



Pledged the ministry's full support in addressing the pressing issues impacting the business community during a meeting with PBF

*Federal Minister for Commerce
Jam Kamal Khan*

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COAS pays tribute to Army veterans for dedication in shaping nation's history



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir has paid heartfelt tribute to the contributions of the retired personnel, lauding their dedication and instrumental role in shaping the nation's history.

The COAS hosted a graceful reception in honor of Pakistan Army veterans on the occasion of Independence Day. The event brought together a multitude of retired army officers and soldiers, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

The COAS paid heartfelt tribute to the contributions of the retired personnel, lauding their dedication and instrumental role in shaping the nation's history. He emphasized the paramount importance of unity and resilience in the face of challenges, urging veterans to continue playing a vital role in Pakistan's progress and development.

The COAS also cautioned against the insidious threat of fake news and propaganda being perpetrated by inimical elements to weaken the bond between the people of Pakistan and the Armed Forces. He reassured that the unwavering support of the nation, including the veterans would foil all such futile efforts.

The veterans expressed faith and confidence in the leadership of the Pakistan Army, pledging their support in combating both internal and external security challenges. The event served as a testament to the unbreakable bond between the Pakistan Army and its veterans, united in their commitment to the nation's prosperity and security. PR



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb presiding over a meeting of Economic Coordination Committee (ECC).

Atta Tarar commends Army's accountability measures

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar Thursday commended the Pakistan Army's accountability measures in connection with the arrest of General Faiz Hameed, saying the detention proved link between Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and the elements hatching conspiracies to destabilise the country.

Talking to the media here at Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Secretariat Model Town, he noted the recent developments in the country, saying the self-accountability process was a welcome move and crucial for preventing further unrest in the country.

He said the accountability process was expanding and three more retired officers of army had been arrested, as revealed in an ISPR press release. The arrests were part of the investigation into General Faiz Hameed's actions, demonstrating a significant step in curbing the destabilisation attempts.

With detention of army officers, it had been established that a political party and its leader had coordinated with General Faiz, resulting in attempts to create unrest and



instability in country. He also pointed out that during the no-confidence motion, General Faiz and his associates were actively involved in political activities. The minister emphasised that no one was allowed to compromise national security. Even in liberal societies around the world, immediate accountability and strict monitoring were carried out for those conspiring against the state. Further investigation and additional arrests were anticipated, he said and added that it appeared that there were even attempts to communicate from the PTI founder while in jail.

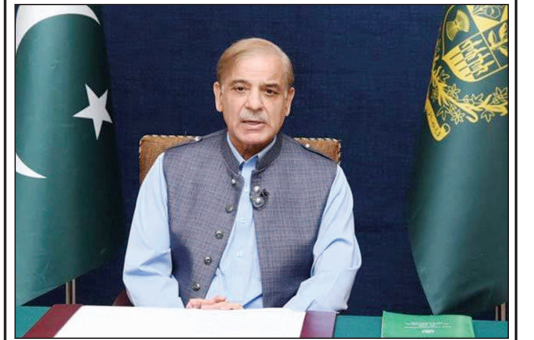
Minister Tarar noted by reaffirming that the military's reputation as one of the best institutions globally was due to its transparent accountability process, based on irrefutable evidence. He stated that the country could not afford to allow the economy or national security to be jeopardised for political gains. The government is committed to ensuring no leniency in this matter, he added. As Pakistan moves towards recovery, with the currency stabilising, positive developments regarding dollar, and gradual decreases in petrol prices.

He highlighted ongoing efforts to safeguard the country from turmoil and to bring peace and stability.

Under the Prime Minister's direction, significant steps are being taken to achieve economic and political stability. In his August 14 speech, the PM outlined plans to provide relief to the public through reduced electricity bills and to soon release a comprehensive economic agenda.

He is expected to address the nation in the coming days, during which he will present a five-year economic plan detailing the reforms intended to improve the economy and ease the lives of all Pakistanis.

PM Shehbaz calls for vigilance against flooding in Punjab's urban, Chenab river areas



VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif directed the NDMA, PDMAs, and other relevant agencies to remain on high alert to address the potential severe flooding in areas near the Chenab River and urban flooding caused by heavy rains in Punjab.

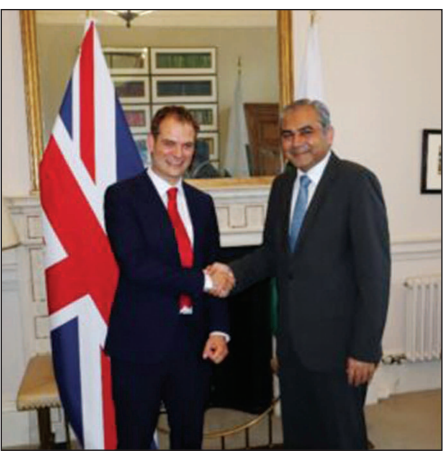
According to a statement from the PM Office Media, the prime minister indicated that he was personally monitoring the anticipated heavy monsoon spell until August 25.

He had directed National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMAs), rescue and relief agencies, civil defense, and district administrations to be prepared to protect residents in the Chenab River catchment area and cities at risk of flooding due to heavy rains. The prime minister directed the relevant authorities to ensure preparations for the evacuation and rescue of people, as well as for drainage, water, medicines, tents, and other relief items in any emergency situation, besides safeguarding the public.

