



laid a foundation stone of the largest and first ever public sector cancer hospital in the history of Pakistan in which level 3 and level 4 cancer patients will also get free treatment

Chief Minister Punjab
Maryam Nawaz

Mohsin condemns attack on Qazi Faez Isa's car in London

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has strongly condemned the attack on former chief justice of Pakistan Justice (retired) Qazi Faez Isa's car in London.

In his message, Naqvi while condemning the incident has instructed the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) to take immediate steps to identify the attackers.

The interior minister also confirmed that a vehicle belonging to the Pakistani High Commissioner in London was targeted as well.

"We cannot remain silent on this incident," Naqvi stated, questioning why security was not provided despite prior threats to Qazi Faez Isa. He ordered that the assailants be identified through available footage and assured that legal actions will be taken against them.

Naqvi added that an FIR will be registered in Pakistan to advance the case, including measures to block the attackers' identity cards and revoke their passports.

He also announced steps to strip the assailants of their Pakistani citizenship, with a formal case to be sent to the cabinet for approval. "No one will be permitted to engage in such attacks," Mohsin Naqvi emphasized firmly.

PTI activists attempted to obstruct the former chief justice's vehicle, which belongs to the Pakistan High Commission, in London, even trying to smash its windows. They chanted slogans upon spotting Qazi Isa's car and ran alongside it.

Qazi Isa was en route to a ceremony at the Middle Temple.

One Khwarij terrorist killed other apprehended injured in Zhob operation: ISPR



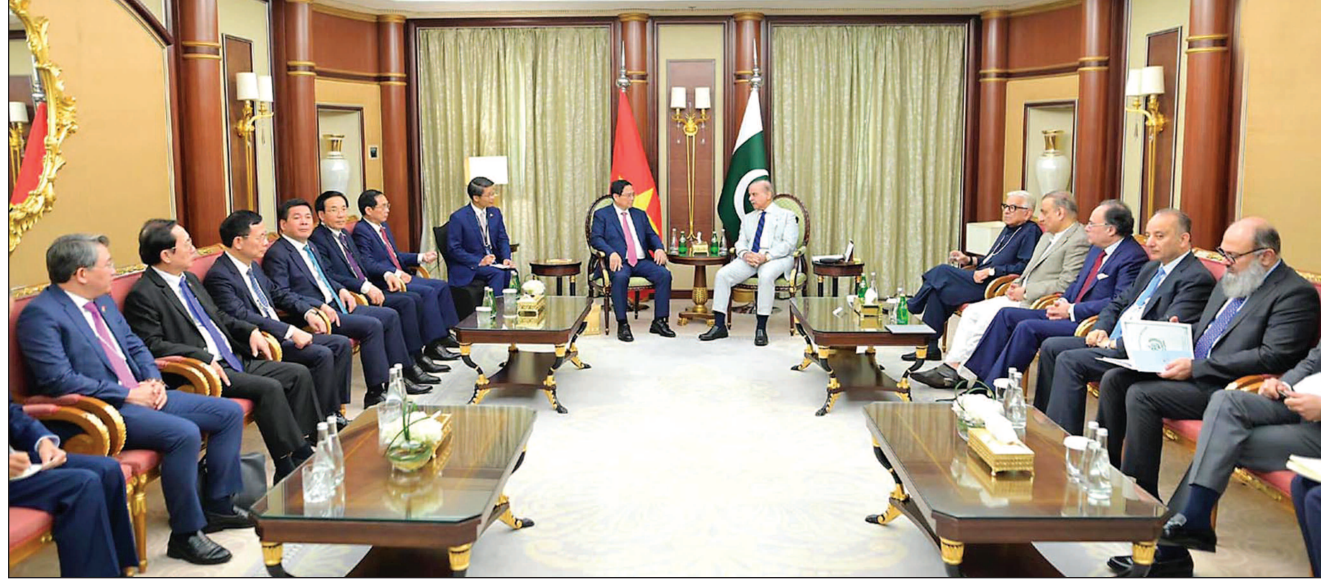
RAWALPINDI: The Security Forces on Wednesday killed a Khwarij terrorist while injured the other during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted in general area Sambaza, Zhob District.

During conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between the Army troops and Khwarij, an Inter Services Public Relations news release said.

The weapons and ammunition were also recovered from them.

Sanitization operation is being conducted to neutralize any other Kharij present in the area.

"Security forces of Pakistan, in step with the nation, remain determined to thwart attempts at sabotaging peace, stability and progress of Balochistan," the ISPR said. PR



RIYADH: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh of Vietnam on the sidelines of the 8th Future Investment Initiative (FII) Conference.

Pak-Saudi marching forward together to strengthen their brotherly relations: PM Shehbaz

Addresses news conference along with Saudi Minister of Investment Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al-Falih

RIYADH: Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has said Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are marching forward together to strengthen their brotherly relations.

Addressing a news conference along with Saudi Minister of Investment Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al-Falih, in Riyadh on Wednesday, PM Shehbaz Sharif said that under the dynamic leadership of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, we will achieve progress and prosperity not only for the peoples of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan but the entire Muslim Ummah.

The Prime Minister thanked the Saudi support in securing the IMF program. Describing his meetings in Saudi Arabia as reassuring, he said we have discussed very important mutually beneficial projects. He expressed satisfaction that the MoUs signed a few weeks ago are now under implementation. We are like a family and will build on in times to come.

