



Government is taking all possible measures to transform the education system by improving infrastructure, enhancing facilities and focusing on skill-based education

Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training
Dr. Khalid Maqbool

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Ahsan Iqbal commends Huawei's collaboration to build 'Digital Future' for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation from Huawei Pakistan met with Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday to discuss the company's latest digitization initiatives in the country.

The delegation comprised the company's CEO Ethan Sun, Director Subsidiary Board and Deputy CEO Ahmed Bilal Masood and Vice CEO Yushaoming, a news release said. During the meeting, the delegation provided updates on their progress in implementing various projects, including the development of Islamabad as a model smart city, as proposed by the Minister in a previous meeting.

The emphasis was on the importance of digital infrastructure in driving the new age economy.

The discussion also centered on digitizing education infrastructure, improving access to smart devices for underprivileged students, and establishing smart classrooms as a priority area under ongoing education reforms. Huawei officials highlighted their online Learning Management System, which enables students across Pakistan to access new ICT courses. Furthermore, the meeting touched on the need for e-government initiatives to achieve a paperless government. Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal commended Huawei's digital transformation plans, stating, "A robust digital ecosystem of learning, innovation, and efficiency is crucial for Pakistan to meet 21st-century digital demands. Huawei's collaboration in building a digital future for Pakistan is indeed commendable."

Senate passes Election Amendment Bill

ISLAMABAD: After approval from the National Assembly, the Senate has also passed the Election Act Amendment Bill, which bars independent candidates from joining political parties after a designated post-election period, subject to review by the top court. The "Elections (Second Amendment) Act, 2024" has proposed changes to the Elections Act 2017. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Senator Talal Chaudhry presented the amendment bill in the upper house of parliament where it was passed by the majority. Leader of the Opposition Senator Shibli Faraz opposed the bill and said that this bill is against the democratic values. Meanwhile, the Federal Minister for Law Azam Nazir Tarar while commenting on the bill said "The elected Parliament has the right to lawmaking, and it cannot be given to 17 people." Replying to the Opposition Leader in the Senate, Azam Nazir Tarar said that PTI violated all rules during their government established unconstitutionally in 2018. He said that PTI had come in the government through huge rigging and even it did not allow the opposition to complain against the election theft. Tarar said that PTI should apologize for their unconstitutional acts. According to the details, the bill also said that an independent candidate shall not be considered a candidate of any party if they filed a statement to that effect at a later stage. APP



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Huawei headed by Ethan Sun, CEO Huawei Pakistan called on Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal to discuss progress of the company's digitization initiatives in Pakistan.

DPM Dar arrives KSA to attend OIC extraordinary meeting

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday arrived in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to participate in the Extraordinary Meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Executive Committee. At the Madinah airport, the deputy prime minister was received by Ambassador of Pakistan to Saudi Arabia Ambassador Ahmad Farooq and Director General of the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs Madinah Branch Ibrahim bin Muhammad Saeed Alsobhi, Ministry of Foreign Affairs posted on X account. The deputy prime minister and foreign minister would participate in the Extraordinary Meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Executive Committee on 7 August, which is being convened at the request of the State of Palestine and the Islamic Republic of Iran to discuss the ongoing Israeli aggression against Palestine and other regional states, the spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the earlier press release said. "As one of the staunchest supporters of the Palestinian cause, Pakistan has always been at the forefront in raising its voice at all international fora, including the Organization of



Islamic Cooperation (OIC)," it was added. At the extraordinary meeting, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister would present Pakistan's serious concerns about the dire situation in Gaza and the wider Middle East region. "He will emphasize the urgency of peace and provision of relief assistance to the people of Gaza. On the sidelines, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister will hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts from other OIC member states," the spokesperson said.

Interior minister assures foolproof security for Chinese citizens, businesses

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday assured foolproof security for Chinese Citizens and staff working on projects in Pakistan. A high-level meeting between Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and a Chinese business delegation, led by Consul General Zhao Shirin, focused on improving safety measures for Chinese citizens and staff in Pakistan.

The meeting, attended by top officials from law enforcement agencies, discussed suggestions from Chinese businessmen to enhance security protocols. Naqvi assured the implementation of feasible suggestions, prioritizing the safety of Chinese citizens.

He announced that online visas for Chinese citizens would be available from August 14, facilitating their business travels to Pakistan. The meeting aimed to review and refine Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the convenience of Chinese citizens.

Consul General Zhao Shirin expressed optimism about the meeting's outcome, highlighting the "ideal relations" between Pakistan and China. The meeting was also attended by senior officials from Punjab, including the Inspector General of Police and the Interior Secretary.

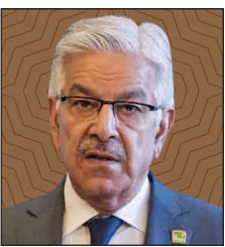
This development underscores Pakistan's commitment to fostering a secure environment for Chinese investments and businesses, further solidifying the bilateral relationship between the two nations.

Independence day celebrations: CJP Faez Isa donates 31680sq ft land for public for Environmental Centre

QUETTA: Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Qazi Faez Isa and his family has announced to celebrate the 77th Independence Day of Pakistan by gifting 31,680 square feet of land from his ancestral property to Balochistan government for establishment of an Environmental Centre.

