



Pakistan remains committed to diplomacy and dialogue, it will respond with unyielding resolve to any hostile actions

Spokesperson Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mumtaz Zahra

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J&K dispute is an internationally recognized dispute that must be resolved in accordance with the UNSC resolutions: Mumtaz Zahra Baloch

Says Pakistan unequivocally rejects any narrative that suggests that the J&K dispute has been or can be settled unilaterally



ISLAMABAD: In response to media queries regarding the recent statement made on Jammu and Kashmir by India's Minister for External Affairs, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch has said that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute is an internationally recognized dispute that must be resolved in accordance with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and the wishes of the Kashmiri people. Resolution of this unresolved conflict is pivotal to peace and stability in South Asia, she said. In a statement issued on Sunday, FO Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that Pakistan unequivocally rejects any narrative that suggests that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute has been or can be settled unilaterally. Such claims are not only misleading but dangerously delusional, as they blatantly disregard the on-ground realities, she said. India's unilateral actions in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) cannot and will not change this reality, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said.

She said that while Pakistan remains committed to diplomacy and dialogue, it will respond with unyielding resolve to any hostile actions. True peace and stability in South Asia can only be achieved through a settlement in accordance with UNSC resolutions and inalienable rights of the Kashmiri people, FO spokesperson said. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that Pakistan, therefore, calls on India to abandon its provocative rhetoric and baseless assertions about IIOJK, and to instead, engage in a meaningful dialogue for a just, peaceful, and lasting resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute and for durable peace in South Asia. SABAH



MURIDKE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif offers Fateha for Late Rana Afzal Hussain, brother of Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister.

PM expresses satisfaction over inflation rate drop; economic stability

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday expressed his satisfaction over the nosediving of inflation rate in the country and the indicators of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, showing a decline in the inflation rate. The prime minister said that 'Consumer Price Index' fell to record low in July 2024, bringing inflation to 11 percent and welcomed the economists' forecast of further decline in inflation in the current month of September.

"After Fitch, the global rating agency, Moody's recently upgraded Pakistan's credit rating, which is an acknowledgement of country's positive economic indicators by the international financial institutions," PM Office Media Wing, in a press release, quoted the prime minister as saying. The prime minister further said that the government was pursuing a policy of economic reforms and the implementation work was rapidly in progress over the right-sizing policy of the government which he himself was monitoring. He expressed the confidence that its posi-

President, PM vow Pakistan's continued support for Kashmiris' right to self-determination

President Asif Ali Zardari has paid tribute to heroic struggle of iconic Kashmiri leader Syed Ali Gilani for rights of oppressed people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. In a message, he said Syed Ali Gilani was a beacon of hope and resistance, inspiring countless Kashmiris to stand firm in their quest for self-determination. The President said Pakistan will continue to advocate for realization of people of IIOJK's right to self-determination as enshrined in the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said

that the struggle for Kashmiri people's right of self-determination will continue till achieving the goal.

In a message on veteran Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Gillani's third martyrdom anniversary, Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan will always continue the moral, diplomatic and political support of Kashmiri people. He said Syed Ali Gillani will always be remembered as a respectable name of the Kashmir independence movement. He said Syed Ali Gillani was a great leader who had a firm belief to achieve the Kashmiri people's right of self-determination, for which he devoted his whole life.

tive impact on the economy would be visible soon. The prime minister also acknowledged that the federal and Punjab governments had provided a big relief to the electricity consumers in respect of monthly bills, adding the prices of petroleum products were further reduced from today. The prime minister said that the govern-

ment believed in passing on all the benefits of such policies to the common man. The economy was moving towards stability owing to the hard work of the government's economic and financial team, he added. He said the government was cognizant of the issues of the people and was striving day and night to resolve them.

Ministry of IT working to transform Islamabad into "Model Digital City"

ISLAMABAD: The federal capital is poised for transformation into a "Model Digital City," aiming to integrate a broad spectrum of technological advancements for the benefit of its residents.

According to officials from the Ministry of Information Technology, Islamabad will serve as the pilot project for this initiative. This transformation aligns with the Prime Minister's vision of digitalization.

The "Model Digital City" project will enable residents to access 150 government services through a new City Super Application. This mobile app will facilitate a range of governmental and administrative services, including those from the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Islamabad Police, health services, and educational institutions. The aim is to encourage citizens to use the app for more efficient access to these services.

The app will also feature an e-parking facility, designed to streamline parking management and alleviate congestion in the city.

The project will include the installation of AI-integrated smart cameras across Islamabad. These cameras will play a vital role in monitoring street crime, enhancing security, and improving traffic management for residents and travellers alike.

Officials informed that Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja is of the view that digital transformation is key for the country's development. She said that the Ministry of IT and Telecommunication under the leadership of the prime minister is committed to advancing the Digital Pakistan Vision, with the Digital Pakistan Policy setting the stage for further progress in this area.

Dialogue possible after PTI apologizes for May 9: Asif

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Defense, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, said on Monday that for any meaningful dialogue to take place, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) must seek an unconditional apology for orchestrating the events of May 9. Talking to a private news channel, he pointed towards Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, and stated that it was impossible to negotiate with a party engaged in activities that undermine the political process. He said that the Prime Minister had repeatedly called for discussions and even proposed a Charter of Economy to address the country's challenges.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) had consistently emphasized the importance of dialogue for the restoration of politics, he added. When asked about recent talks with the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) chief and the ongoing reconciliation efforts, Khawaja said that reconciliation has always been an important part of PML-N's politics. He acknowledged that Maulana Fazal Ur Rehman, being a seasoned politician, can play a pivotal role in the legislative process. APP

NHA, FWO must rigorously implement traffic rules and regulations: Abdul Aleem Khan

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Privatization and Investment Board and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan chaired a joint departmental meeting between the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) and the National Highway Authority (NHA) that took key decisions aimed at enhancing the efficiency and safety of Pakistan's road infrastructure.