The Prime Minister said he hopefully will be visiting the Kingdom by the middle of next month, expressing the confidence that we will be able to achieve timelines of the projects. PM Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan will be producing skilled workforce which will further contribute in the Kingdom's development. In his remarks, the Saudi Minister of Investment recalled that during his recent visit to Pakistan, the two sides had concluded twenty seven MoUs valued at 2.2 billion dollars.

He said this number has increased to thirty four MoUs. He said the value of these agreements has also increased to 2.8 billion dollars.



The Saudi Minister of Investment said five of the MoUs are already operational and financed, and creating values for both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. He said some of these agreements have resulted in exports from Pakistan. He said a Saudi investor has already acquired land for the building of an integrated Medical Complex.

Meanwhile Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met with the Saudi Investment Minister Engr. Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al-Falih and Adviser at the Saudi Royal Court Mohammad Bin Mazayad Al-Tuwajiri in Riyadh on Wednesday.

Both sides reviewed the progress on various economic initiatives between the two countries.

Recalling the Saudi Investment Minister's recent visit to Pakistan, earlier this month, along with a large private sector delegation, the Prime Minister noted that the Business-to-business MoUs signed in Pakistan during the visit have started to materialize into solid investment and commercial deals.

He encouraged to continue the momentum for creating new opportunities for developing strong economic partnership.

The Prime Minister thanked Minister Khalid Al Falih for his efforts and commitment towards strong economic cooperation with Pakistan. He underscored the need to benefit from tremendous economic opportunities for both countries that have emerged in the backdrop of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. APP

Govt focusses on economic uplift of masses, says DPM Dar

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday highlighted that the incumbent government focused on efforts to uplift the economic conditions of the masses.

Now, the country was on road to sustainable growth as all the macro-economic indicators were doing well with food inflation nosediving and the GDP on the rise, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister expressed his views during the launching ceremony of BOGO LIV, a financial mobile application, as a chief guest.

He further said that Pakistan Stock Market had been the best performing market in the Asia while the credible global institutions were all projecting Pakistan's economy on road to recovery.

Dar stressed that they needed to introspect on their past and reflect as to how correct the course and stay on the right course.

He said that government's strategy revolved around encouraging productivity through private sector, adding it was not the government's job to do businesses, rather it acted as facilitator to encourage the private sector.

The DPM/Dar further said that the airports were to be outsourced in the country. When the UK could do it why it could not be done here for the purpose of provision of better services, he added. He said that the government was also focusing on downsizing its size and curtailing its spending, adding that immense potential still existed in the country, though they had lost a lot yet the vast opportunities existed.

Dar underscored the need of maintaining the economic stability and called for unity, hard work and moving in the right direction.

He said after few months of this government's tenure, the inflation rate had brought down to around 7 percent while the monitoring policy rate was also reduced.

About the launch of the digital app, the deputy prime minister/ foreign minister said that such like digital payment services and innovative models would contribute towards Pakistan's digital economy and its financial landscape.

He said the government had the vision for digital and prosperous Pakistan and it was taking all steps to stabilize the economy.

The innovative ideas in the technological fields would strengthen and uplift lives of the communities, he observed, adding that the country's population comprised about 67 percent of youth under 30 years of age.

He said while on the other hand, Pakistan was blessed with vast mineral wealth which was complemented by its IT and renewable energy sectors.

The novel digital financial programmes always contributed to Pakistan's social and technological progress by benefiting consumers and businesses and by bringing more transparency and accountability, he added.

Govt wants to make Pakistan hub of Information Technology: Shaza Fatima



KARACHI: Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecom Shaza Fatima Khawaja Wednesday said that the government wanted to make Pakistan hub of information technology.

Addressing an event the Digital Pakistan Cybersecurity Hackathon 2024 officially launched here, she said special attention was being paid to cybersecurity. Organized by Ignite under the auspices of the Ministry of IT & Telecom, this flagship event marks the beginning of a nationwide series that will see 521 teams from across Pakistan competing in cybersecurity challenges designed to identify, nurture, and promote local talent in this critical field.

Shaza Fatima Khawaja also expressed her grat-

itude to all participants, partner organizations, organizers who contributed to the success of the Karachi launch.

"Events like the Digital Pakistan Cybersecurity Hackathon are instrumental in developing an ecosystem of innovation and col-

laboration in cybersecurity," said Shaza Khawaja.

She further said, "I am proud to share that Pakistan has been recognized in the Top Tier-1 (Role-Modelling) of the ITU-Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI_V5) 2024, reflecting our nation's strides in strengthening cybersecurity and resilience. This milestone is a testament to the Ministry's leadership and the dedicated efforts of stakeholders across government, industry, academia, and law enforcement agencies."

Secretary IT & Telecom, Zarrar Hasham Khan, highlighted the Ministry's commitment to developing national cybersecurity expertise and capabilities.

Investors expressing confidence in Govt's decisions: Ahsan



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal has said investors are expressing confidence in the government's direction and decisions.

Addressing an event in Islamabad today, he pointed out Pakistan Stock Market is reaching historic highs, while inflation has decreased to 6.7 percent. He emphasized that the world is beginning to view Pakistan as a successful turnaround country and called for greater synergy to advance the nation's progress and development.

Alluding to the challenge posed by climate change, the Minister highlighted that the government is focusing on building community resilience, enhancing infrastructure adaptability, and ensuring food and water security.