A letter, duly signed by the chief justice of Pakistan and his family member Qazi Azmat Isa, reads as "We own land measuring 31,680 square feet which lies adjacent to the Quaid-e-Azam's Residency in Ziarat ('the Land') which we want to donate free of charge for public purpose and use as an environmental centre, which would sensitize people to the uniqueness of the Juniper forest, impart learning and the principles of environmental conservation." It may be recalled that Chief Secretary Balochistan, through a letter written to the provincial revenue authorities, had sought land adjacent to the Quaid-e-Azam's residency for setting up of the environmental center. In response to public interest, and part of Independence Day celebrations, CJP announced to donate the ancestral land. "Pakistan is approaching 77 years of Independence and, if the government agrees, we would want this gift for the people to take effect on the auspicious day of 14 August 2024," the letter read. The letter further declares that the Land shall only be used for the said public purpose in perpetuity. APP

Parliament holds authority to enact laws: Khawaja Asif



ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said that Parliament is the supreme institution and it holds the authority to enact laws.

Speaking on the floor of the National Assembly on Tuesday, he said "We respect all institutions, but they have the mandate to interpret the constitution and not to rewrite." He expressed concern that interference from one institution into another would weaken the democracy. He said that democracy is far superior to dictatorship and that the respect and constitutional sanctity of the parliament must not be compromised. He stressed the importance of continuing the democratic journey, acknowledging that while democracy has its shortcomings, these are present even in devel-

oped democracies like the UK and the US. "The US and UK are also struggling; candidates are being attacked in the US," he added. He added that despite political differences, the institutions of the country must not be attacked. The minister said, "No system is flawless. We should be thankful that the system is operational in our country. Some people may have some reservations about it, but Parliament is respectable, and question marks should not be placed on it." He argued that questioning the legitimacy of Parliament would weaken the system and urged political parties to work towards strengthening democracy and the Parliament. Regarding the Kashmir issue, the minister highlighted national unity on the matter and reiterated Pakistan's stance that the Kashmir issue must be resolved in accordance with United Nations resolutions. He lamented that resolutions on Kashmir and Palestine had not been implemented and said that the will of the people of Kashmir must be respected.

PM congratulates athlete Arshad Nadeem on Olympic javelin throw final qualification

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday congratulated Pakistani athlete Arshad Nadeem on qualifying for the final round of the javelin throw events at the 2024 Olympics.

He lauded Arshad Nadeem's outstanding performance, stating he has won the admiration of the entire nation through his exceptional work and relentless dedication.

The prime minister wished Arshad Nadeem success in the 2024 Olympics and praised his contributions for promoting the javelin throw.

He highlighted that Arshad Nadeem's hard work and dedication served as an inspiration for the youth and recalled the meeting with Arshad Nadeem at the PM House in March 2024.

The prime minister noted that Pakistan possessed vast talent that required further development and affirmed the government's commitment to support athletes on the international stage. APP

Punjab has every right to pass its own laws: Tarar

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information, Broadcasting, Culture and National Heritage Attaullah Tarar objected to the discussion on the Punjab Defamation Act by the Senate Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting, presided over by Senator Syed Ali Zafar on Tuesday.

According to the minister, Punjab had every right to pass its own legislations that could not be discussed at the committee forum in accordance with the constitution and law. Such a practice could encourage interference of one institution in the domain of the other, he added. Defending the legislation, Attaullah Tarar said that those who had resources could file defamation suit abroad to seek swift action against the accused persons, but the situation in Pakistan was otherwise.

The minister said that in the past some Chinese companies were accused of kickbacks and case in this regard had been going on for six years. The Punjab government has passed a law

which would apply in that province alone and could not be discussed here, he stressed.

Senator Irfan Siddiqui also opposed the view to the review of the committee on a legislation passed by Provincial Governments, as the matter fell under the ambit of Provincial Governments following the 18th Amendment.

Senator Syed Ali Zafar opined that the primary objective of this agenda was to conduct a comparative analysis of defamation laws currently prevailing worldwide.

He emphasised that purpose of the law should be to balance fundamental rights and freedoms, rather than to diminish one at the expense of the other. The Committee decided to hold an exclusive session to discuss the impact of defamation acts on society and freedom of expression. Meanwhile, the information minister briefed the committee on Right of Access to Information (Amendment) Bill 2023, Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals (Amendment) Bill 2022. APP

Empowering women key to community-based disaster resilience, Romina

Empowering Women and Girls in Disaster Management: One-Day National Dialogue Organized by NDMA

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Coordinator on Climate Change Romina Khurshed, Chair of the Women Parliamentary Caucus, emphasized that, "Women are not just victims of disasters; they are agents of change and resilience. Their unique perspectives and capacities must be integrated into our disaster management strategies to build a stronger, more inclusive Pakistan." The event facilitated knowledge exchange on best practices, identified challenges and opportunities for enhancing women's participation in disaster efforts, and developed actionable recommendations for gender-sensitive policies. NDMA's Gender & Child Cell (GCC), in collaboration with UNWOMEN Pakistan,



UNICEF Pakistan, Catholic Relief Services, Islamic Relief, Hands, and Welthungerhilfe (WHH), hosted a successful "One-Day National Dialogue on the Role of Women and Girls in Disasters". This event spotlighted the critical yet often underutilized contributions of women and girls in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and management. Participants discussed how women and girls

possess invaluable knowledge and capacities that significantly enhance community resilience and recovery, yet their contributions are frequently overlooked in formal DRR frameworks.