During the meeting, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan emphasized the need for coordinated mutual policies between FWO and NHA. Abdul Aleem Khan instructed the enforcement of a ban on excessive axle loads on Grant Trunk GT Roads, similar to regulations on motorways across the country. Weighing stations are to be established on GT Roads for heavy vehicles to ensure compliance. The minister called for the use of "e-challan" systems to penalize traffic violations such as speeding, seat belt non-compliance, and mobile phone use. He also stressed the importance of installing surveillance cameras on

national highways to prevent accidents. Khan emphasized that NHA and FWO must rigorously implement traffic rules and regulations, asserting that no external pressures or recommendations should influence the axle load ban.

The federal minister highlighted the necessity of constructing new motorways and highways with future needs in mind. He issued specific instructions for the Sialkot to Khariyan and Islamabad motorways, advocating for their development as two-way and six-lane roads to accommodate growing traffic demands. The meeting, which also included briefings from Director General FWO Major General Abdul Sami and Chairman NHA Shehryar Sultan, covered the status of motorways, GT Roads, and ongoing construction projects. A decision was made to reconvene for another joint departmental meeting next week to continue discussions and oversee the implementation of these directives. INP

First children receive polio vaccinations in Gaza ahead of start of UN-led campaign

UNITED NATIONS: A first group of children received polio vaccinations in besieged Gaza on Saturday ahead of the official start of a much-anticipated United Nations-led campaign on Sunday. Children at the Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, central Gaza, were among the first to receive the vital vaccines on Saturday, according to footage shown on American television. UN official said that success of the vaccination operation depends on the "humanitarian pause" in the bombardments of the enclave agreed by Israel. After beginning in central Gaza, vaccines are set to be administered in southern Gaza and then in northern Gaza. The campaign, which involves two doses, aims to cover more than 640,000 children under 10. Michael Ryan, WHO deputy director-general, told the UN Security Council this week that 1.26 million doses of the oral vaccine had been delivered in Gaza, with another 400,000 still to arrive. The Ramallah-based Palestinian health ministry said earlier this month that tests in Jordan had confirmed polio in an unvaccinated 10-month-old baby from central Gaza. Intense heat in Gaza could worsen health crisis for Palestinians, WHO warns. Poliovirus is highly infectious, and most often spread through sewage and contaminated water - an increasingly common problem in Gaza as the Israel-Hamas war drags on. APP

Pakistan has always raised voice for Kashmiris right to self-determination at every forum: Amir Muqam

ISLAMABAD Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan and SAFRON, Engr Amir Muqam has said that Pakistan has always raised its voice for Kashmiris right to self-determination at every international forum and will continue to raise its voice till realisation of the Kashmiris goal of freedom.

Addressing Kashmiri Diaspora in Toronto, Canada, Engr Amir Muqam said that Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif effectively advocated Kashmiri dispute in his address at UN General Assembly forum and all international forums, said a press release. The participants given standing ovation to Federal Minister Engr Amir Muqam on arrival to stage. They also chanted slogans Pakistan Zindabad and PML N leadership Zindabad. He said that Pakistan and particularly present government will continue to lend its unstinted moral, political and diplomatic support to the rightful and just cause of the freedom struggle of Kashmiris.



The Indian actions of 5th August 2019 a blatant violation of the UN Charter, the 4th Geneva Convention and international laws. For the last three years India had tried every tactic of oppression against the Kashmiris but their resolve and passion for freedom could not be weakened.

The barbaric and brutal occupation of IIOJK by India not only violates international law, but also makes a mockery of the globally accepted norms of fundamental rights and freedoms. The international community can no longer remain silent while India continues to perpetrate its oppression in Kashmir. APP

Romina declares ICT's green Islamabad initiatives role model for other cities

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC & EC), Romina Khurshid Alam has appreciated the initiatives of the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration for transitioning to renewable energy and vulnerability of the capital city to climate change impacts.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, she stated that the MoCC & EC had proposed to ICT administration a unique AI based solution to improve air quality of the city to make it model environmentally-sustainable and climate-smart city of the world. Romina Khurshid Alam highlighted that at present, the air quality of Islamabad was higher than interim WHO

permissible limits, and the problem was getting worse due to various reasons including increasing levels of emissions from gasoline and diesel-fueled vehicles.

She said that the proposed solution under the transition to green energy involving promotion and adoption of electric vehicles and promotion of urban forestry would not only enhance air quality in the capital city but also reduces the associated health risks and attracts more international tourists as well.

The PM's climate aide Ms Alam said various policies and initiatives such as the electric bus service, climate change fund (CCF), Margalla Hills Fund (MHF) and Carbon Credit Programme (CCP) have been already introduced for ICT to enhance climate resilience and environmental sustain-



ability of Islamabad and its peripheral areas. Appreciating these initiatives, she

emphasized the importance of collective efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change being faced by the cap-

ital city. "These measures are setting a pioneering example in climate action, promising a greener and more sustainable future for the residents of the capital city and the adjoining areas", Ms Alam highlighted.

She acknowledged that the recently launched electric bus service in ICT is a significant step towards addressing environmental concerns, adding: "These buses emit no pollutants, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and noise pollution compared to traditional diesel-powered buses".