CJCSC calls on President of Azerbaijan, Military-Civil leadership

RAWALPINDI: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), General Sahir Shamshad Mirza on an official visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan called on President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, Minister of Defence Colonel General Hasanov Zakir Asgar, Foreign Minister, Jeyhun Aziz Oghlu Bayramov, 1st Deputy Defence Minister and Chief of General Staff Colonel General Karim Tofiq Oghlu Valiyev and Minister of Defence Industry, Vugar Mustafayev.

During the interaction, both sides appreciated deep and historic relations between the two countries and discussed matters of mutual interest including evolving security dynamics of the region and enhancement of existing defence ties in multiple domains, an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.



The CJCSC highlighted the importance of enhanced military cooperation between Pakistan and Azerbaijan and reaffirmed collective commitment towards peace and stability.

Azerbaijani leadership appreciated the professionalism and sacrifices of the Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged the commonality of views to expand existing cooperation by exploring multiple avenues to forge deeper ties with Pakistan. PR

Pak-EPA directed to take coping measures for improving capital's air quality

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam while taking serious notice of the rapidly worsening air quality in recent days in the capital city and its surrounding areas, has directed the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency to take necessary measures to cope with the issue in coordination with relevant official stakeholders including Islamabad Capital Territory Administration and Capital Development Authority.

The deteriorating air quality of Islamabad from the onset of mid-October has particularly started worsened further, leaving the city's ambience murky with increasing pollution, dust and vehicular emissions raising alarm bells for smog risk, the PM's climate aide noted, according to a press statement issued here on Wednesday by the climate change & environmental coord-



ination ministry. The poor air quality in Islamabad, like many urban areas, can be attributed to several factors. The main causes include vehicle emissions, industrial pollution, construction dust, burning of waste and crop residue. "Addressing these drivers of bad air quality in the city requires stringent enforcement of the relevant environmental regulations and fines. And, adoption of better waste management practices and public awareness campaigns to combat pollution

effectively are essential to compliment the air quality improving measures.

Romina Khurshid Alam urged the city dwellers to play their part by avoiding burning of waste and crop residue. She also urged the city's waste collection authorities to regularly collect the waste from designated points and dispose of it properly on environmentally sustainable and scientific manner to avoid its burning by the people in streets.

Pak-EPA officials said that efforts are being taken to tackle the growing air pollution in the capital city for protection of public health from its hazardous impacts. In a press statement, they said that air quality monitoring is being conducted on regular basis through mobile station and low cost qir quality monitoring sensors across the city.

The data collection through the Pak-EPA's air quality monitoring network focuses on key pollutants and environmental factors impacting public health, including Particu-

late Matter (PM2.5 and PM10), Carbon dioxide (CO2), temperature, and relative humidity. Findings obtained by AQI data showed that PM2.5 levels ranged between 55.25- 66.5 µg/m³, while PM10 ranged from 58-74.1 µg/m³. Carbon dioxide (CO2) levels in the air were recorded between 528.25- 577.5 ppm whereas the temperatures ranged from 27.25-30.5 °C, and relative humidity was between 36.5- 40.83%. "Calculated AQI values indicated that PM2.5 and PM10 levels were in the Moderate range, primarily affecting sensitive individuals, such as the elderly and those with respiratory conditions," senior Pak-EPA official said. The findings underscore the urgency of addressing Islamabad's air pollution to safeguard public health, particularly given the harmful PM2.5 levels, according to the Pak-EPA official.

The Pak-EPA official also said that the city's environmental watchdog's Environmental Monitoring Team (EMT) has conducted on October 28 a monitoring exer-

cise with focus on vehicular emissions from heavy transport vehicles at the Mandi Morr entry point, Sector I-11, Islamabad. This monitoring was carried out in collaboration with the Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) to address the smog issue so as to enhance the capital's air quality. During such exercise, the team also assessed the smoke emitted by diesel-fueled heavy vehicles, using the Ringlemann scale for evaluation and measured noise emissions with a dedicated noise meter, the official added. The Pak-EPA official said further that during the checking of the polluting vehicles, 36 vehicles out of 50 were fined for surpassing the permissible limits set by NEQS as a part of Pak-EPA's broader strategy to combat smog issue, ensure cleaner air and promote public health through targeted pollution control measures.

The capital's environmental watchdog said that the Capital Development Authority (CDA) is currently implementing in several major construction projects including the

widening of Park Road, the construction of 10th Avenue and preliminary work on the widening of L.J.P Road. Additionally, new flyovers are being constructed simultaneously.

These construction activities are contributing to traffic congestion, which in turn lead to increased vehicular emissions, noise pollution and dust emissions, ultimately deteriorating the air quality in Islamabad. But, the relevant authorities have been requested to take all-out measures to mitigate air and noise pollutions for improving air quality and protecting public health, the Pak-EPA official emphasized. Meanwhile, the PM's coordinator on climate change Romina Khurshid Alam urged all the relevant government departments to collaborate with the Pak-EPA to strengthen regulatory measures to enforce stricter emissions standards, promoting cleaner transportation options, and implementing public awareness programmes on pollution's hazardous health impacts.

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Hungry for change

DR MEHREEN MUJTABA

Rahim Khan was born very weak, according to his father, a daily wage earner from Ganche, in the Gilgit-Baltistan region. A few months back, a severely malnourished, 12-month-old baby Rahim was brought to the Nutrition Stabilisation Center (NSC) in Ganche. Whatever he would eat, he would either vomit or pass through. He was emaciated, listless, with no energy. The father had spent all his meagre savings on the treatment of his son at various clinics.