He directed the relevant agencies to keep the public informed about the anticipated flooding in vulnerable areas and to take precautionary measures to prevent expected floods around canals, nullahs, and rivers.

He also instructed that citizens be made aware of NDMA's Disaster Alert application to monitor the situation at all times.

United Kingdom acknowledges unprecedented sacrifices of Pakistan rendered in war against terror



ISLAMABAD: The United Kingdom has acknowledged unprecedented sacrifices of Pakistan rendered in war against terror.

This was stated by British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Hamish Falconer during a meeting with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in London today.

Speaking on the occasion, Mohsin Naqvi said Pakistan is a victim of terrorism and its armed forces have rendered unmatched sacrifices in the war against terrorism. He said the collective efforts to curb the scourge of terrorism will prove result oriented.

Mohsin Naqvi further said second phase of repatriation of Afghan refugees will be started soon. He further said that Pakistan is a peace loving country and want good and cordial relations in the region. SABAH

Muhammad Aurangzeb chairs the meeting of ECC

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chaired a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet at Finance Division today.

The meeting was attended by the Minister for Industries & Production Rana Tanveer Hussain, Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, Minister for Privatization Abdul Aleem Khan, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission, Federal Secretaries, and other senior officials of the relevant ministries.

The Cabinet Committee approved the proposal presented by the Industries & Production Division to continue the Prime Minister's Relief Package for FY 2024-25 through Utility Stores Corporation with revised price and subsidy.

Furthermore, the ECC approved the request of Ministry of Industries & Production to declare Warehousing and Logistic Sector as an industry. SABAH

Seven terrorists killed, five injured in Kurram IBO

RAWALPINDI: Seven terrorists were eliminated while five got injured during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted by the security forces in Kurram district on Thursday on the reported presence of Khawarij (TTP terrorists).

During conduct of the operation, the Army troops effectively engaged the Khawarij's location, as result of which, seven Khawarij of Fitna Al Khawarij were sent to hell, while five of them got injured, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

The Khawarij's hideout was also busted and a large quantity of weapons, ammunition and explosives was recovered.

The killed Khawarij remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against the security forces as well as the innocent civilians. "The sanitization operation is being conducted



to eliminate any other Kharij found in the area as the security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe-out the menace of terrorism from the country," the ISPR said. PR

Minister pledges to address problems of business community

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan has pledged the ministry's full support in addressing the pressing issues impacting the business community during a meeting with Pakistan Business Forum (PBF). The meeting highlighted several critical challenges, including Pakistan's disproportionately high electricity costs, which are hampering the country's ability to compete internationally, said a news release. During the meeting, the representatives of the PBF stated that Pakistan's electricity costs, at 20 cents per unit, far exceed those of regional competitors such as India and Bangladesh, where costs are around 4 cents per unit.

The minister acknowledged that the high electricity tariffs have severely hindered the competitiveness of Pakistani industries in the global market, thereby stifling export growth.

"We can't compete with the international market and can't increase exports unless we address the issues related to cost of production," he emphasized.

President of PBF, Khawaja Mehboob ur Rehman said for decades, Pakistan's inward-looking trade policy regime has constrained economic growth and export performance. High tariffs, pervasive import bans, complex regulatory duties and extensive red-tape have led to serious distortions in the economy.

"We can't compete with the international market and can't increase exports unless we address the issues related to cost of production"

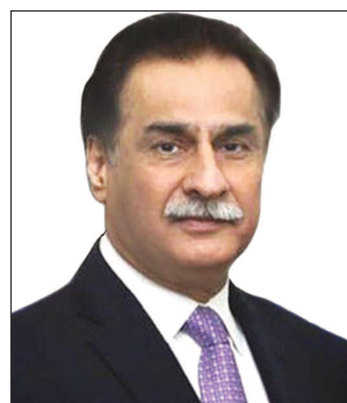
These policies might have served a purpose in the past, but are now fundamentally misaligned with Pakistan's development needs and changing global economy. There is an urgent need for comprehensive reform to liberalise trade, boost competitiveness and enable export-led growth. He said Pakistan's trade policy approach has historically centred on import substitution industrialisation and protecting the domestic industry through high tariffs and non-tariff barriers. This was rooted in a view that imports were 'bad' and threatened domestic production and employment. While ISI met with some early success, the policy outlived its utility as inefficiencies became entrenched. INP

Sardar Ayaz Sadiq orders wide-ranging administrative reforms in NA Secretariat

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has ordered wide-ranging administrative reforms in the National Assembly Secretariat.

While taking cognizance of austerity measures, the Speaker NA Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has spearheaded the administrative reforms and abolished 220 non-essential posts in grade 1 to 19, which would save the national exchequer more than 563 million rupees annually. Furthermore, saving one billion rupees annually has been envisioned by Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq.

It is also pertinent to mention that two of the three phases of administrative reforms have been implemented successfully. In the 1st phase, 90 non-essential posts of various grades in the National Assembly were abolished which saved 25 crore 52 lakh 64 thousand rupees annually. In the 2nd phase, eliminating 130 non-essential posts from BPS 1 to 19 has resulted in saving more than 30.75 million rupees.