Chairman NDMA Lt General Inam Haider Malik and Prime Minister's Coordinator on Climate Change Romina Khurshed Alam attended the Dialogue. Chairman NDMA emphasized the impor-



tance of proactive responsiveness and social resilience in disaster management. He stressed the need for adaptive measures to address climate-related challenges. The Chairman acknowledged that disasters disproportionately affect vulnerable communities, particularly women and girls. However, their potential for resilience-building remains largely untapped within formal disaster risk reduction (DRR) and anticipatory action frameworks. He also highlighted that this platform aims to facilitate the sharing of experiences, identify best practices, and develop actionable strategies. Chairman NDMA underscored the critical contributions of women and girls, address the barriers they encounter, and advocate for gender-sensitive policies and practices in Pakistan's DRR efforts.

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Earth's fever has hit new highs

SAMEERA SHEIKH

According to the EU monitor, our planet is heating up at a pace that defies imagination, with 2023 temperatures eclipsing any period in the past 100,000 years. This relentless rise can be traced back to the industrial juggernaut that began its course in Europe during the late 18th century. The legacy of fossil fuel-driven progress has spread like wildfire across the globe, creating an era of replication and expansion.

In the face of such dire prospects, the world's leaders convened in 2015 at the UN Climate Change Conference, giving birth to the Paris Agreement, a beacon of hope aiming to restrain the "increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 C above pre-industrial levels", while striving to "limit the temperature increase to 1.5 C."

This agreement stands as a testament to the historical culpability of developed nations in the atmospheric accumulation of greenhouse gases. The Paris Agreement, a binding international accord on climate change, implores its signatories to submit Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) every five years, each time enhancing their climate action plans. In this global narrative, Pakistan has played its part, submitting two sets of NDCs to the UNFCCC: the first in 2016, and a more ambitious one in 2021. The latter commits Pakistan to a 50 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, a monumental pledge with 15 per cent reliant on domestic resources and a staggering 35 per cent contingent on international financing. These pledges place a heavy financial burden upon Pakistan, for transitioning to renewable sources of energy, the country needs \$101 billion and, to put things in perspective, this figure was calculated in 2021 – before the massive devaluation of the Pakistani rupee. The finances needed to meet national commitments are colossal and, to say the least, so are the needs of the country to handle the adverse effects of climate change. Pakistan, persistently ranking among the top ten most climate-vulnerable countries, faces a barrage of extreme weather phenomena: searing heatwaves, tropical storms, unprecedented rainfall, and glacial lake outburst floods. The pressing question looms: how can Pakistan finance the transformative measures necessary to combat the climate crisis? Many nations turn to carbon markets for a solution. The rationale is twofold: first, incentivization through carbon credits from reduction and removal projects, be it transitioning to e-mobility or expanding forests to absorb emissions. Second, cost efficiency in implementing NDCs, with studies suggesting carbon markets could slash costs by as much as 250 billion dollars by 2030. The Paris Agreement endorses carbon markets through three mechanisms: a) utilization of Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs) towards NDCs under Article 6.2; b) establishment of a mechanism to mitigate GHG emissions and support sustainable development under Article 6.4; and c) non-market approaches to assist NDC implementation. In Pakistan, the Ministry of Climate Change & Environmental Coordination has drafted Carbon Market Policy Guidelines aimed at facilitating carbon trading, targeting a ceiling of 50 per cent or 280 MtCO₂e of the conditional target across sectors like transport, energy, and forestry. Provincial consent is pivotal as these projects span the country. However, provinces have voiced concerns over mandatory fees, particularly the Corresponding Adjustment Fee set at \$4 per credit or 12 per cent of gross revenues, and the allocation of 10 per cent of credits for future NDC implementation.

The ministry's arguments for these fees are compelling: the need for Pakistan to elevate its mitigation targets and acquire carbon credits to curb emissions as economic growth accelerates and per capita emissions rise. The uniform fee structure is defended as necessary to fund adaptation and resilience activities in a country besieged by climate vulnerability. Provincial counterarguments are equally persuasive. High fees could deter investment in crucial sectors like industry and transport. They argue that fees should be reinvested by the Ministry based on provincial recommendations, ensuring local benefits.

A compromise is essential to resolve this standoff. Prolonged deadlock serves neither federal nor provincial interests, and the relentless march of climate change demands urgent, unified action. Managing the unrelenting impacts of climate change must be the top priority and even the worst of differences must be set aside for the public good. To come to an agreement, the federal government can set the ball rolling by setting up institutional infrastructure for trading in carbon markets, that is establishing appropriate methodologies for quantifying mitigation outcomes, and setting up a national registry and greenhouse gas inventory for authorization and sale of credits. Further, a Monitoring, Review and Valuation system may also be instituted by employing technologies like Artificial Intelligence for independently assessing the precision of reduction/removal of carbon emissions and ensuring environmental safeguards. To put it simply, participation in global climate markets is contingent upon capacity building, so the Ministry of Climate Change can initiate capacity-building activities for different stakeholders, especially at the level of districts. Capacity-building programmes could empower district-level officials to manage carbon credit projects while protecting local communities. Provinces could also see their concerns addressed by lower corresponding adjustment fees for projects in highly degraded or vulnerable areas and a collaborative matrix for spending accrued fees on high-priority resilience and mitigation initiatives.

As global negotiations under Article 6 advance towards COP29, unresolved provincial reservations could thwart Pakistan's ability to benefit from carbon offset projects and secure vital climate finance. The stakes are immense: failure to align could leave Pakistan's populace, already on the climate crisis frontlines, without the means to develop locally suitable mitigation and adaptation strategies.

The writer is a civil servant.