The nutrition assistant at the NSC measured the mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) of baby Rahim, which was 9.1 cms, indicating severe acute malnutrition, a life-threatening condition. The baby was admitted and started on Ready to Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) treatment, a lifesaving, essential drug that treats severe cases of malnutrition in children under the age of five. Baby Rahim was fed this nutrition-dense paste twice a day, which resulted in stabilising his condition.

Three months later, Rahim achieved a MUAC of 12.7. The baby is thriving well. Rahim is among five million children in Pakistan who suffer from acute malnutrition which is referred to as wasting. Ganche is one of the 67 high-burden districts in Pakistan with severe malnutrition in children under the age of five.

Ganche is one of 67 high-burden districts in Pakistan with severe malnutrition in children under age of five

Pakistan faces a paradox. While we are making strides in various sectors, malnutrition remains a significant challenge, impacting health, productivity and economic growth. Malnutrition affects 40 per cent of children under the age of five, with stunted growth and 18 per cent suffer from acute malnutrition, as was the case with baby Rahim from Ganche.

This is a matter affecting the very foundation of our nation's health and future. These figures represent more than just numbers. They reflect the missed potential, a reduction in the future productivity of our workforce, and an increased burden on our healthcare system. Recent financing estimates show that \$1.2 billion is needed annually to combat stunting, wasting and maternal anaemia. The capacity of the national government to mobilise additional resources for the implementation of a multi-sectoral nutrition plan is meagre, rendering Pakistan's ability to sustain nutrition programming highly questionable in the medium and long term.

Securing both domestic and external financing is at the core of the 2021 Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Compact. Comprehensive and faster mechanisms must be in place to restructure the country's debt if we are to achieve SDGs. In that scenario, debt relief in the form of debt swaps to address malnutrition offers a more promising approach to support Pakistan's efforts in tackling malnutrition, provided it is linked with better performance or strong conditionalities on nutrition public spending.

Debt swap mechanisms increasingly gained interest amongst development partners over the last several decades, allowing creditor governments to waive outstanding debt obligations and interest claims from debtor governments in exchange for earmarking the repurposed/reallocated funds towards predetermined objectives and projects.

In exchange, the debtor government is responsible for channeling the funds transparently through its financial systems in the local currency. This could be achieved either through setting up in the debtor country a public trust fund or through a third-party organisation.

Debt Swap for Nutrition programmes need to focus on countries with the highest burden of malnutrition using indicators like Double/Triple Burden Malnutrition, and joint UNICEF-WHO-World Bank databases.

Pakistan's external debt reached \$130.4 billion in March 2024. Through debt swap, a portion of Pakistan's external debt could be redirected towards funding nutrition programmes. This will not only improve health outcomes and reduce malnutrition, but also reduce our debt burden while at the same time allocating dedicated resources for critical nutrition needs.

Potential partners to achieve debt swap for nutrition could be the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, IMF, European Union, and bilateral donors (USAID, FCDO, JICA, GIZ etc). In Pakistan, several of the recognised debt swap models can be used. For starters, through a 'Buy-Back Model', Pakistan repurchases debt at discounted rates and redirects the savings towards nutrition interventions like therapeutic feeding programmes, multi-micronutrient supplements, and food fortification at scale.

There is also a 'Debt-for-Nutrition Swap' – wherein the creditors forgo the debt in exchange for Pakistan's commitment to invest in nutrition. A third model could be 'Debt Rescheduling' through which the government of Pakistan can potentially reschedule debt repayment terms, freeing resources for nutrition. Debt swaps need to be brought to scale in the field of nutrition. Nutrition programme swaps should have lower transaction costs than ad-hoc nutrition projects and will bring together multiple stakeholders in the design and implementation process. By exploring Debt-for-Nutrition Swap opportunities, Pakistan can address pressing nutrition challenges, improve health outcomes, and support economic growth.

The writer is the director of climate change, nutrition and health at the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation, and Coordination (MoNHSR&C).



By Minhaleh Suleman

AI and the Human Factor: A Necessary Evolution

I was propelled to write about this topic since I experienced that there is a dire need in addressing the socially conditioned orthodox mindset and why does any new technology struggles as a big leap in Pakistan even as of year 2024.

My perspective is that there is reluctance to change the mindset which has a lot to do with the environment where we all are raised in. Its a complete ecosystem which contributes to key decision making where we question things which bring comfort, e.g., which will make the tedious working style more streamlined is more skeptical because ease is not what we are used to or there is a deep insecurity in getting replaced. The main issue lies in insecurities which leads to making a chain of weak decisions which adversely impact businesses and for a reason we cannot find more Pakistanis as a leading role at key International Technology companies. This same insecurity is now roaming

around Artificial Intelligence as AI to replaced jobs, which is truly a debatable topic but aren't we all been using AI for more than a decade now? even the phone lock system via facial recognition or thumb print is AI, we didn't question this ease but yes any new technology has always threatened human preconceived mindset. Let me share an example of ATM machines, cashiers at the banks were threatened and protested, but don't we still see cashiers at banks with same arrogant attitude, this is the point which I am trying to make is that AI will empower people to do their jobs better and be more creative so we don't take it for granted.