Implementing both phases has resulted in an annual saving of more than Rupees 56 crores, while additional savings of Rupees 40 crore will be achieved in the 3rd phase. The policy initiatives have been approved in a meeting of the Finance Committee of the National Assembly Secretariat held under the chairmanship of Speaker NA Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. Decisions

approved in Finance Committee meeting include: implementation of the austerity plan, rationalizing needs and requirements of the National Assembly Secretariat, improvement in the procedure of determination, elimination, appointments and promotions, ensuring transparency and accountability. Furthermore, the Finance Committee has stopped further recruitment in the National Assembly Secretariat unless decided otherwise, while a sub-committee has also been formed to review the National Assembly Secretariat Employees Act 2018 to make it more compatible with Civil Servants Act, 1973. The Committee will propose amendments to National Assembly Employees Act 2018 with the purpose to determine the strength of staff according to the needs of the National Assembly Secretariat and to improve the system of promotions and appointments. The meeting was also informed that a 'ticketing and lodging committee' consisting of representatives of all

relevant departments of the National Assembly Secretariat has been formed, which will bring more transparency in the execution of the work, and the work of the officers and staff will be clearly outlined. It will help in evaluating their performance, and overall resources will also be saved.

The meeting also apprised of the process of digitization of the National Assembly Secretariat so that the paperless and modern technologies may be introduced at the workplace. The meeting also apprised about the work started by team of Punjab Information Technology Board in this regard. Moreover, Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has also directed to ensure timely construction of additional blocks of Parliament Lodges. It is pertinent to mention that under the visionary leadership of Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, solarization of the Parliament Building has saved millions of rupees annually to national exchequer. SABAH

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Rulebook for rational dialogue

MALIK MUHAMMAD AHMAD KHAN

As the speaker of the Punjab Assembly and custodian of the House, I am committed to fostering a culture of reasoned and respectful debate. This is essential for a healthy representative democracy. Deliberations cannot occur without rational discussion, and rational discussion cannot exist without mutual respect. Shouting and verbal abuse are no substitutes for reasoned arguments. Instead, abuse only serves to undermine the strength of the House and the will of democracy at large.

The crucial task of strengthening democracy cannot be achieved without an effective legislature. An effective legislative assembly includes a vibrant and active opposition. I understand that our society is highly polarized, and this naturally finds its way into the assembly as well. However, the assembly, as a shared space, provides a unique opportunity to create a sanctimonious environment within which a polarized society may heal by virtue of a common interest in the proceedings of the House.

The problems besetting our province of 127 million people are immense. And the most important place where we can actively work to resolve them is the legislature. Constructive work within the assembly is contingent upon a healthy and deliberative environment. The issues faced by this densely populated province cannot be overcome through fighting within the House. A deliberative assembly that debates, guides the government, and holds the executive accountable is the need of the hour. The historical trajectory of how the House has often been conducted in the recent past would disgrace any seasoned parliament. However, with a strong belief that previous errors are to be learned from and not mourned over, I am determined to ensure that this time, we do things differently. With this vision at the heart of my conduct as speaker of the Punjab Assembly, I have taken several steps to provide fair opportunities to the opposition members within the assembly.

First, I have accepted and ruled on an unprecedented number of opposition points of order. I have, so far, announced five rulings (in just the first five months of the assembly) on the points of order raised by the opposition; and two out of five points of order were declared in order, so much so that we suspended the membership of 27 treasury MPAs on a point of order raised by the opposition. During the tenure of the previous assembly (2018-23), the speaker had announced only five rulings in more than four years. I also notified and provided space for the deputy leader of the opposition. Similarly, in April 2024, despite hesitation by the government, the issue of wheat procurement was put to debate for four days on the agenda of the assembly at the insistence of the opposition benches.

The point I am attempting to make here is that opposition members have been given ample time to voice their concerns on the floor of the House and I have strived to run the House in a neutral and unbiased manner. Second, to support and strengthen the Punjab Assembly, we have established a dedicated Parliamentary Development Unit (PDU) to spearhead legislative reform, ensure capacity building of the members, and modernize the approach to policymaking within the house. Under this initiative, we have established a parliamentary research centre to assist members with assembly proceedings. The aim behind this is to ensure that the debates and discussions taking place within the house are of the highest quality and cadre. The services of these initiatives are available to all members of the assembly without any discrimination based on party. Third, we have undertaken the monumental task of revising the Rules of Procedure of the Punjab Assembly. Recognizing the importance of cross-party ownership of this exercise, due representation was given to members of the opposition bench and their suggestions were incorporated. A substantial number of changes, including those relating to supplementary assembly questions among others, were made on the demand of the opposition members. Fourth, my office personally undertook the initiative of devolving the speaker's powers to the standing committees to strengthen them, increase their efficiency, and allow room for members to work autonomously. Immediate steps have been taken to activate these committees, with several already operational.