Referring to different studies, she noted electric buses can be 2.5 times cleaner in terms of lifecycle emissions than diesel buses. Romina Khurshid said the CCF, the first of its kind project, will contribute to address environmental concerns in

ICT region. Referring to CCP as part of the climate change initiative, she said under this project 4 to 5 million trees would be planted over 2000-10,000 kanals all over the capital city.

The Prime Minister's aide said allocation of 1.5 per cent of revenue generated from recreational spots in Margalla Hills under MHF would be ensured to protect and conserve natural resources of the Margalla Hills National Park.

Romina urged the administration of other cities to follow Islamabad's model for climate action in the cities, prioritizing use of renewable energy, adoption of electric vehicles, promotion of urban forestry and climate-resilient construction for achieving environmental-sustainability goals in the cities across the country. INP

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Digital junk food

ZAHID ASGHAR

During the Pakistan National Youth Convention on August 21, and in a separate meeting with a delegation of Harvard students, the COAS rightly warned about the perils of junk information spread by social media. We often think of junk food as unhealthy snacks, but what if I told you there's another kind of junk food that's just as dangerous? This one doesn't harm our bodies – it harms our minds. Mental junk food, like social media and viral rumours, is filling our heads with useless and harmful content. In Pakistan, while many can't afford fast food, this mental junk food reaches nearly every home, especially through the smartphones in our children's hands. Just as junk food is designed to be tasty and addictive, but lacks any real nutritional value, so too is the content on social media that engages us with little effort, entertains us for hours, but leaves us unfulfilled and disconnected from reality. This is what we can term as 'mental junk food'. And just like its physical counterpart, its excessive consumption is proving detrimental to our collective intellect and ability to engage in meaningful discourse.

Pakistan's youth spend hours scrolling through memes, celebrity gossip, and sensational news. Social media algorithms keep them hooked on this shallow content, offering emotional satisfaction but little substance. The consequence? A generation lost in noise and confusion, unable to separate fact from fiction. Despite having access to more information than ever before, they are increasingly susceptible to misinformation and propaganda, lacking the digital literacy needed to discern truth from falsehood.

This is particularly concerning in Pakistan, where literacy rates are already low, and digital literacy is even further behind. The flood of unchecked information on social media has made it difficult to have any meaningful dialogue. Distractions and distortions run rampant, leaving people vulnerable to misinformation and unable to identify nonsense. Rather than fostering critical thinking and analytical skills, social media has turned into a breeding ground for the spread of falsehoods, conspiracy theories, and outright lies.

There is very little cost of sharing information. With just a computer and the internet, anyone can create content that looks professional but is filled with inaccuracies. Algorithms, built to keep us engaged rather than informed, spread this content quickly, reaching thousands, sometimes millions, in minutes. Falsehood flies and truth comes limping after it. This was clearly shown when a person from Lahore spread false news about a Muslim individual's involvement in killing girls in the UK to earn dollars. The fake news led to protests against Muslims in the UK, and by the time the truth came out, the damage was already done.

The spread of old-style misinformation – fancy language without facts – has now been replaced by a new kind. This new misinformation uses science, statistics, and even maths to seem credible. Sadly, our education system does not focus on teaching people how to critically analyze this information. Because of this, even educated people are easily misled by technical-sounding misinformation. Media platforms, particularly print media, once focused on delivering factual and well-checked content, but now chase clicks with sensationalism. Today, the headlines that get the most attention aren't the ones sharing important facts but those that stir emotions. This trend is happening worldwide, and it's very visible in Pakistan.

So, what can be done in the face of this overwhelming digital junk? First, we need to emphasize the importance of education in critical thinking and media literacy. Our institutions should not only teach students how to access information but also how to assess its credibility. Fact-checking should become second nature, and the ability to separate fact from fiction should be ingrained in our education system.

As Pakistani society becomes more digitally connected, the onus is mainly on academia, think tanks, leading media personnel and society to prepare the next generation to navigate this complex landscape with discernment and wisdom. Media professionals today need urgent upskilling to effectively spot falsehoods, especially when misinformation comes disguised as numbers, statistics, or forecasts on technical topics like energy and regulatory issues. With complex data often being used to sway opinions, journalists and media workers must sharpen their skills in understanding and interpreting technical subjects accurately.

Just like physical junk food, mental junk food is harmful when over-consumed. Pakistan's youth need to understand that, while it may be fun for a moment, it lacks the depth and substance needed for real intellectual and emotional growth. Instead, they should focus on content that challenges their minds, sparks meaningful discussions, and builds the critical thinking skills needed to succeed in today's complex world. Avoiding digital distractions is important for all of us, especially the younger generation. By creating healthier habits, they can tap into their full potential and contribute positively to both their personal growth and the country's future.

While staying focused in this digital age can be challenging, it's something we can work on together. Encouraging a mindset rooted in facts, thoughtful engagement, and critical thinking can help build a more informed and balanced society. As we navigate this changing world, prioritizing meaningful content will benefit not only individuals but also the collective well-being of our nation.

The writer is a professor of economics at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.



Ghazi Salahuddin

Balochistan's 'game of thrones'

As an avid reader of fiction, I often wonder if even some of those who sit at the high table in the citadel of power read books and have learnt to use their imagination and their minds to deal with our problems creatively.

Ah, but the issue I have this week is Balochistan and not literature. I am led astray because it has never been easy to write about Balochistan. It is not possible to be candid about it. And its treacherous environment has many separate aspects to delve into.