Abdul Sattar

Visible and invisible subsidies

Subsidies, especially those extended to poor people in Western and developed states, have always been resented by free market advocates who argue they amount to encouraging people to be sluggish, lazy and parasitical. They hate the very idea of extending help and succour to people from the bottom layer of social stratification.

Market fundamentalists, therefore, fiercely support the idea of a brutal austerity programme, urging the governments to slash social welfare budgets to strike a fiscal balance. It is perhaps the influence of these followers of laissez-faire that forced many countries, known for their social welfare projects, to cut down on such spending, which spells a disaster for people in several Western states, leading to the rise of far-right demagogues.

While subsidies given to the people in the form of benefits or social welfare are much talked about, other invisible forms of favours go unnoticed or largely ignored by the mainstream corporate media. Anti-austerity critics point out the hypocrisy of free market thinkers who do not want any government intervention and want to see a society where capitalists are fiercely competing with each other and letting the market decide their fate, but whenever a crisis hits a capitalist country, these advocates of unbridled capital want the government to inject money from the public taxes in a bid to clear the mess created by the anarchy of production and blind competition between capitalists.

Many advocates of capitalism – from liberal economic thinker John Maynard Keynes to free market fanatic Milton Friedman – wanted the hard-earned money of the people to be spent for the benefit of the capitalist economy, especially when it is on the verge of a financial or economic meltdown. Keynes strongly supported lavish spending of public money on worthless infrastructure projects to stimulate the economy

which might also benefit people in one or another way. At the same time, Friedman advocated limited state intervention to bolster the capitalist class in times of crisis.

It is interesting to note that free-market thinkers are quick to point out governments spending on social welfare programmes, accusing them of wasting precious resources but tend to ignore the invisible forms of subsidies extended to the super-rich or elites of various capitalist states. For instance, former US president Barack Obama was lambasted for expanding the scope of medical insurance but very little is said about the \$800 billion bailout package that he doled out to banks. Trump's government offered a substantial reduction in taxes to American businesses and manufacturers in a bid to persuade them to invest inside the US. But no objection was raised. These favours created immense fiscal imbalances that were naturally bridged by cutting down on social spending or burdening people with more taxes.

Similarly, the UK, a country that followed the ruthless free market philosophy of Fredrick Hayek during the time of Margaret Thatcher, doled out favours to banks and other economic entities. It was estimated in 2017 that some banks were doled out a hidden £23 billion-subsidies a year. This was in addition to the nationalization of some banks, including Northern Rock.

According to the British parliament's website, from September 2007 to December 2009, the government made several interventions to support the banking sector generally and several banks specifically. "It injected \$137 billion of public money in loans and capital to stabilise the financial system, most of which has been recouped over the years. In addition to cash support, the Treasury also provided financial guarantees to help restore confidence in the banks. Guarantees are promises to repay or compensate investors if they lose their money, so that if all goes well, guaranteees don't cost the government. The National Audit

Office (NAO) estimates that total guarantees added up to over \$1 trillion at peak support." The champions of the free market turned a blind eye to the process of nationalizing the losses and privatizing the profits. One might describe them as visible subsidies but there are other types of subsidies that might be called invisible. For instance, the US spent \$16 trillion on defence, weapons and wars between 1945 and 2001. If we add up the \$8 trillion that it spent on the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, then the total would be a whopping \$24 trillion. Who benefited from this mammoth spending? The military-industrial complex, oil conglomerates, large banks, catering outlets, food businesses, electronic entities and several other vested interests. They were paid out from public money which should have been spent on improving infrastructure, free college education and supporting the low-income families.

France also doled out these clandestine subsidies. It carried out several military expeditions across Africa in a bid to prop up governments that turned a blind eye to its ruthless exploitation of uranium and other minerals in the most impoverished continent of the globe. Paris has been cutting down on social spending for years or dithering on allocating sufficient funding for people's welfare schemes. Who benefited from these expeditions? The nuclear lobby and other vested interests.

India has also emerged as one of the biggest military spenders. The ruling elite in the largest democracy is less concerned about extending relief and succour to over 243 million poor officially (over 600 million unofficially depending upon the criteria used to measure poverty) and more about how to appease the corporate sector and vested interests.

Since the rise of Modi, the elite has been receiving a lot of favours. The Modi regime not only extended substantial relief in taxes last year to high-income individuals but it also intends to spend over \$200 billion to modernize the military.

According to a report of the Commit-

tee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt, the top 10 per cent of the Indian population now holds 77 per cent of the total national wealth. "Between 2018 and 2022, India is estimated to have produced 70 new millionaires every day. Billionaires' fortunes increased by almost 10 times over the last decade and their total wealth is higher than the entire national budget of India for the fiscal year 2018-19." The report goes on to add, "In contrast, 63 million Indians are pushed into poverty because of healthcare costs every year – almost two people every second. Indeed, it would take 941 years for a minimum wage worker in rural India to earn what the top paid executive at a leading Indian garment company earns in a year. While the country is a top destination for 'medical tourism', the poorest Indian states have infant mortality rates higher than those in sub-Saharan Africa. India accounts for 17 per cent of global maternal deaths, and 21 per cent of deaths among children below five years."

Samyukta Kisan Morcha, an umbrella of farm unions, claims that over 100,000 farmers have committed suicide in the last ten years of Modi's rule. Citing various global bodies, the CADTM reveals, "India ranks 111th of the 125 nations in the Global Hunger Index (2023) report. India is home to over a third of the world's malnourished children, which is not only a health crisis but has a wider impact on the economy. A 2023 joint report by FAO, Unicef, WHO and WFP, found that 74 per cent of the population cannot afford healthy food."