The purpose behind highlighting a few of our recent measures is to communicate the momentum and spirit with which I had hoped to conduct the business of this House to strengthen the foundation of democracy within the largest provincial assembly of Pakistan. Unfortunately, however, this spirit has not been reciprocated by the opposition benches. Instead of engaging in constructive debate, avoidable and unprovoked ruckus on the part of the opposition members prevented the leader of the house from speaking in the House. This runs contrary to all parliamentary conventions, norms, and practices. Not only in Pakistan but across the world. The established norm is that when the leader of the house and the leader of the opposition have the floor, parliamentary traditions require that they be heard. Fiscal oversight is the most basic function of the House. The intense disruption was deliberately caused during the budget session – the most important session and exercise of the year. This conduct, at a critical juncture of assembly proceedings that would seal the fate of provincial finances for the entire year, stands contrary to all established parliamentary practices. The right to protest is not absolute; it has its limitations. The scope of the right in the assembly proceedings is extremely narrow. It has to be balanced by the consideration of the smooth conduct of the proceedings of the House. The right cannot be exercised at the cost of the core functions of the assembly. This was done even though whenever the leader of the opposition has stood to speak, I have ensured that he is heard respectfully. Likewise, the number of members given the floor to debate the budget during the 2018-23 tenure ranged between 64 and 147 while during Budget 2024-25, we accommodated a record 154 members with equal representation from the treasury and opposition benches.

The writer is the speaker of the Punjab Assembly.



Asghar Soomro

Back to school?

per day. The students are not allowed to take these iPads to their homes and are expected to hand them over to the teacher at the end of their class. Regarding the eligibility for admission, children aged seven years and older, who are currently out of school, are admitted to these micro schools. One micro school caters to 100 students for 18 months. Last, following the completion of the short-ened courses, students need to be mainstreamed into the formal education system, for which arrangements

are yet to be made. Here comes a million-dollar question: how can we effectively reach genuine out-of-school children in the vicinity? It remains the most challenging aspect of the project, and I speak from experience. Nearly a decade ago, a UKaid-funded initiative titled 'Education Fund for Sindh' launched a project aimed at enrolling out-of-school children in three areas of Sindh viz Karachi, Khairpur Mirs and Qambar Shahdadkot. The strategy involved identifying genuine out-of-school children, locating nearby private schools and then enrolling them by covering their fees, books and uniform expenses. To identify these children, the project relied on data from two sources: the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and third-party surveys. Despite diligent efforts, the project struggled to enroll even 0.2 million children over two years. During the period of monitoring and

scrutiny of student data, it was discovered that half of the children identified as out-of-school children were already enrolled in other schools, and had inadvertently and adventurously migrated to this programme. In essence, enrolling 0.3 million out-of-school children in a year is no easy task. Hiring and training 600 teachers, conducting surveys, and managing logistics within such a short timeframe is indeed a formidable challenge. The SEF requires dynamic, visionary gains. Since Pakistan's inception, over 20 programmes have been introduced at various times, some successful, others discontinued halfway, and some continuing in altered forms to this day. Currently, non-formal institutions account for 8.0 per cent of education institutions (25,106) in the country, which is less than religious schools or madrassahs (14 per cent or 43,613). The sustainability of non-formal institutions remains a challenge, primarily because it does not have permanent premises and other necessary resources. Therefore, this sector lacks the potential for substantial expansion and scaling up. Thus, random, short-sighted and superficial initiatives merely represent the symptomatic treatment of a deeply rooted chronic problem. Out of the 7.6 million OOSC in Sindh, 4.18 million are girls who have either never set foot in the classroom or dropped out due to various reasons, largely due to the deplorable conditions of essential facilities in public schools.

At the primary level, where the highest number of OOSC (3.2 million) is concentrated, 66 per cent of schools lack electricity, 38 per cent lack drinking water, 43 per cent lack toilets, and 39 per cent are without boundary walls. Amid this backdrop of neglect and inequality within formal education, the initiative of introducing digital micro schools with iPads appear grossly misplaced. It is time to overhaul the entire education system and set our priorities right, accompanied by enhanced transparency, accountability and a long-term vision

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Digital micro schools are, in fact, non-formal schools that run accelerated courses over 18 months

are yet to be made. Here comes a million-dollar question: how can we effectively reach genuine out-of-school children in the vicinity? It remains the most challenging aspect of the project, and I speak from experience. Nearly a decade ago, a UKaid-funded initiative titled 'Education Fund for Sindh' launched a project aimed at enrolling out-of-school children in three areas of Sindh viz Karachi, Khairpur Mirs and Qambar Shahdadkot. The strategy involved identifying genuine out-of-school children, locating nearby private schools and then enrolling them by covering their fees, books and uniform expenses. To identify these children, the project relied on data from two sources: the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and third-party surveys. Despite diligent efforts, the project struggled to enroll even 0.2 million children over two years. During the period of monitoring and

and actively engaged leadership with strong credentials. Unfortunately, in recent years, retired bureaucrats have been hired for the managing director position. This practice of recycling bureaucrats is demoralizing for young and competent officers who are keen to introduce innovative ideas. Since its establishment in 1992, the SEF has managed to enrol 0.9 million through its various programs. Given this track record, how is it expected to enrol 0.3 million students just in one year? Isn't it ironic? The SEF continues to struggle with its existing responsibilities, including the task of functionalizing 500 closed or poorly performing schools in Sindh. Despite efforts, only 100 schools have reportedly been revived so far. With 26.2 million out-of-school children (OOSC) in Pakistan, focusing efforts on non-formal education models will not lead to significant