But Balochistan is what Pakistan has to come to terms with, at its own peril. What happened during the Sunday-Monday night, at the outset of this week, has shaken the country. Though the idea of not to be seen in a state of panic makes good sense, the moves that are being made by the present rulers signify a state of emergency.

Obviously, the state is formulating a response to the province's militancy challenge. Statements proclaim to uphold the militancy menace, using all resources that are at the disposal of the army. There is "no room for weakness". Simultaneously, it was asserted that doors for dialogue "were open and would remain open" for those who believe in Pakistan.

We cannot be sure as to what is different in what is now proposed to be done in the beleaguered province. But what happened during the long night of Sunday is certainly unprecedented. It was a night

of terror that could hardly be anticipated. It is possible that ordinary Pakistanis are not yet aware of the magnitude of the damage that the militants associated with the banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) were able to inflict in coordinated attacks in separate districts.

In Musakhel, a district on the border with Punjab, militants shot dead 23 persons after checking their identity documents. They blew up a railway bridge near Kolpur, cutting off Quetta from the rest of the country. Another track near Mastung was damaged, disconnecting the rail link to Iran. Militants stormed a paramilitary camp in Bela. As many as 35 trucks, buses and other vehicles were set on fire on the highway near Rara Sham. There were other incidents. In all, 70 people lost their lives, including militants and security personnel.

If something like this happens in a province that has a long history of violent unrest and terrorism, including of a sectarian nature, what is to be done? To be sure, there has been an updated repetition of what is wrong with Balochistan. We have seen the faces and read the names of our seasoned experts who have followed the affairs of the province for many decades. They are, in a sense, shouting from the rooftops. Why are those who govern this country not able to hear these voices?

I have some personal experience of being a part of some earnest studies of the province. In fact, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has regularly been sending fact-finding missions to Balochistan

and their credible reports have duly been published. I was a member of three of these missions and two of these, in 2009 and 2013, were led by Asma Jahangir.

I remember sitting on the lawn of the Quaid-e-Azam Residency in Ziarat soon after it was attacked with hand grenades by the militants in June 2013. We were there at the Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University just two or three days after a bomb on the university's bus had killed 14 female students and injured 22 others. When the survivors were taken to the hospital, gunmen killed another 11 people. This was sectarian terror, targeting the Hazara community.

I can recall a number of other very educational visits to different regions of the province. There was one with a PLDDAT group which provided an opportunity to discuss the situation with distinguished individuals from different walks of life.

For a change, there was an exciting and cheerful encounter when I participated in a literary festival in Quetta in May this year. It was a grand show sponsored by the Pakistan Arts Council, Karachi. But the mood was sombre in a long, off-the-record session with local journalists on the rooftop of the Quetta Press Club. By the way, the club was ordered on Wednesday to not hold any conference or seminar without a no objection certificate. This is how the administration does not learn its lessons.

The most recent HRCP report on rights' violations in Balochistan was released in April last year, titled 'Balochistan's struggle for hope'. It

expressed deep concern about the mounting public frustration over enforced disappearances, economic exclusion, curbs on press freedom, misgovernance and allegations of political manipulations by the establishment.

Now, I have invoked that blockbuster TV series 'Game of Thrones' because thinking about Balochistan, I was reminded of a line spoken in one of its episodes. Yes, it is "power is power" and the dramatic manner in which it is demonstrated would be familiar to a large number of people, because of its circulation on social media. But what is the message of this repudiation of the adage that "knowledge is power"?

However, Balochistan may not exactly be a game of thrones. I have another quotation from the serial: "When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die. There is no middle ground". In Balochistan, the game may better be played in the middle ground.

But irrespective of all these distractions, many questions that are raised by the shocking attacks by BLA on Sunday night remain unanswered. That is the story of Balochistan. The truth of what it is remains indescribable. Coincidentally, Friday was the UN International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances.

Finally, Balochistan is indeed one crisis out of many that Pakistan is embroiled in. But Balochistan is an example of how efficient we are in keeping our crises unresolved.

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

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



The contest was between the Muslim League government and a "United Front" of parties led by the Krishak Samik party of Fazlul Haq (Fazi ul-Haq) and the Awami League of Hussein Shaheed Suhrawardy, Mujibur Rahman, and Maulana Bhashani. When the ballots were counted, the Muslim League had not only lost the election, it had been virtually eliminated as a viable political force in the province. Fazlul Haq was given the opportunity to form the new provincial government in East Bengal, but, before he could convene his cabinet, riots erupted in the factories south of the East Bengali capital of Dhaka (Dacca). This instability provided the central government with the opportunity to establish "governor's rule" in the province and overturn the United Front's electoral victory. Iskander Mirza, a civil servant, former defense

secretary, and minister in the central government, was sent to rule over the province until such time as stability could be assured.

Iskander Mirza had no intention of implementing the results of the election, nor did he wish to install a new Muslim League government in East Bengal. But the Muslim League's defeat and de facto elimination in the province necessitated realigning the Constituent Assembly—still grappling with the drafting of a national constitution—at the centre. Before this could be done, however, the Constituent Assembly moved to curtail Ghulam Muhammad's viceregal powers. The governor-general's response to this parliamentary effort to undermine his authority was to dissolve that body and reorganize the central government. The country's high court cited the extraordinary powers of the

chief executive and ruled not to reverse his action. The court, however, insisted that another constituent assembly should be organized and that constitution making should not be interrupted. Ghulam Muhammad assembled a "cabinet of talents" that included major personalities such as Iskander Mirza, Gen. Mohammad Ayub Khan (the army chief of staff), and H.S. Suhrawardy (the last chief minister of undivided Bengal, and the only Bengali with national credentials).