Many critics believe that the issue of poverty in India, college debts in the US, improvement of the health system in the UK and reduction in social welfare funding in several middle- and high-income countries can be addressed if visible and invisible subsidies doled out to the rich are abolished.

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

Today in History

History of Pakistan



Pakistan's four provinces are divided into divisions, districts, and sub-districts (tehsils, or tahsils). These units are run by a hierarchy of administrators, such as the divisional commissioner, the deputy commissioner at the district level, and the subdivisional magistrate, subdivisional officer, or tehsildar (tahsildar) at the tehsil level. The key level is that of

the district, where the deputy commissioner, although in charge of all branches of government, shares power with the elected chairman of the district council. During the period of British rule, the deputy commissioner was both the symbol and embodiment of the central government in remote locations. Expected to serve the constituents in numerous

ways, the officer's responsibilities ranged from that of magistrate dispensing justice to record keeper, as well as provider of advice and guidance in managing the socioeconomic condition. Those multiple roles have varied little since independence, but increasing emphasis has been placed on self-help programs for the rural populace.

In addition to the provinces, Pakistan has the Islamabad Capital Territory and a number of tribal areas that are administered by the provincial governments. The areas of Kashmir under Pakistani control are administered directly by the central government.

To be continued.....

Showbiz

Jenna Ortega to collaborate with Glen Powell, J J Abrams' untitled movie

Jenna Ortega in final talks with J J Abrams' secret movie

Jenna Ortega is all set to join J.J. Abrams' untitled movie at Warner Bros. Deadline reported that the Wednesday star will star opposite Glen Powell, who is also finalising his deal. The outlet revealed that Abrams had written the script while Bad Robot would produce this new movie. Powell's latest movie Twisters earned past \$200 million stateside and \$275M worldwide, while Ortega could get credit for having the latest Scream VI notch its best domestic opening ever at \$44.4M and best stateside take for the franchise at \$108.1M. The outlet noted that among all the Scream movies on a global box office, Scream VI is the third highest-grossing



picture in the series. Interestingly, Powell and Ortega were flagged as being a part of the "New A-List," per The Hollywood Reporter. For the unversed, Ortega-starring Wednesday is the most watched series in Netflix history with 252.1 million global views. Meanwhile, Ortega also has the A24 movie Death of a Unicorn which will be directed by Alex Scharfman and stars include Paul Rudd and Will Poulter. The plot "follows father-daughter duo who hit a unicorn with their car and bring it to the wilderness retreat of a mega-wealthy pharmaceutical CEO," per official synopsis. The outlet noted Ortega is repped by CAA and Jackoway Austen Tyerman.

Tech

Google found guilty of maintaining online search monopoly in landmark ruling

A US judge ruled that Google engaged in monopolistic behaviour to eliminate competition and maintain its dominance of internet search and search advertising, according to BBC. This verdict is a big blow for Google's parent company Alphabet, and qualitatively, could change the operational strategies of leading tech firms. Google faced a lawsuit from the US Department of Justice in 2020 after it accused the company of controlling about 90% of the market share for online search. This case is not isolated but belongs to a series of actions by the US antitrust authorities to strengthen competition in the IT segment. US District Judge Amit Mehta said that Google has spent billions of US Dollars to make sure that it continues being set as the default search bar on smart devices and browsers. "Google is a monopolist, and it has behaved like one to protect its dominance," the judge titled his 277-page decision. "Simply put, Google's dominant position has made it invulnerable to almost all restraints," he added. Reuters reported that Alphabet is



seeking a review of the decision. US Attorney General Merrick Garland described the ruling as a "historic win for the American people" affirming that no company – however big – is beyond the law. Other big tech firms have also faced several suits from the federal antitrust authorities with Meta Platforms, the owner of Facebook and Amazon amongst them. com, and Apple, claiming that the two firms run unlawful monopolies. This ruling comes after the prosecution claimed, in the 10-week trial in Washington DC, that Google pays billions of dollars to have its search engine installed as a default on Apple, Samsung, Mozilla, and other devices. The US averred that Google spends more than \$10 million annually to enjoy this aspect, locking users' data to cement their hold in the market.