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

Today in History

History of Pakistan

Education suffered a major setback in the 1970s as a result of the nationalization of private schools and colleges. The reversal of that policy in the 1980s led to a proliferation of private institutions, particularly in the large cities. In the 1980s the government also began to focus on the Islamization of the curriculum and the increased use of Urdu as the medium of instruction. During that period there was also an increase in the number of madrassahs (Islamic schools) established throughout the country, particularly in poorer areas. (The added incentive of such institutions has been that most are residential schools, providing room and board at no cost in addition to a free education.) Although many of these schools provide good quality education in religious as well as secular subjects, others are simply maktabas

(primary schools) that provide no basic education, even for older students, beyond the memorization of scripture; a number of those—particularly schools found along the Afghan border—have been recruiting and training centres for jihadist groups. The more-Westernized segments of the population prefer to send their children to private schools, which continue to offer Western-style education and instruction in English. A number of private schools offer college entrance examinations administered by educational agencies in the United States and the United Kingdom, and many graduates of these schools are educated abroad. The division of the educational system into a private Westernized section and a state-run Islamized section has thus caused social tensions and exacerbated the problem of "brain drain,"

the emigration to the West of many of the better-educated members of the population. Ceiling of the mosque of Maryam Zamani, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan. Pakistan shares influences that have shaped the cultures of South Asia. There are thus wider regional similarities extending beyond the national boundaries; cultural ways in Pakistan are broadly similar to those experienced in large parts of Afghanistan and northern India. This entire region was deeply influenced by the Arabic-Persian culture that arrived with Muslim conquerors beginning roughly a millennium ago. On the other hand, the specific regional cultures of Pakistan present a picture of rich diversity, making it difficult to speak of a single Pakistani culture. Residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, for example, lead lives similar to fellow Pashtuns

in Afghanistan. In other parts of the country, Urdu-speaking muhajirs brought with them many cultural ways and values found among the Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim populations of northern India. Throughout Pakistan, as in most agrarian societies, family organization is strongly patriarchal, and most people live with large extended families, often in the same house or family compound. The eldest male, whether he is the father, grandfather, or paternal uncle, is the family leader and makes all significant decisions regarding the family and its members. Traditionally, a woman's place in society has been secondary to that of men, and she has been restricted to the performance of domestic chores and to fulfilling the role of a dutiful wife and mother.

To be continued....

Showbiz

Katy Perry's music video under investigation for unauthorised filming

Spanish authorities examine potential damage from Katy Perry's music video shoot

Spanish authorities have launched an investigation into the production company behind Katy Perry's latest music video, Lifetimes, for filming without permission on protected dunes in the Balearic Islands. The video, directed by Stillz, features Perry partying and clubbing on the Mediterranean islands, but officials claim that authorisation was not sought to film on the ecologically sensitive land on the isle of S'Espalmado in Formentera. While officials are examining potential damage to the dunes, Perry and the production team are not at risk of being persecuted for any "crime against the environment" because



videos and photography "can be authorised" upon request. A preliminary investigation has been launched because, according to the ministry in charge of the area's conservation, "in no case had the production company requested authorisation from the ministry to carry out the filming." A label spokesperson told The Hollywood Reporter on Wednesday that "the local video production company assured us that all necessary permits for the video were secured. We have since learned that one permit was in process, although we were given verbal authority to go ahead."

Tech

Netizens frustrated as internet remains throttled in Pakistan

Internet users in Pakistan continue to grapple with limited connectivity and partial outages with no official word available from the concerned authorities. Customers are having trouble accessing internet services due to limited connectivity, particularly while using mobile data in some regions. The government blocked access to the social media platform X, formerly Twitter, around February's election, citing national security concerns, but users still cannot open the website without using a VPN (virtual private network). The internet disruption is not only affecting citizens' rights but also causing financial losses to the national exchequer, as several online businesses, including e-commerce and ride-hailing services, are bearing the brunt of the restricted connectivity. Users of the widely used messaging application WhatsApp in Pakistan have also reported frustratingly long delays and failures when uploading and downloading con-

tent of all types. Netizens are demanding that the government avoid throttling social media platforms arguing that it was not only hindering communication, which is their basic right, but also bringing a bad name to the country globally. The PTA has yet to respond to the matter despite being contacted repeatedly. Lately, the Pakistan Telecommunication Company Ltd (PTCL) mobile internet services went down, which were restored after a daylong breakdown. Reportedly, a recent trial run of a firewall in Pakistan, prompted by security concerns over 'digital journalism,' has nearly crippled most social media platforms and apps. This has sparked uncertainty about the future of internet-based businesses and raised serious concerns about digital rights and freedoms. Last month, government officials familiar with the situation stated that internet speed would be restored after the firewall trial was completed.