In 1955 the bureaucrats who now took control of what remained of the Muslim League combined the four provinces of West Pakistan into one administrative unit and argued for parity in any future national parliament between West Pakistan and East Bengal (now officially renamed East Pakistan). Ghulam Muhammad, by

then seriously ill, was forced to relinquish his office, and Iskander Mirza succeeded to the post of governor-general. In the meantime a new Constituent Assembly was seated; and in 1956 that body, under new leadership but still subject to the power of the bureaucracy—and now to the military as well—completed Pakistan's long-awaited constitution, using the parity formula that supposedly gave equal power to both wings of the country. The constitution of 1956 embodied objectives regarding religion and politics that had been set out in the Basic Principles Report published in 1950, one of which was to declare the country an Islamic republic. The national parliament was to comprise one house of 300 members, equally representing East and West Pakistan.

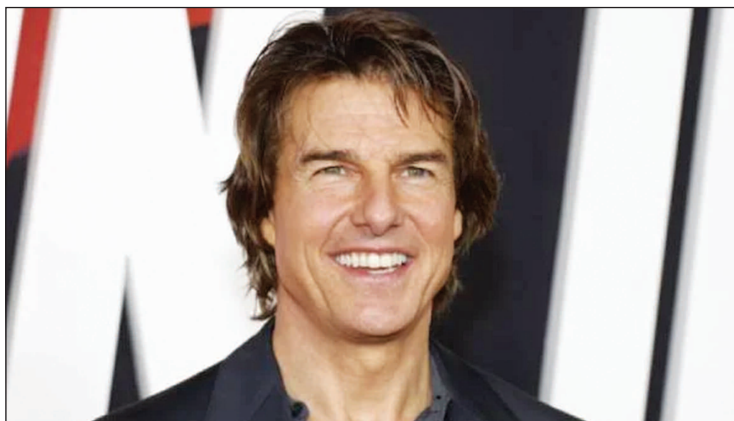
To be continued....

Showbiz

Tom Cruise likes to 'socialise' with media moguls for promoting his movie business

Tom Cruise has no friends who can keep pace with him, claims source

Tom Cruise only likes to "socialise" with A-listers for his movie ambitions. A source spilled to the In Touch, "Tom literally has no friends who can keep pace with him." "Let's be real here, Tom lives for the business of being a global movie star, and it's not exactly 'work' for him because he goes at it like a 24/7 lifestyle choice," shared an insider. The source told the outlet, "He only socialises with the moguls and other A-listers to further his movie ambitions." "It's pretty clear when you spend any stretch of time with him that he's a lonely guy and would rather be off shooting a mega stunt than pretending he likes his downtime," stated



an insider. The source noted that Top Gun star "doesn't even take vacations

without pasting on some kind of work function to it". "You want to tell the guy, 'get a life!' but with a person as strong willed as Tom, that would never work," remarked an insider. Earlier, OK! reported that Tom finished off the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris by rappelling down into the Stade de France stadium to take hold of the Olympic flag. At the time, the source mentioned that the Mission Impossible star "argued with producers over his safety rope being overly visible, as he felt it did not make the jump believable enough and he did not plummet as fast as he wanted".

Tech

After Telegram founder arrest, Russians fear loss of 'main information source'

MOSCOW: France's arrest of Telegram chief Pavel Durov has raised fears in Russia that the popular messaging app — used both by the Kremlin and its opponents — could be blocked, depriving them of one of the last sources of critical, uncensored news. Since the start of its offensive in Ukraine in February 2022, Russia has cracked down on dissent and protest, leaving Russians without independent news outlets or access to Western social media such as Facebook, Instagram and X, formerly Twitter. In that climate, Telegram — which was itself blocked for a period by the Kremlin for refusing to cooperate with Russian law enforcement agencies — has become one of the last bastions of free speech and uncensored information. Moscow now fears for the fate of the messenger and its Russian-born founder Durov, charged late August with failing to curb extremist and illegal content on the platform. Though he has been released on bail, he cannot leave the country and the Kremlin has warned France

against turning the case against him "into political persecution." Durov's arrest is not the only headache the privately-owned service faces. The European Commission is also investigating whether Telegram has more EU users than claimed and must therefore comply with more stringent rules. In Russia, Telegram channels widely cover subjects that are otherwise strictly censored in state media. That includes everything from front-line reports of the conflict in Ukraine to trials of Kremlin critics and manifestos dispatched from political prisoners. The most popular channels have millions of subscribers. The Kremlin, government ministries and regional governors also use Telegram as their go-to public communications tool. "Telegram is a very practical and reliable messaging service for all Russians, regardless of their political opinions," said Alexei Venediktov, head of the Echo of Moscow radio station, blocked in Russia after its criticism of the Ukraine offensive.

Health

Mpox concerns mount in Pakistan as tally hits five

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan steps up its fight against mpox after fears of Peshawar becoming a focal point for the viral disease grow with the emergence of the infectious disease's fourth case from the metropolis, climbing the nationwide tally to five this year on Sunday.

The fresh case of mpox was detected in a 47-year-old man on August 29, after he was isolated by the Border Health Services staff. The patient had returned from the Middle East, raising concerns about the disease's stemming from travellers arriving from the Gulf region.

"This is the fifth mpox case reported this year [in the country] and the fourth since WHO declared mpox a global health emergency," said Dr Shabana Saleem, the federal director general of health, on Sunday.

"The virus's re-emergence in Peshawar raises

serious concerns about its transmission and demands immediate action." She emphasised the need for vigilance, highlighting that all recent cases have involved individuals with a history of travel to Gulf countries. "Peshawar appears to be turning into an epicentre for mpox cases," she said. "This trend is alarming, and we are doubling our efforts to prevent further spread."