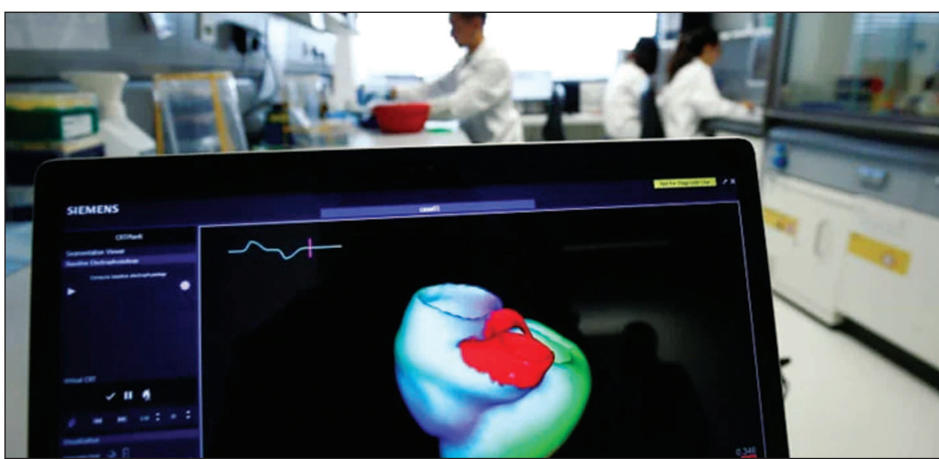
Health

This revolutionary AI tech can identify unseen heart attack threats

An Oxford University spinout company Caristo Diagnostics has developed an Artificial Intelligence model that can identify individuals at risk of a heart attack within the next decade, news reported. Scientists have dubbed this model revolutionary, as it identifies cardiac inflammation that cannot be distinguished on a computed tomography or CT scan, a combination of X-ray and computer technology. A pilot programme is currently being implemented in five hospitals in Oxford, Milton Keynes, Leicester, Liverpool, and Wolverhampton hospital trusts with the support of NHS England. It has been presented, and a decision regarding its applicability to the NHS is pending in the forthcoming months. They are also using the technology to prevent diabetes and strokes. Professor Keith Channon

from the University of Oxford said: "It is transformative and game-changing technology since it is the first time that we can monitor biological actions that are not visible to the naked eye which comes before the formation of these narrowings and blockages [within the heart]. In the pilot, patients with chest pain and who have been referred for a standard CT scan get their scan results passed through Caristo Diagnostics' CaRi-Heart AI. An algorithm indicating the presence of inflammation in the coronary artery and plaque is then checked and confirmed by operators. They have found that an increased level of inflammation also means an increased chance of developing cardiovascular disease or fatal heart attack. The British Heart Foundation BHF states that about 7. Over 6 million people in the

United Kingdom are suffering from heart disease which the National Health Service in England spends £7. Cardiac CT scans are done about 350,000 in the UK every year. The Orfan study done on 40,000 patients from Oxford Risk Factors and Non-invasive Imaging published in the Lancet stated that 80% of patients were referred back to primary care without any particular preventive management or treatment course. It was established that patients with inflammation in their coronary arteries were 20 to 30 times more likely to die in the next 10 years from a Cardiac event. With the help of this AI technology, 45% of such patients were either prescribed medication or advised to make changes to avoid a future heart attack.



Ethiopian Embassy, SDPI to jointly hold 'Green Legacy Forum' in Islamabad



VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic Ethiopia (FDRE) and Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) have agreed to forge a mutual collaboration to jointly organize "Green Legacy Forum" to create awareness and mobilize all segments of society for massive plantation of fruits and vegetables, which will not only restore eco-system but also ensure food security and sustainable development.

The collaboration was agreed upon during a meeting between Special Envoy & Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ethiopia to Pakistan, Jemal Beker Abdula and Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI here at the Embassy of Ethiopia. The forum will have participation of Parliamentarians, diplomatic and business community, environmentalists, religious and media fraternity, youth and civil society. It is aimed at sharing success story of Ethiopia with Pakistan in environmental conservation, ecosystem restoration and food security under the Green Legacy initiative of Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia.

Speaking on the occasion, H.E. Ambassador Jemal Beker lauded the services and capabilities of the SDPI as the premier independent think tank of Pakistan with its core capabilities in niche areas of economics, climate change, food security, human rights, health and social protection.

He underlined the importance of the Green Legacy Initiative which is the flagship project of the government of Ethiopia with the highest-level political leadership and public endorsement that has set an ambitious target of 7.5 billion seedlings to be planted across the country in 2024.

The Ambassador said since 2019, Ethiopia had planted more than 40 billion seedlings of vegetables, fruits and animal feed which had increased its capacity to address climate related challenges and reduced poverty, boosted job creation, and ensured food security. He underscored the need to rollout massive nationwide campaign in Pakistan to address the growing vulnerability of its masses against climate change as 2022 floods' devastation left its communities bareheaded under the risks and devastation of unprecedented scale. "I have personally witnessed the flood-impacted areas across the country that allowed me to assess the toll paid by masses despite their minimal contribution towards global warming and environmental degradation," he added. It is high time for all segments of Pakistani society to join hands to save the planet earth, he said, reiterating his resolve to work closely with them to take green initiatives for Pakistan.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a group photo with delegation of Chinese businessmen led by Consul General Zhao Shiren. (Story on page 1)

Aurangzeb exudes confidence in IMF board's approval of \$7bn loan deal this month

Finance minister indicates Pakistan will engage IMF management board on climate financing



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb has said that he is confident that the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Board of Directors will approve the staff-level agreement by the end of August.

Addressing the "Climate Action for Pakistan" event organised by Acumen Pakistan on Tuesday, the finance czar also indicated that there would be discussions with the IMF management board regarding climate financing. Last month, Pakistan and the IMF reached an agreement for a \$7 billion, 37-month loan agreement with tough measures such as raising tax on farm income. The staff-level agreement capped negotiations that started in May after Islamabad completed a short-term, \$3 billion programme that helped stabilize the economy, avert a sovereign debt default and

set challenging revenue targets in its budget to get IMF approval.

Touching on the macroeconomic situation, Aurangzeb also assured that Pakistan's "economy is on a path to stability", with ongoing reforms aimed at fostering sustainable economic growth and development.

Pakistan has been struggling with boom-and-bust cycles for decades, leading to 22 IMF bailouts since 1958. Currently, the IMF is the fifth-largest debtor, owing \$6.28 billion as of July 11, according to the lender's data. The federal finance emphasised the need for expanding the tax system, improving transparency, implementing energy sector reforms and enhancing governance.

Under the IMF deal, the highest effective tax rate can rise to as much as 45% from the current 15%. It will be implemented from 2025, a move that was termed "unprecedented" by analysts.