Health

Pakistan reports first monkeypox case of 2024

Pakistan on Thursday detected the first case of monkeypox of 2024 among a Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) citizen who flew back home from Saudi Arabia — just a day after the National Command and Operation Centre (NOC) issued an alert to stop the potential spread of diseases via foreign travellers. Officials from the federal health ministry said that the young man belongs to Dir and is currently residing in Mardan. The infected man was detected with Mpox following his return from the kingdom on August 3, they added. The health ministry's officials further said that they collected more samples of people who came in contact with the affected man. Subsequently, the ministry also ordered the Border Health Services to commence strict monitoring of all entry points. Taking further measures to stop its spread,

an important session was held at the Health Ministry under the chair of DG Health in which advisory and guidelines were issued regarding Mpox. The provinces have been directed to appoint focal persons to monitor and report developments regarding the detection of the disease. It is noteworthy to mention here that the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the recent spread of monkeypox a global emergency a day ago. In the past year, Pakistan has confirmed nine cases of Mpox, all among travellers returning from the Middle East and other countries. Tragically, one patient, who was co-infected with HIV and Mpox, later died in Islamabad. During the special session of the NOC on Mpox, it was noted that around 15 African countries are currently reporting Mpox cases, with a total of 2,030 confirmed cases. Four countries —

Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda — previously unaffected by Mpox, have reported cases since mid-July 2024. According to NIH officials, the WHO reported that from January 1, 2022, through June 30, 2024, a cumulative total of 99,176 laboratory-confirmed cases of Mpox, including 208 deaths, were reported from 162 countries across all six WHO regions. In June 2024 alone, 934 new cases were reported, with most cases coming from the African Region (61%), followed by the region of the Americas (19%) and the European region (11%). The WHO has noted a decline in reporting, which means recent trends in Mpox cases should be interpreted with caution. WHO continues to encourage all countries to ensure that Mpox is a notifiable disease and to report cases, including when no cases have been detected (known as 'zero-reporting').



After Gen Faiz Hamid, three more retired servicemen taken into military custody



RAWALPINDI: In connection with the Field General Court Martial (FGCM) proceedings of Lieutenant General (ret'd) Faiz Hamid, three more retired officers have been taken into military custody, the army's media wing said on Thursday. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) added that the retired officers were arrested for their actions prejudicial to military discipline.

Those who have been arrested include Brig © Ghaffar and Brig © Naem. One colonel Asim has also been arrested.

"Further investigations of certain retired officers and their accomplices for fomenting instability at the behest of and in collusion with vested political interests are continuing," it also said. On August 12, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said Gen Faiz had been taken into custody by the army over allegations of land grabbing and snatching valuables from the owner of a private housing society. "Complying with the orders of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, a detailed court of inquiry was undertaken by the Pakistan Army to ascertain the correctness of complaints in Top City Case made against Lt Gen (ret'd) Faiz Hamid," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) had said. Consequently, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) had said appropriate disciplinary action had been initiated against the former spy-master under provisions of the Pakistan Army Act. It had added that multiple instances of violation of the Pakistan Army Act post-retirement had also been established against the former general, who also served as Peshawar corps commander. "The process of Field General Court Martial has been initiated and Lt Gen (ret'd) Faiz Hamid has been taken into military custody," the ISPR had said in the communiqué.

The arrest was made in connection with a petition filed by a housing society's chief executive officer (CEO) in the Supreme Court last year, wherein the former ISI director general (DG) was accused of land grabbing and stealing valuables during a raid. In a plea filed with the apex court's human rights cell (HRC) in November 2023, the petitioner sought action against the former DG ISI. PR

FO tightens visa rules amid rise in political asylum claims by parliament staff

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office has introduced stricter guidelines on the issuance of visa notes and note verbales for the Senate and National Assembly Secretariats after the growing trend of Parliament employees and officers seeking political asylum abroad.

Following the approval of Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, the Foreign Office immediately implemented these new guidelines. Foreign Secretary Cyrus Sajjad Qazi communicated the changes through an official letter addressed to the Secretaries of the Senate and National Assembly, outlining the revised procedures. The letter specifies that the facility of issuing note verbales for private visits to holders of diplomatic and official passports has been discontinued. Additionally, the issuance of letters of introduction for visa purposes to the families of officers from the National Assembly and Senate Secretariats has been banned.

For private passport holders accompanying members of Parliament on official and private visits, a new requirement mandates an affidavit to ensure that the visa-seeking individual will not seek asylum in the destination country. Furthermore, an undertaking must be provided, confirming that the Foreign Office's introduction letter will not be misused. The guidelines also state that letters of introduction will no longer be issued to family members of officers from the National Assembly and Senate Secretariats. Diplomatic and official passport holders will now only receive note verbales for official visits after a formal request from the Senate or National Assembly Secretariat. Private visit requests will be processed following the updated policy guidelines. These changes reflect the Foreign Office's commitment to preventing the misuse of diplomatic privileges and ensuring that visa processes are not exploited for political asylum purposes. INP

Death toll from Israeli assaults in Gaza passes 'grim milestone' of 40,000 deaths: UN

UNITED NATIONS: As the number of Palestinians killed by Israel's deadly attacks in Gaza passes the dark milestone of 40,000, UN rights chief Volker Turk has called for an end to the killings while negotiators prepared to meet in Qatar to renew efforts to halt the conflict and avert a wider war.

"Most of the dead are women and children. This unimaginable situation is overwhelmingly due to recurring failures by the Israeli Defence Forces to comply with the rules of war," Turk, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, said in a statement on Thursday.

"On average, about 130 people have been killed every day in Gaza over the past 10 months," he added, citing estimates based on data from the enclave's health authorities, before describing the "scale of the Israeli military's destruction of homes, hospitals, schools and places of worship [as] deeply shocking." He noted that his Office had documented serious violations of international humanitarian law by the Israeli military and Palestinian armed groups, including Hamas fighters. Meanwhile in Gaza, a fortunate few



in the devastated enclave enjoyed a little respite from the ongoing conflict, at a restored water pumping station in Khan Younis.