Authorities have ramped up measures to contain the virus, with stringent screening protocols now enforced at all airports.

"We are not taking any chances. Effective screening systems are operational across the country," Dr Saleem assured, noting the government's commitment to safeguarding public health. Federal and provincial health officials are coor-

inating closely to monitor the situation, ensuring that all necessary steps are taken swiftly. "We are working round the clock to ensure all preventive measures are in place and effective," Dr Saleem said. "The Ministry of Health is continuously monitoring the situation, and we are prepared to respond to any developments immediately." The spike in mpox cases in Peshawar has triggered concerns among health experts and the public alike, with calls for increased awareness and stricter travel guidelines.

The federal director general of health urged the public to remain vigilant and to comply with health advisories, particularly those returning from high-risk regions. "Public cooperation is crucial in preventing the spread of mpox," she warned. "Together, we can curb this virus before it takes a firmer hold."



Bilawal pays tributes to late Kashmiri leader

KARACHI: The Chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has paid glowing tribute to the late Kashmiri leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani on his third death anniversary.

He lauded Syed Ali Shah Geelani for standing as a steadfast bulwark against Indian oppression and for upholding the banner of the IIOJK people's struggle for self-determination. He remarked that Geelani's unwavering commitment and struggle for the fundamental human right of freedom will continue to inspire current and future generations. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari emphasized that the unresolved IIOJK conflict threatens the peace, stability, and development of the entire region. He reiterated that the solution to the IIOJK issue lies in United Nations Security Council resolutions and the aspirations of the IIOJK people. He reaffirmed the Pakistan People's Party's commitment to continue extending political, diplomatic, and moral support to the IIOJK people in their struggle for the right to self-determination.

Pakistan, Vietnam trade volume witnesses 28% increase

ISLAMABAD: The Trade volume between Pakistan and Vietnam has witnessed an increase of twenty-eight percent during first sixth month of the current year as compared to the same period last year. Addressing a function in connection with the celebration of the 79th anniversary of Vietnam National Day in Islamabad, Ambassador of Vietnam to Pakistan Pham Anh Tuan said bilateral trade relations between the two countries have emerged as one of the most outstanding fields of the cooperation. He said the number of delegation exchanges for business and visits has been increasing year by year and the two countries have signed a number of treaties and agreements, which create legal framework for further promoting the cooperation for mutual interest. INP

Increase in monthly stipend to families of national legends approved

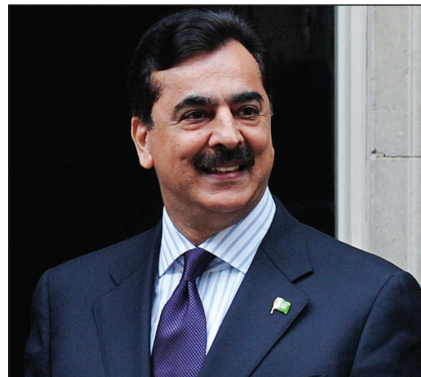
KARACHI: A high-level meeting held here on Sunday with Governor Sindh and Patron-in-Chief of Legends Trust, Kamran Khan Tessori gave principal approval of increase in monthly stipend to the families of national legends. During a meeting held at Governor House, a scrutiny committee was also constituted to present its recommendations in the next meeting. Speaking on the occasion, Kamran Khan Tessori emphasized that every possible step would be taken for the welfare of these families. He stated that these legends were the pride of the nation and their contributions in their respective fields would always be remembered. The meeting was also attended by the Managing Trustee of the Trust, Suhail Wajahat Siddiqui, along with Trustees Sultana Siddiqui and Qaiser Nizamani.



ISLAMABAD: Rawal Dam authorities open spillway of the reservoir after dam water level rose to alarming level due to heavy rain. APP

Having access to basic health facilities right of every citizen: Gilani

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani has said that having access to basic health facilities is fundamental right of every citizen and collective efforts are needed to ensure that everyone has awareness and resources needed for leading a health life. Speaking at a celebration ceremony and health awareness seminar organized by TIENS International here on Sunday, he extended heartfelt congratulations to TIENS International for their remarkable achievements and unwavering commitment to health and wellness. "Today's seminar is a testament to their ongoing efforts to raise health awareness and promote well-being," he said. For over two decades, TIENS has made a profound impact on the health and entrepreneurial landscape of Pakistan. Yousaf Raza Gilani praised TIENS's dedication to promoting Traditional Chinese Medicine and related products, which has significantly improved the lives of countless individuals. He specifically commended TIENS for addressing critical health issues such as ageing, obesity and personal care, aligning perfectly with national health objectives. The Chairman Senate underscored the importance of health awareness in today's society, particularly in Pakistan, where the



population faces numerous health challenges. He emphasized the critical role of preventive healthcare and lauded TIENS for its efforts in promoting health awareness, which resonates with national goals of improving public health outcomes and reducing the burden of disease. Gilani also praised TIENS for empowering individuals by providing access to reliable health information and resources, enabling them to make informed decisions about their well-being. "By preventing diseases and promoting a higher quality of life, TIENS is mak-

ing a significant contribution to our society," he added. He highlighted the importance of fostering an environment where individuals can achieve financial stability, contributing to the economic growth and prosperity of the nation. TIENS, through its innovative business models and support systems, is helping many realize their dream of financial independence. The Chairman Senate also recognized TIENS International's commitment to people development education, particularly through its capacity-building and personal grooming training programs. These initiatives, he said, are instrumental in uplifting the social IQ of the youth, equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the challenges of a rapidly evolving world. Reflecting on Pakistan's 77th Independence Day, he urged the nation to remember the sacrifices of the forefathers and renew their commitment to building a stronger, more united Pakistan. Gilani called all stakeholders—government, the private sector, and civil society—to collaborate in promoting health awareness and entrepreneurship, creating an environment where health education is prioritized, and every citizen has access to the resources they need for a healthy life. INP