Now speaking about Cloud, over here I would like to share my experience that why Cloud technology is so close to my heart and what sort of mindset challenges I had to face in Pakistan. I was the very first hiring of Oracle Cloud for healthcare sector in Pakistan and with relentless hardwork we made it the most successful cloud market. The main challenge we faced was that the data regulation policies in Pakistan and same reluctance to change while keeping data more prone to danger & costly solution i.e. on-premise

whereas seamlessly moving towards cloud. This is the main reason why our country is behind the seamless technology shift besides huge potential is that our country is over-regulated with so many policies that it gives Pakistanis to put 10 times more effort to compete in the international market. It we just peep into the success of our neighbouring countries the smartest move they made was acceptance of Technology shift, that's they key bring any countries' trajectory towards success. Look at how many giant techs have shut down among which my favorite blackberry & Nokia, where are they, too late and gone. Its very daunting to experience these giants being sunset as a brand just because of late adaption towards technology transformation and fearing change where actual fear was lied right under their nose i.e. not to transform.

Hear, I would like to reiterate that Technology shift is inevitable where technology is bound to succeed and this is what we all experienced recently during Covid-19, a rapid shift towards unprecedented technology measures was considered where platforms like Zoom, Good Classrooms and Netflix experienced

growth because they were on cloud, easily scalable, robust to change and highly secure.

We must appreciate that recently our government is also planning on moving to cloud within Pakistan which is highly commendable. At the same time, our government and financial sector must work with Key Cloud & AI players in the market which meets international security standards whereas still we are beating around the bush and protecting what I call "My Dear Data" to be hosted within Pakistan where sadly none of the local cloud players meet any security or global certification other than ISO 9001, sigh!

Some of you might be able to assess my frustration since I had to experience crazy use cases and came across CIOs calling a single rack a "Data Center" while some CIOs literally build disaster recovery site within the same rack as the primary rack, this leaves me speechless but the good part is I even converted such clients to cloud, its all about persistence.

My idea is to write more about my experience on technology and invite key players to have more interactive sessions and leave a legacy and be more open to learn.

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



They are, from north to south, the Khyber, Kurram, Tochi, Gomal, and Bolan. The Khyber Pass is of special historical interest: broad enough to allow for the passing of large numbers of troops, it has often been the point of ingress for armies invading the sub-continent.

South of the Gumal River, the Sulaiman Range runs in a roughly north-south direction. The highest point of that range, Takht-e Sulaiman, has twin peaks, the higher of which reaches 18,481 feet (5,633 metres). The Sulaiman Range tapers into the Marri and Bugti hills in the south. The Sulaiman and, farther south, the low Kirthar Range separate the Balochistan plateau from the Indus plain.

The vast tableland of Balochistan contains a great variety of physical features. In the northeast a basin center on the towns of Zhab and Loralai forms a trellis-patterned lobe that is surrounded on all sides by mountain ranges. To the east and southeast is the Sulaiman Range, which joins the Central Brahui Range near Quetta, and to the north and northwest is the Toba Kakar Range (which farther west becomes the Khwaja Amran Range). The hilly terrain becomes less severe southward in the form of Ras Koh Range. The small Quetta basin is surrounded on all

sides by mountains. The whole area appears to form a node of high ranges. West of the Ras Koh Range, the general landform of northwestern Balochistan is a series of low-lying plateaus divided by hills. In the north the Chagai Hills border a region of true desert, consisting of inland drainage and hamuns (playas).

Southern Balochistan is a vast wilderness of mountain ranges, of which the Central Brahui Range is the backbone. The easternmost Kirthar Range is backed by the Pab Range in the west. Other important ranges of southern Balochistan are the Central Makran Range and the Makran Coast Range, whose steep face to the south divides the coastal plain from the rest of the plateau. The Makran coastal track mostly comprises level mud flats surrounded by sandstone ridges. The isolation of the arid plain has been broken by an ongoing development project at Gwadar, which is linked with Karachi via an improved road transport system.

Lying south of the northern mountain rampart, the submontane plateau has four distinct divisions—the Trans-Indus plains, the Potwar Plateau, the Salt Range, and the Sialkot region. The Trans-Indus plains, west of the Indus River, comprise the hill-girt plateaus of the Vale of Peshawar and of Kohat and Bannu, all of which are

oases in the arid, scrub-covered landscape of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Of these, the Vale of Peshawar is the most fertile. Gravel or clay alluvial detritus covers much of the area and is formed from loose particles or fragments separated from masses of rock by erosion and other forces. Annual precipitation is generally limited to between 10 and 15 inches (250 and 380 mm), and most of the cultivated area in the Vale of Peshawar is irrigated from canals.

Kohat is less developed than the Vale of Peshawar. Precipitation is about 16 inches (400 mm). Only a small percentage of the cultivated area is canal-irrigated, and its groundwater is not adequately exploited, although the water table is generally high. Much of the area consists of scrub and poor grazing land. The region is much broken by limestone ridges, and the uneven limestone floor is variously filled with lacustrine clays, gravel, or boulders.

In Bannu, about one-fourth of the cultivated area is irrigated. Annual precipitation is low, amounting to about 11 inches (275 mm). Fat-tailed sheep, camels, and donkeys are raised in Kohat and Bannu; wool is an important cash crop.

The Potwar Plateau covers an area of about 5,000 square miles (13,000 square km) and lies at an elevation of

some 1,200 to 1,900 feet (350 to 575 metres). It is bounded on the east by the Jhelum River and on the west by the Indus River. On the north, the Kala Chitta Range and Margala Hills (at about 3,000 to 5,000 feet [900 to 1,500 metres]) form its boundary. Toward the south it gradually slopes into the Salt Range, which presents a steep face rising to about 2,000 feet (600 metres) even farther south. The middle of the Potwar Plateau is occupied by the structurally downwarped basin of the Soan River. The general terrain of the basin consists of inter-laced ravines, which are locally known as khaderas and are set deep in the soft Shiwalik beds of which the whole area is composed. The surface layer of the area is formed of wind-blown loessic silt, deteriorating into sand and gravel toward the hill slopes. The small Rawalpindi plain in the north is the location of the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

The Potwar Plateau receives modest annual precipitation, averaging between 15 and 20 inches (380 to 510 mm). Though precipitation is somewhat higher in the northwest, the southwest is very arid. The landscape is dissected and eroded by streams that, during the rains, cut into the land and wash away the soil.