They added that these changes could contribute to inflation, particularly in food prices, affecting consumers nationwide, adding that larger farmers would be affected more. Inflation averaged close to 30% in FY23 and 23.4% in FY24, which ended on June 30.

"The current government is taking necessary measures in these areas," he noted adding,

"Pakistan requires increased resources to accommodate its growing population."

Stressing the need for effective projects to address climate change challenges, and advocating for active participation and financing from the private sector, he highlighted that climate change was an international issue impacting many regions globally.

He noted that Pakistan was among the countries most affected by climate change and in 2022 floods, it suffered massive destruction and incurred losses estimated at \$30 billion. Aurangzeb mentioned that at the Geneva conference, various countries, bilateral and multilateral partners, and international organisations pledged over \$9 billion in assistance for Pakistan.

However, the country did not receive the promised funds.

Highlighting its crucial role in climate financing, the finance minister urged the private sector to assume leadership in this area. Pakistan has lost nearly 10,000 lives and has suffered economic losses worth \$3.8 billion due to climate change from 1998 to 2018, while the floods in 2022 further cost life, infrastructure and economic losses of over \$30 billion and reconstruction needs over \$16 billion. Agencies

MOFA issues travel advisory for Pakistani nationals in Lebanon

ISLAMABAD: The Spokesperson for Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Tuesday said that in view of recent developments and the prevailing security situation in the region, all Pakistanis were advised to avoid travel to Lebanon till further notice.

"All Pakistani nationals presently residing in Lebanon are advised to leave Lebanon while the commercial flights remain available. Those staying in Lebanon are advised to exercise extreme caution especially with regard to vulnerable areas," the spokesperson said in a press statement.

They were also requested to remain in contact with the Embassy of Pakistan in Beirut on the following contact numbers: Cell/Whatsapp: +961-81669488 +961-81815104 Email: parepbeirut@mofa.gov.pk

British High Commission at forefront of floods response in Chitral

ISLAMABAD: The British High Commission has been amongst the earliest organisations to provide relief interventions, following devastating floods in Chitral. Between 29 July and August 3, Chitral suffered severe damages from torrential rains, flash floods and glacial lake outburst floods. 14 drinking water supply schemes, 15 jeep-able bridges, 55 irrigation channels, 9 link roads, 3 schools building, protection walls (4,000 feet), and 20 local shops have been fully/partially damaged, a news release said.

The British High Commission used their existing presence in Chitral to respond to immediate needs through their partners, Concern Worldwide and the Agha Khan Foundation. They are supporting emergency relief and restoration of infrastructure and livelihoods.

So far, the UK has funded essential items like kitchen sets, hygiene kits, water storage containers and more for around 300 families. Partners continue to work on immediate restoration of damaged drinking water systems, the restoration of essential irrigation channels, and debris removal to re-enable access and livelihoods, UK support is expected to benefit over 20,000 people in Chitral. The UK are also considering on longer-term recovery plans for affected areas, in close coordination with government counterparts and humanitarian partners.

Chargé d'Affaires of the British High Commission, Andrew Dalgleish said: "The recent floods in Chitral are devastating. Lives and livelihoods have been destroyed. The UK is here to support Pakistan. These floods are a stark reminder that there is much more to be done to improve Pakistan's climate resilience." Floods have already led to 141 deaths, 266 injuries and damage to over 1,000 houses in Pakistan this year. Climate change is a priority for the UK Government. During the devastating floods of 2022, the UK helped over 2.3 million people, dedicating a total of \$39 million in UK aid. The British public mobilised, and raised \$41.5m as part of the Disaster Emergency Committee appeal. Support included emergency cash assistance, shelter kits, nutritional support, learning kits and infrastructure repair. APP

Govt takes steps to improve educational facilities as per modern requirements: Dr. Khalid Maqbool

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui Tuesday said that the government is taking all possible measures to transform the education system by improving infrastructure, enhancing facilities and focusing on skill-based education. He was speaking as a chief guest at the 37th Medal and Prize Distribution Ceremony of the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) for the Years 2022 and 2023. The ceremony was arranged at the Islamabad Model College for Boys, H-9/4 and attended by officials of FBISE and the Ministry of Education and Professional Training. Speaking on the occasion, the federal minister stated that the purpose of arranging this ceremony was to motivate the students to further excel in their educational endeavours and achieve success. Dr. Khalid Maqbool termed youth as the biggest wealth of Pakistan and said, "We are blessed to

have the biggest chunk of the population which is comprised of youth who can play a pivotal role in the development of the country if we are equipped with the modern education". Highlighting the importance of educated women in society, the minister said that educated women can play an instrumental role in the progress of the country. "As women advance in every field, the possibilities of change will be significant", he said. The countries which have resources and issues like Pakistan are progressing, Khalid Maqbool said while emphasizing equipping our youth with education and skills as per modern-day requirements. He said, "We all together will write the destiny of Pakistan with the power of education". The federal minister said that due to technological advancements, one billion people in different jobs will become irrelevant in the future and there is a need to equip them with the skills as per modern requirements. APP

PML-N vows to uphold stability amidst PTI's disruptive politics: Aqeel Malik

ISLAMABAD: Government's Spokesperson on Legal Affairs Barrister Aqeel Malik on Tuesday said that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was dedicated to steering the country towards economic and political stability and development.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that the government was committed to maintaining stability and order in the country while tackling the challenges posed by protests.