No group will be allowed to take law into its own hands: Sarfraz Bugti

Announces compensation of Rs 2 mln per family for those who were martyred in the recent terrorist attack in Musa Khel

LAHORE: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Khan Bugti has announced a compensation of two million rupees per family for those who were martyred in the recent terrorist attack in Musa Khel. Addressing a news conference in Lahore on Sunday, Mir Sarfraz Bugti said the terrorists are killing innocent citizens. He emphasized that terrorists have no religion or tribe and should be recognized and treated as terrorists only. Mir Sarfraz Bugti reiterated that no group will be allowed to take law into its own hands. He said that heirs of the martyrs will not be alone, and all out assistance will be given to them. He vowed that there would be no concessions for terrorists, affirming that they will be dealt with iron hands. Mir Sarfraz Bugti also highlighted that in recent days, terrorists attacked nine locations in Balochistan and targeted innocent people. He said that the smart kinetic operations will be conducted against those involved in killings in the province. Mir Sarfraz Bugti emphasised the misuse of the term "disgruntled Baloch," stating that the provincial assembly, during former Chief Minister Qudus Bizenjo's tenure, had already declared these individuals as terrorists. "Please do not call them disgruntled Baloch; they are terrorists. We need to reverse this terminology," he asserted. Sarfraz Bugti reiterated the government's commitment to maintaining the writ of the state at all costs, standing with the oppressed, not with the oppressors. "The country cannot be handed over to any mobs. No ideology will be imposed at gunpoint. We stand with the people of Pakistan during these trying times, and we will avenge this bloodshed," Sarfraz Bugti vowed. He pointed out the nexus between terrorists and their facilitators, affirming that both will be brought to justice. "This is a RAW-funded militia; we are not saying this without evidence. They have no connection to nationalism; they only target soft targets because they lack the capacity to take on hard targets," Sarfraz Bugti explained. Sarfraz Bugti further highlighted a well-organized conspiracy against Pakistan, where under the guise of protests, efforts are being made to poison the minds of the youth against the state. "In Balochistan's case, the victim is the state. No society can allow such bloodshed," he said. He stressed that those who have taken up arms are terrorists. "The political issues are visible across Pakistan, but not in Balochistan. I can negotiate with anyone within the constitutional framework, but should I negotiate with those who pulled people off buses and killed them, or should I bring them to justice?" Sarfraz Bugti questioned. Sarfraz Bugti mentioned that if necessary, an operation similar to the one conducted in Swat could be carried out. "What kind of fight for rights is this? Punjab gave us its share in the NFC Award, we should be grateful to Punjab. Violence is an exclusive monopoly of the state, and while there have been issues due to bad governance, the state's authority must be upheld," he stated. SABAH

First-ever workshop on 'Space Law and Policy' to be held from September 03-04

ISLAMABAD: National Center of GIS and Space Applications (NCGSA), in collaboration with the Institute of Space Technology (IST), is set to host Pakistan's inaugural Workshop on 'Space Law and Policy' on September 03-04. According to the NCGSA, this ground breaking event will be the first of its kind in the country, focusing on the critical and emerging domains of space law and policy. With the increasing relevance of space activities in global geopolitics and national security, this workshop aims to equip participants with the knowledge needed to navigate the complex legal and regulatory frameworks governing space. Resource persons from renowned organizations including Access Partnership, Singapore; Pakistan Space Activities Regulatory Board (PSARB); National Defence University (NDU), Pakistan; Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO), China; and

the National Center for Cyber Security (NCCS), Pakistan, will share their expertise and insights during the two-day event. The key topics on the agenda include International Space Treaties and Agreements, Space Governance and Regulatory Frameworks, National Space Policy of Pakistan, Space Diplomacy, Liability and Insurance in Space Activities, and Space Sustainability focusing on debris and environmental protection. The workshop will also address the increasingly critical issues of Space Security and Cyber Security, reflecting the intersecting challenges that lie at the forefront of contemporary space law and policy discussions. This landmark event represents a significant step forward for Pakistan in the global space community, aligning with the objectives of the newly approved National Space Policy.



QUETTA: Security personnel at the site of explosion near a security forces check post at Chaman Phatak. INP

Trade Deficit - Embarking on a strategy to remove bottlenecks

ISLAMABAD: As the nation grapples with multiple economic challenges, the present government is struggling on numerous fronts to control inflation, enhance foreign exchange reserve, boost exports and lower the burden of local and external debts. Embarking on a number of measures in the face of these pressing challenges, the most vital is to revitalize external trade by exploring new destinations and propel it towards a surplus, thereby fueling sustainable economic growth. With a keen focus on diversification, the government is spearheading a multi-faceted approach to venture beyond traditional markets to tap into non-traditional ones and redefining the country's trade landscape. Tariff rationalization, market and commodity diversification, regional trade connectivity; 'Look Africa Policy'; Free Trade Agreements and

negotiations for trade agreements with various countries are hallmarks of policy shift to increase country's exports and curtail trade deficit. In the current situation when the country is on path of economic stability, to remove the trade bottlenecks, the ruling alliance has initiated negotiations at the government level to increase regional trade with Central Asian states including Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. The measures also include Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Tajikistan with high-level economic team and finalization of agreements. Negotiations for regional economic integration and trade promotion with various regional countries, including Iran and Azerbaijan also concluded at Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Astana (Kazakhstan) last month.