To be continued....

Showbiz

Shailene Woodley reflects on personal transition while filming 'Three Women'

Shailene Woodley reveals her connection with 'Three Women' character months before Aaron Rodgers split

Shailene Woodley has recently reflected on her 'heavy personal transition' while filming Three Women.

Months before her split from Aaron Rodgers, the Divergent star revealed she felt connection with her character in the new show.

"I was going through a pretty heavy personal transition [when we filmed], and to come to work and see her face and have that grounding rod artistically and professionally was something that I'll take with me forever," said the 32-year-old in a new interview with Natural Diamonds. Sharing her experiences of Lisa Taddeo's novel, Shailene told the outlet, "The plot line and story of [my character] Gia are truthful to Lisa's history but also fictional. She could relay her emotional complexities about those experiences."

"But when I met her, I was like, 'Oh, you're a



soulmate," remarked the Ferrari actress.

Dishing out details about the show's plotline, Shailene explained, "One of the things that causes the most suffering in my life is this feeling of existential loneliness, which is different from loneliness."

The Fallout actress continued, "Three Women has become a pillar [for me] to feel less alone with my experiences and the emotional complexities of having a human heart."

"I hope it can offer the same thing to other women. There is room for conversations or connections to happen. It's good to have art in the world that shares this idea," she told the outlet. For the unversed, Shailene and Aaron were first romantically linked in July 2020 and got engaged the following February. A year later, they called off their engagement in April 2022.

Tech

Chinese astronauts reach space station to conduct groundbreaking experiments



Three Chinese astronauts successfully docked at the nation's permanently inhabited homegrown space station on Wednesday, marking a significant milestone in its space exploration efforts.

The crew, led by 48-year-old Cai Yuzhe along with 34-year-olds Song Lingdong and Wang Haoze, reached the space station after a six-hour journey after launching into space aboard the Shenzhou-19 spacecraft, according to Chinese media.

"During the Shenzhou-19 flight ... 86 space sci-tech experiments will be carried out in the fields of space life sciences, microgravity

physics, materials, medicine, new technologies," Lin Xiqiang, deputy director of the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA), said in a press conference on Tuesday.

The crew's mission includes conducting various scientific experiments as well as an experiment expected to involve exposing bricks made from simulated lunar soil to conditions in space for the potential construction of human habitats.

If successful, these bricks could serve as a key material used in the construction of a permanent lunar research station, which China hopes to complete by 2035, as it would in theory be more convenient than transporting building materials from Earth.

The bricks will be sent in a separate uncrewed cargo spacecraft to the Shenzhou-19 crew next month.

Additionally, Lin highlighted that, outside the mission, all three crew members are part of the Chinese military's air force, with Wang also being the third female Chinese national sent into space.

WHO declares Pakistan among five high-burden countries as TB resurges

ISLAMABAD: The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared Pakistan as one of the top five high-burden countries where tuberculosis (TB) cases reached record high in 2023, media reported on Wednesday. According to the global health body, the country — alongside India, Indonesia, China and the Philippines — accounted for over half of 10.8 million cases of the disease worldwide, shedding light on an ongoing public health challenge despite the availability of treatment and prevention tools.

The WHO's Global Tuberculosis Report 2024 stated that the newly diagnosed TB cases rose to 8.2 million in 2023, up from 7.5 million in 2022 — highest number since global monitoring began in 1995. TB claimed 1.25 million lives, making it the leading infectious disease killer in 2023 and surpassing COVID-19.

"TB remains a global health threat, particularly in high-burden countries like Pakistan," said WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "We urge all nations to fulfil commitments to expand tools for TB prevention, detection, and treatment to end TB once and for all," DG said.

While TB-related deaths saw a modest decrease — down from 1.32 million in 2022, the disease continues to spread rapidly in resource-constrained settings, with high undernutrition, diabetes, smoking and HIV infection acting as major risk factors. Nearly 56% of global TB burden in 2023 was concentrated in Pakistan and its neighbouring high-burden countries.

Further complicating TB's eradication is the rising incidence of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB), a severe form that resists common treatments and is closely linked with anti-

microbial resistance.

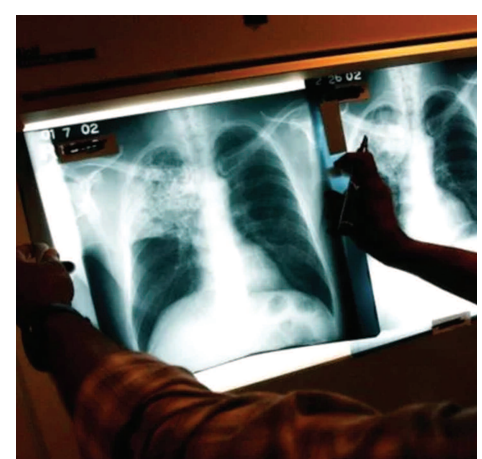
In 2023, only 44% of MDR/RR-TB cases were diagnosed and treated, with a treatment success rate of 68%, illustrating challenges faced by health systems in tracking and managing this resistant strain. Despite national and international efforts to counter TB, funding shortages persist. In 2023, low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) required \$22 billion to effectively combat TB, but only managed to secure \$5.7 billion (26% of this target). The WHO's report underscores a significant number of TB-affected households face catastrophic costs, exceeding 20% of their annual income, to access necessary TB care and treatment. Dr Tereza Kasaeva, Director of WHO's Global Tuberculosis Programme, called for urgent, multisectoral action, emphasizing, "Funding shortfalls, financial burdens on patients, con-

flict, climate change and drug-resistant strains are hampering progress in controlling TB".