"The last time I visited this well was at the end of April, and it was destroyed, surrounded by shrapnel and potential unexploded ordnance," said Louise Wateridge, spokesperson for UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestine refugees, which led repairs at the facility.

"I saw so many children not only collecting drinking water for their families, but also enjoying cooling off and playing under the water, spilling over from filling the larger tanks... a basic

joy that is available to so few here." The severe shortage of clean water throughout Gaza since the war began has compounded families' efforts to stave off disease and malnutrition, highlighting the importance of the reopened facility in the southern city and beyond to tens of thousands of people. It is the largest drinking water supply to families in Khan Younis and operates for eight hours a day, "pumping over 500 cubic metres of clean drinking water on a daily basis to around 100,000 displaced people," Ms. Wateridge said in an online video post that showed children and adults

filling up jerrycans and other youngsters playing happily under a leaky hose.

"There are so few water sources across the Gaza Strip that many families are forced to travel huge distances in sweltering temperatures," she explained. "Others are not able to access [clean water] at all, forcing them to survive on dirty water."

Despite the "relentless" bombing, the UNRWA official noted that in addition to those arriving at the water station in person, tankers were being filled continuously to serve those unable to go there themselves. As humanitarians welcomed the development, media reports indicated that new evacuation orders had been issued by the Israeli military, impacting Al-Qarara and Al-Sathar in and around Khan Younis. On Tuesday, communities in Makhta and Beni Suhaila in eastern Khan Younis received orders to move to the so-called "safe zone". According to the UN aid coordination office, OCHA, the order impacted essential services, including eight water and sanitation facilities, along with two primary health-care centres. APP



ISLAMABAD: Dark clouds hovering over the Federal Capital. As Forecasting Center Islamabad predicted more monsoon rains from 14th to 18th August with occasional gaps. ONLINE

Pakistan to declare Snow Leopard as Int'l symbol of Climate Adaptation

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam, during "Pakistan Wildlife Protection Awards, 2024" ceremony reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to designate the snow leopard as an international symbol of high mountain ecology and climate adaptation. This declaration highlights the nation's dedication in combating climate change and preserving its unique wildlife, a news release said.

The upcoming Conference of the Parties (COP29) of the (UNFCCC) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, scheduled for November 11-22, 2024, in Baku, Azerbaijan, provides a prime opportunity to promote the snow leopard as a global symbol of high mountain ecology and climate adaptation.

During the 8th Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) steering committee meeting in Samarkand in March 2024, the committee reaffirmed the significance of the snow leopard in high mountain ecosystems. It was agreed to request the UN Secretary-General to officially recognize the snow leopard as a powerful international symbol of high mountain ecology and climate adaptation.

Asia's high mountains, often referred to as the "third pole of the Earth," are home to the world's 14 highest peaks and are experiencing warming at twice the rate of the Northern Hemisphere. This accelerated warming is impacting glaciers and ecosystems across



regions including the Himalayas, Hindu Kush, Pamir, Tien Shan, Altai Mountains, and the Tibetan Plateau.

Pakistan, which is one of the five countries most vulnerable to climate change and steward of 80,000 square kilometres of snow leopard habitat, has seen significant glacier retreat over the past two decades—affecting agriculture, water supplies, hydroelectric power, and wildlife habitats.

Romina Khurshid Alam emphasized the need for both national and international cooperation to tackle climate change challenges. "Climate change poses a significant threat to our ecosystems and wildlife. Rising temperatures and extreme weather events are altering habitats and putting pressure on vulnerable species.

We must strengthen our conservation efforts and work together to mitigate these impacts," she stated. Romina further highlighted that "recognizing the snow leopard as an international symbol of climate change resilience will enhance Pakistan's image as a nation

demonstrating sustainable and harmonious development with nature".

Dr. Muhammad Ali Nawaz, Director of the Snow Leopard Foundation, expressed gratitude for the motivation to perusing the recognition of the snow leopard as an international symbol. He emphasized the significance of this moment for wildlife preservation and noted that in 2007, Snow Leopard Foundation (SLF) Pakistan scientists tracked a snow leopard in Chitral, revealing the need for transboundary conservation efforts as the leopard traversed 1,600 square kilometres between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Dr. Nawaz also highlighted the formation of the GSLEP in 2013, an alliance of 12 countries (Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) committed to protect snow leopards and their habitats. Pakistan's role in GSLEP underscores its leadership in wildlife conservation.

GSLEP Emissary and wildlife ambassador Sardar Jamal Khan Leghari expressed optimism about this initiative, stating that "it will reinforce efforts to protect the snow leopards and enhance Pakistan's reputation as a leader in sustainable development". He emphasized the urgent need for action to address climate challenges in the "Third Pole" region.

"Snow leopards, residing near snow-capped peaks, symbolize healthy mountain ecosystems, climate resilience, and biodiversity conservation. They play a crucial role in providing essential ecosystem services such as freshwater supply and carbon sequestration, benefiting billions of people downstream."