Ruet body to meet for Rabi-ul-Awwal moon sighting on Wednesday

ISLAMABAD: Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Chairman, Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khair Azad will preside over a meeting to sight the moon of Rabi-ul-Awwal 1446 AH at the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony on Wednesday. Director General Syed Mushahid Hussain Khalid, will be responsible for coordination while technical assistance will be provided by Zain-ul-Abideen from the Ministry of Science and Technology, Chief Meteorologist Dr Sardar Sarfaraz from the Pakistan Meteorological Department, and Gulam Murtaza from SUPARCO via telephone during the meeting. Members of the Central and Zonal Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Islamabad, including Mufti Zameer Ahmed Sajid, Mufti Muhammad Iqbal Naemi, Mufti Abdul Salam Jalali, Maulana Abu Bakar Siddiq, Maulana Haroon Rashid Balakoti, Allama Sajjad Hussain Jawadi, Pir Muhammad Mumtaz Ahmed Zia Nizami, and other religious scholars will attend the meeting. Zonal committees across the country will hold their meetings at their respective headquarters in Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, and Peshawar. APP

FBR collects Rs. 1,588 biln in gross revenue in first two months of 2024-25

ISLAMABAD: Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has collected gross revenues of Rs 1,588 billion for the months of July & August 2024. Against a target of Rs. 1,554 billion, FBR has collected Rs. 1,456 billion in net revenue and refunds of Rs. 132 billion (44% more than last year) were issued to the exporters to resolve their liquidity problems. The FBR collected Rs. 593 billion under the head of domestic income tax as compared to Rs. 437 billion in July & August 2023, thereby showing a growth of 36%. A healthy year-on-year growth of 40% was achieved in the domestic sales tax with collection of almost Rs.314 billion. Around Rs.86 billion were collected as Federal Excise Duty (FED) showing a year-on-year increase of 13%. As a result a cumulative growth of almost 35% has been achieved in the collection of domestic taxes. However, on the import side the same momentum could not be maintained due to continued compression in imports. In US\$ terms, imports in the country have declined by 2.2% in August 2024 as compared to August 2023. Simi-

larly, the imports during August 2024 in PKR value also showed a decline of 7% as compared to August last year. Moreover, the import of high duty items such as vehicles, home appliances, as well as miscellaneous consumer goods such as garments, fabrics, footwear etc have reduced significantly, changing the import mix. This trend has impacted collection of Customs duties as well as other taxes collected at import stage. Despite a modest increase of 4% in collection of Customs duties, FBR's overall growth in net collection registered a 21% increase on collection of previous year. FBR is likely to achieve the revenue targets of the first quarter as both the economic activity and imports are expected to show a healthy turnaround in the month of September due to lower policy rate and other interventions being made by the Government in recent months. The growth is also likely to show a significant increase as a result of digitisation and other FBR's reforms which are currently being very keenly supervised by the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister.

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif meets chairman Akhuwat Doctor Amjad Saqib

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif met the Founder and Chairman Akhuwat Doctor Amjad Saqib. The Chief Minister lauded the social services of Akhuwat being rendered under the leadership of Doctor Amjad Saqib. Doctor Amjad Saqib paid tribute to CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif on the provision of mega relief in the electricity bills along with launching 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' program. CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif said, "We will fulfil the dream of low-income people of having their own house across the province. The Low-Cost Housing program' has been launched in Punjab and the Punjab government will extend its scope every year. 'Apni Chhat... Apna Ghar' program will be one of the biggest and economical residential projects in the history of Pakistan. The basic aim of 'Apni Chhat... Apna Ghar' program is to provide a residence to the financially weak segments of society." The CM added, "The Punjab government will provide subsidies to reduce financial burden on the people and will also fix soft-term monthly instalments. Durable and



environment-friendly construction of houses will be promoted under the 'Apni Chhat... Apna Ghar' program. Lakhs of people will be provided employment and lakhs of families can enjoy a better lifestyle with the launching of this revolutionary housing project." CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif said, "Apni Chhat Apna Ghar program will be one of the biggest projects in the history of our country based on provision of loans on interest-free basis. The provision of houses to the homeless people is part of the first and foremost priorities of the Punjab government. Projects are being launched under a three-tier plan of Apni Chhat... Apna Ghar program. The owners of residential plots of 10 marlas in the rural areas and 05 marlas in the urban areas can obtain

loans worth rupees 15 lakhs. Under Apni Chhat... Apna Ghar scheme, approximately rupees 14 thousand in the monthly instalments will have to be paid on interest-free basis. We will construct 4-storeyed flats in the big cities on the state lands. The flats will be provided to the people on easy instalments through balloting." The CM said, "We will construct 3-5 marla houses in the private housing schemes. The Punjab government will provide a subsidy worth rupees 10 lakhs for the construction of every house in the private housing projects. The applicant in the private housing project can become an owner of his house by paying back remaining instalments in 05 years." Doctor Amjad Saqib appreciated the robust enthusiasm of CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif for resolving the problems of a common man on priority basis. Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman, Principal Secretary to CM Sajid Zafar Daal, Secretary Housing Asad Ullah Khan, Head of CM Complaint Cell Shoaib Mirza, Secretary CMO Danish Afzal and Personal Secretary Saima Farooq were also present on the occasion. PR