He said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was pushing the country towards shutdowns and chaos with its agenda.

While every political party has the right to protest within legal and constitutional limits, PML-N claims that PTI was attempting to paralyze Islamabad by targeting sensitive areas.

Answering a question, he said the recently introduced Election Act Amendment Bill aimed to clarify existing and proposed legislation to prevent floor-crossing and ensure a more transparent and stable political environment.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar chaired second meeting of the Committee to give recommendations for independent Drug Pricing Body.

Empowering women key...

Continued from Page 1

Addressing as chief guest at a national dialogue on 'Role of Women and Girls in Disaster Risk Reduction', the PM's climate aide highlighted that women, particularly those from rural or marginalised communities, hold invaluable local knowledge about environmental conditions, traditional practices and risk management. However, their leadership in these areas not only can help improve disaster management strategies but also fosters a more comprehensive understanding of community needs and vulnerabilities.

The PM's Coordinator told the participants of the event. As the world grapples with increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters, it has become clear that women and girls are not just beneficiaries but pivotal players in disaster risk reduction (DRR). Their unique contributions are essential for building resilient communities and ensuring effective disaster preparedness and response. Suggesting measures to fully harness the potential of women and girls in disaster risk reduction, the PM's climate aide Romina Khurshid said that it is crucial to enhance their participation in decision-making, policymaking and policy implementation processes at all levels, support and fund women-led disaster risk reduction initiatives and organizations, promote gender-sensitive approaches in disaster management policies and practices and ensure that women and girls have access to education and training related to disaster preparedness and response.

"The present government is highly concerned over the sufferance of the communities, which are frequently affected by climate change-caused disasters, particularly smallholder farming and marginalized communities with poor resources for post-disaster recovery and com-

mitted to building disaster resilience of them by providing them necessary knowledge, skill and resources," Romina Khurshid Alam informed the participants.

She remarked that women and girls often serve as the backbone of their communities, particularly during disasters, particularly floods, cyclones and heatwaves. When empowered with knowledge, technical and financial resources, they could play a central role in managing household preparedness, disseminating risk information and providing critical support systems.

Their involvement in disaster risk reduction initiatives could also enhance community resilience and ensures that disaster management strategies are both inclusive and effective, Romina Khurshid Alam added.

The PM's aide said further that recent case studies have demonstrated the significant impact of women-led initiatives in disaster scenarios.

From grassroots organizations in various disaster-vulnerable countries to community-based programs in [another region], women have proven their capacity to drive positive change, enhance risk communication, and support long-term recovery processes, she added.

"Empowering women and girls in DRR efforts can lead to innovative solutions and more responsive policies. Women's involvement in policy-making and advocacy ensures that disaster management approaches address the diverse needs of all community members, promoting greater equity and effectiveness in recovery efforts," she said. This event marked a significant step towards empowering women in DRR, contributing to Pakistan's overall disaster management capabilities. It was funded by NDMA, UNWOMEN, UNICEF, Catholic Relief Services, Islamic Relief, WHH, Federation Handicap International, HANDS, and STEP.

Pakistan imports 6.187MMT wheat in last two years: Tanveer Hussain



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain on Tuesday informed the Senate that Pakistan during last two years had imported 2.60MMT and 3.587 MMT wheat. Responding to a question during a question hour session in the senate, he said in 2022-23, the Trading Corporation of Pakistan imported 2.60 MMT of wheat for PASSCO to maintain strategic reserve at the average cost of US\$ 356/MT (CNF). The minister said that the carry forward stock was reported at 1.84 MMT adding that in 2023-24 public as well as private sector were allowed to import wheat. He said the private sector imported 3.587 MMT at the average cost of US\$ 280/MT (CNF). Carry forward stocks as reported by the Provincial Food Departments was at 1.63 MMT in the country. INP

Tahir Ashrafi lauds Saudi govt's Hajj arrangements, underscores message of 'unity & harmony' among Muslims

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Pakistan Ulama Council Hafiz Tahir Memood Ashrafi on Tuesday said the message of Hajj Sermon 2024 was unity and harmony among Muslims.

Addressing the Paigham-e-Hajj Conference here Ashrafi appreciated the Hajj arrangements made by the government of Saudi Arabia. He congratulated the Saudi government for the excellent arrangements and thanked them for their services to Pakistan, Saudi arrangements for Hajj are getting better day by day he added.

He said this year, eleven million people performed Umrah. On the 27th night of Ramadan, 2.6 million people were present in the Haram in Makkah, he added.

He said Saudi Arabian government is changing the system, whereas the Hajj companies will also have to follow operations under the same system.

He said at the beginning of this Hajj season, the Saudi govern-

ment had allowed only two thousand companies to operate for Hajj services. However, the Saudi ambassador and the Saudi government cooperated and thousands of people were saved from unemployment through augmented services.

Tahir Ashrafi lauds Saudi govt's Hajj arrangements, underscores message of 'unity & harmony' among Muslims

On the occasion, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy expressed his best wishes for Pakistan and said that there was no relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia other than

sincerity. "Pakistan and Saudi are brothers" he added.

Tahir Ashrafi lauds Saudi govt's Hajj arrangements, underscores message of 'unity & harmony' among Muslims

Addressing the Paigham-e-Hajj Conference, Federal Minister of Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh said that the government of Pakistan was grateful to the Saudi Ambassador for the Hajj arrangements. He also extended his gratitude to Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony, Chaudhry Salik Hussain who made extraordinary efforts for successful Hajj arrangements. APP