Addressing TB, she noted, requires united efforts to tackle these barriers, as well as increased funding and research into diagnostics, treatments and vaccine development.

The WHO's push for TB vaccine research highlights unmet need, with only 20% of \$5 billion annual target for TB research reached in 2022. TB Vaccine Accelerator Council is actively working on advancing this agenda.

WHO also calls for action on commitments made at 2023 UN High-Level Meeting on TB, urging governments, donors and global partners to translate pledges into effective strategies. The targets set for 2027 remain off-track, with further progress needed to reduce TB cases and deaths globally.



Health

Mushahid identifies leadership, adaptability as drivers of China's global success

ISLAMABAD: Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed on Wednesday cited effective leadership, stable policies, adaptability, and a peaceful foreign policy as key factors in China's ascent to global prominence. He, in his introductory remarks while chairing the "China at 75: A Journey of Progress, Transformation and Global Leadership," celebrating 75 years of the founding of People's Republic of China, highlighted China's peaceful rise to global leadership without invasion, aggression, occupation, or colonization, attributing its success to peaceful leadership, stability, adaptability, and commitment to learning. The conference was hosted by Pak-China Institute.

He described Pakistan-China relations as unique as these are neither transactional nor tactical but rooted in deep strategic cooperation.

Reflecting on China's recent history, Senator Mushahid Hussain summed up China's 75 years in what he termed were

'3 R's: Revolution under Chairman Mao, Reform under Deng Xiaoping and now peaceful Rise under President Xi Jinping.

Referring to his interaction at an American think tank in Washington, DC, where Senator Mushahid Hussain was asked: 'which side are you on, to which he retorted: 'Pakistan is on the right side of history, and the course of contemporary history is determined by the Asian Century, where China is our reliable strategic partner'.

He also appreciated Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar's role in raising voice for Dr Afia Siddiqui at highest levels of the Biden Administration and inviting Palestinian students from Gaza to study in Pakistan. The conference was uniquely marked by international representation from South Asia, featuring Mahub Alam, Leader of Bangladesh Nationalist Party; Ahmed Thariq, Member of Parliament from the Maldives; and Achyut Prasad Mainali, Member of the Federal Parliament of Nepal.

Jiang Zaidong, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Pakistan expressed heartfelt gratitude to Senator Ishaq Dar for his attendance, despite his 32-hour journey from Samoa, underscoring the significance attached to the event.

Ambassador Jiang celebrated the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), now joined by over 150 countries, as a testament to China's commitment to shared prosperity. He further emphasized the pivotal influence of President Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, which has guided China's progress and resilience in this new era.

Expressing appreciation for hosting China's prime minister at the recent SCO summit, Ambassador Jiang advocated for deeper, more comprehensive cooperation among global south nations to foster equitable development and shared progress.

He outlined Chinese concerns for security of its personnel and projects in Pakistan, urging Pakistan's government to take 'effective remedial measures to prevent recurrence of such tort acts and ensure that perpetrators are identified, caught and punished'.

Dr. Ishrat Husain, Economist/Former Governor, State Bank of Pakistan highlighted China's extraordinary journey, achieving unprecedented progress through strategic shifts from a rural to an urban economy and transitioning from a command-driven to a market-oriented system.



ISLAMABAD: Italian Ambassador Marilina Armellini called on the Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain..

Maritime Minister for boosting blue economy



VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Shaikh on Wednesday visited the National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA), where he emphasized a coordinated approach to developing key maritime sectors like aquaculture, green shipping, and tourism in a bid to revitalize Pakistan's maritime economy. During his visit, Minister Shaikh was briefed on NIMA's work in shaping maritime policies and promoting research. NIMA officials presented an overview of

Pakistan's maritime sector, pointing out that it currently contributes less than 0.2% of the nation's GDP, far below the global standard of 8-10%.

This discrepancy, they argued, underscored the need for strategic reforms and investments.

NIMA's partnerships with local, national, and international stakeholders were also discussed as crucial for growth in Pakistan's maritime sector. The institute highlighted how these collaborations are working to create new opportunities and expand Pakistan's maritime footprint.

In a series of discussions, Shaikh and NIMA

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representatives explored various areas within the Blue Economy, underscoring the need for a cohesive national action plan to fully utilize the country's ocean resources. Both sides agreed on the importance of coordinated efforts among MoMA, NIMA, and other maritime stakeholders to ensure sustainable growth across all maritime sectors.

Minister Shaikh reiterated his commitment to supporting NIMA's mission, promising full backing to advance the maritime economy. He stressed that by working together, Pakistan can strengthen its presence in the global maritime arena and move closer to realizing the potential of its Blue Economy.

