural habitats. "Their efforts remind us of the crucial role that each of us plays in preserving the biodiversity that sustains our ecosystems. These awards are not merely tokens of

appreciation, they symbolize our collective resolve to support and honor those who stand at the forefront of conservation. We shall not forget the challenges that lie ahead. Climate change poses a significant threat to our ecosystems and the wildlife that inhabit them. It is imperative that we continue to strengthen our conserva-

wildlife habitats for future generations. This event showcased momentous wildlife photos by an internationally known Pakistani wildlife photographer Jamal Leghari, launching of a book by the late Zahid Baig Mirza, screening of a documentary on snow leopard "The Silent King". The most important segment of the

Wildlife Ambassador Sardar Jamal Khan Leghari.

The Pakistan Wildlife Protection Awards honored six exceptional wildlife guards, watchers, and rangers. Sarmad Shafa, Range Forest Officer of the Gilgit-Baltistan Parks and Wildlife Department, won the IbeX Award and the Blue Sheep award for their conservation and protection efforts in Gilgit-Baltistan. Two efficient officers of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife Department, the Wildlife Ranger Syed Musaddiq Ali Shah, and the Deputy Ranger Wildlife Zaid Ahmad declared winners of the Markhor Award and the Wolf Award respectively.

The Musk Deer Award is earned by Jan Muhammad Nasir, Game Watcher, AJK Wildlife Department. All the awardees were also presented with a souvenir, an appreciation certificate, a field kit and cash prizes of Rs 150,000 for the National Award Winner and Rs 100,000 for the rest of five the Regional Award Winners, respectively.

Patricia appreciates PMYP's role in empowering Youth



ISLAMABAD: Secretary General of the Commonwealth of Nations RT Patricia Scotland has commended the role of Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan for his outstanding contribution to youth development in Pakistan.

During a meeting with the Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, (PMYP) Rana Mashhood at the Prime Minister's office, she expressed pleasure and gratitude for the extensive support provided by the Prime Minister's Youth Programme in the region to empower youth.

"With your continued efforts, Pakistan can ascend from being number three to number one in the global employability and entrepreneurship index for youth", she hoped. On the occasion, the Chairman PMYP Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan briefed the Secretary-General and the Commonwealth delegation on

the various initiatives spearheaded by the Prime Minister's Youth Programme.

He outlined the programme's inclusive approach to youth empowerment, including equipping youth with essential skills to enhance their employability under the Skill Development Programme and providing digital gadgets to bridge the digital divide and foster technological advancement under the Prime Minister's Youth Laptop Scheme.

The Chairman also briefed the Commonwealth secretary general about the Prime Minister's Youth Loan Scheme which offered interest-free loans to support young entrepreneurs in establishing and growing their businesses.

"We are committed and aim to provide all kinds of opportunities to empower youth with the necessary tools and resources to thrive in their careers and entrepreneurial ventures", he added.

The meeting underscored the resilient partnership between the Prime Minister's Youth Programme and the Commonwealth, reflecting a shared commitment to youth development and empowerment. Officials of the Commonwealth of Nations and PMYP were also present on the occasion. APP



efforts," the PM's aide said. She highlighted the indispensable role of wildlife guards, watchers, and rangers in safeguarding the country's natural heritage. She emphasized the importance of their dedication and bravery in combating wildlife poaching and preserving ecosystems. The speakers underscored the collective resolve to protect and preserve Pakistan's rich biodiversity and

ceremony was the inaugural Pakistan Wildlife Protection Awards, where the efforts of dedicated wildlife protection champions were celebrated and honored. The guests of honour included Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari, Head of Climate Change at the British High Commission in Pakistan Anna Balance, Ambassador of Norway, Per Albert Ilsaas, and Senator and