Shehbaz Sharif, Asif Zardari appreciate security forces for conducting successful operation against Khwarij in district Kurram

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has appreciated security forces for conducting successful operation against Khwarij in District Kurram. In a statement, he said security forces are committed to end the menace of terrorism from the beleaguered country.

The Prime minister said the entire nation stands with our forces to end terrorism.

Meanwhile, President Asif Ali Zardari has paid tribute to security forces for conducting successful operation against Khwarij in district Kurram.

In a statement, President appreciated professionalism of the security forces in this operation.

President reiterated national commitment to continue operation for the complete elimination of the menace of terrorism. He said entire nation stands with its forces for this cause. SABAH

ADM Group keen to invest \$250m in Pakistan says Rana Tanveer

ISLAMABAD: ADM Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Yasir Bhambhani has said that the ADM Group is keen to invest an amount of \$250 million in Pakistan for the manufacturing of electric vehicles to provide ecological-friendly automobiles to local consumers.



In a meeting with Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain, he said the first phase of the project charging network station would be established, followed by the manufacturing of electric vehicles in the second phase. He said the electric vehicles will have a range of 300 kilometres on a single charge.

The minister said the government is ready to facilitate direct foreign investment in the country, and the Ministry of Industries and Production is committed to collaborating closely with all relevant stakeholders to ensure a smooth process. He emphasized the importance of focusing on green energy, adding that electric vehicles have become a reality.

Rana Tanveer highlighted the benefits of electric vehicles, including their lower cost compared to traditional vehicles and fuel savings. INP

Balochistan CM Sarfaraz Bugti says BLA terrorists killed Panjgur deputy commissioner

QUETTA: Informing that Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) terrorists had killed Panjgur Deputy Commissioner (DC) Zakir Baloch, the provincial Chief Minister (CM) Mir Sarfaraz Bugti on Thursday made it clear that his government would not tolerate any separatist movement. Addressing a press conference in Quetta, the chief minister stated categorically that Pakistan did not come into existence to disintegrate. He questioned whether killing unarmed innocent civilians was a Baloch tradition.

"I felicitate all Pakistanis on the occasion of Independence Day," he said, adding, "Functions were held peacefully in the province, including Quetta, in connection with the big day."

Advising the Baloch youth not to pay heed to the enemies' propaganda, he assured them that the government would resolve the issue of missing persons. "We have introduced a scheme for the province's youth under which we will provide loans to them on soft terms." He accused the Baloch Yakjehti Committee of thrice violating the agreement reached between them and the government. INP

Tarar announces financial assistance for deceased journalist

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar has announced financial assistance of 2.5 million rupees for the deceased senior journalist Akhlaq Bajwa. Talking to the media during a visit to condole the demise of senior journalist Akhlaq Bajwa at his residence here on Thursday, he said an amount of 2.5 million rupees in a fixed deposit account was being provided to the family in this hour of need.

Akhlaq Bajwa had dedicated most part of his life as parliamentary reporter and was the sitting president of the Punjab Assembly Press Gallery Committee. Earlier, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar condoled with the family of the deceased journalist and offered Fateha for the departed soul. To a query, he said the amount was in addition to the already announced relief by Speaker Punjab Assembly Malik Muhammad Khan, adding that the Speaker had announced a job for one of Akhlaq Bajwa's sons.

He said Akhlaq Bajwa was a dedicated and committed journalist.

The minister paid tribute to the journalistic contributions of the journalist, adding that he stood like a rock in the face of unparliamentary practices at the Punjab Assembly in the recent past.

The minister also asked the journalists to come up with the proposals so that some government building, a block at the Lahore Press Club or some government project may be dedicated to the deceased Akhlaq Bajwa.

He urged the Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA) and other bodies to protect the media workers, adding that the government saved the media industry from two taxes in the recently announced fiscal budget. He said the minimum wages should not be less than 37,000 rupees, urging the media houses to implement the policy.

He said the government had already established health insurance for the journalists, adding that the media houses should come forward with proposals to start life insurance for the media workers. He said all journalists would be covered under the Health Insurance. He said that the media houses should become partners in starting life insurance for the media workers.

To a query, the minister said he would talk to Provincial Minister Azma Bukhari regarding grant of the Lahore Press Club. The information minister said that there was need to some regulations for the social media, adding that the newspapers and news channels had some regulations and it needed to be applicable to the social media presenters as well. APP

Good News for Students: CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif to Award Prizes to Position Holders of all Education Boards in Punjab

LAHORE: "Award prizes to position holders of all education boards in Punjab," Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed the authorities concerned while presiding over a special meeting of the Education Department.

She added, "Also give prizes to each teacher of these talented students."

Madam Chief Minister approved Students Scholarship Programme and Laptop Scheme for students, and directed the relevant authorities to take necessary measures for their launch. She said, "Punjab government will pay more than Rs 125 billion annually to meet all educational expenses of 25000 students." Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed to start a transport program for female stu-



dents, under which buses will be given to 60 girls' colleges of Punjab in Phase-I. She said, "Take immediate steps for the establishment of IT hubs in all districts of Punjab." Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb and Provincial Education Minister Rana Sikandar Hayat attended the meeting. Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman, Principal Secretary to CM Sajid Zafar Dal and Secretary Higher Education Dr. Farrukh Naveed were also present. PR