Muqam holds meeting with Nazriati Group

BUNER: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and President PML-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Engr Amir Muqam held a meeting with Nazriati Group leaders on Wednesday. During the meeting, held at residence of Ishtiaq Chhattan, the Leaders of Nazriati Group announced to abolish the Group and express full confidence on the leadership of PML-N, president Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Engr Amir Muqam and Murtaza Javed Abbasi, received a press release. Extending full support to provincial president Engr Amir Muqam, the leaders vowed to work together for strengthening the party. The Nazriati Group leader Abdul Subhan Khan, Malik Imran, group president from Peshawar Arbab Ghulam Haider Khan, group leader from Abbottabad Sardar Abdur Rashid also spoke on this occasion. Provincial President Engr Amir Muqam hailed their decision and termed the decision of abolishment of group as "better late than never".

He expressed the resolve to work under the dynamic leadership of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif. On this occasion President PML N Mardan Inayat Shah Bacha, Swabi President Shiraz Khan, Buner President Salar Khan, Shargla president Intikhab Alam, Babar Salim, Nawabzada Khan, Adil Khan, Ajar Akram Bacha, Shah Bakht Rawan, Amanullah Khan, Liaqat Khan, Ishtiaq Khan, Javed Ghazali and others were also present.

Law Minister congratulates newly elected president SCBA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tatar on Tuesday congratulated Mian Rauf Atta for being elected as president (SCBA). He congratulated to all group leaders including Mr Ahsan Bhawan, head of Asma Jahangir Group, for their historical victory in the elections of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA). The Law minister said that he is expecting that Mian Rauf Atta will continue the mission of welfare of bar and lawyers. He said that the Independent Group has always done politics of principles and upheld the supremacy of constitution and law.

18th consignment carrying 95 tons successfully landed at Beirut



ISLAMABAD: The 18th consignment of humanitarian aid for the people of Lebanon has successfully landed in Beirut, which flew from Islamabad International Airport via chartered flight, carrying 95 tons of relief items by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). The Government of Pakistan remained steadfast in its commitment to providing humanitarian assistance to the war-affected people of Palestine (Gaza) and Lebanon, a news release said.

Pakistan, Maldives agree to form joint working groups on various sectors



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Maldives here on Wednesday agreed to form joint working groups on various sectors under the framework of the Pakistan-Maldives Joint Commission.

The High Commissioner welcomed the proposal and assured that Maldives will send their official representation for these Working Groups in the near future. Both sides agreed to hold the Inaugural Session of the Pakistan-Maldives Joint Commission in early 2025. The Minister informed that Pakistan was keen to explore new avenues for cooperation with Maldives in key priority areas.

He welcomed the Maldivian side to explore the industries of Halal meat, Agricultural Products, Fruits and Surgical Instruments in Pakistan. The High Commissioner, while emphasizing the physical proximity between Karachi and Maldivian Port, assured of his efforts to enhance bilateral trade between both countries. The Minister also highlighted the significant role both countries can play in regional and international forums including SAARC and OIC on significant issues such as stronger climate action.

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Final bidding process for PIA privatization

ISLAMABAD: The final bidding process for the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is scheduled to take place tomorrow (Thursday) in Islamabad. Preparations for the bidding process have been finalized at a private hotel in the capital.

Of the six potential bidders, only the Blue World City consortium has submitted an advance payment, confirmed by sources from the Privatization Commission. Both the bid submission and opening for Pakistan International Airline's purchase are set to occur on the same day, as per aviation sources. The privatization process will adhere strictly to the regulatory framework and guidelines, ensuring full compliance with legal requirements, the sources added. As the government proceeds with the PIA privatisation, new conditions from potential buyers have emerged related to airline's employees. During a Senate Privatisation Committee meeting chaired by Senator Talal Chaudhry, it was revealed that companies interested in acquiring PIA are requesting significant changes. Key among the new demands is the immediate dismissal of all the employees, alongside the acquisition of 76 percent of PIA's shares, with the government responsible for clearing tax payments. INP

Ali Pervaiz pledges support to strengthen CCP

ISLAMABAD: State Minister for Finance and Revenue, Ali Pervaiz Malik here on Wednesday visited the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP), underscoring the role of the Commission in checking market failure and protecting consumers from anti-competitive practices.

During his visit, Malik conveyed the Ministry's commitment to bolstering CCP's capacity to increase its effectiveness, whether through legislative reforms, follow-up on court cases or capacity-building initiatives. Addressing CCP's officials, he emphasized the need for a comprehensive review of the Competition Act to ensure it remains modern, effective, and relevant as well as to address the challenges being faced by the Commission. "Competitiveness in markets is vital for protecting consumer interests. It also encourages new startups and attracts investments," said Malik. CCP Chairman, Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu, briefed the Minister on Commission's role, including its



functions, performance, and ongoing inquiries in important sectors of the economy. Dr. Sidhu highlighted the challenges faced by CCP, including legal obstacles. Minister Malik pledged his full support to CCP in overcoming its challenges. He requested a detailed list of pending court cases and stay orders, to take up with the Attorney General and Law Ministry for expeditious resolution. The Minister urged Dr. Sidhu to maintain close coordination with the Finance Ministry to ensure effective vigilance of consumer interests. The meeting was attended by CCP Members, Saeed Ahmed, Salman Amin, Abdul Rashid Sheikh, Ms. Bushra Naz, and Directors Generals.

Economy to go forward with sustainable recovery: Report

ISLAMABAD: In the wake of positive developments, the country's economy will continue to observe sustainable recovery in the coming months as it has demonstrated sustained recovery during the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2024-25, the finance ministry said in a report released here Wednesday.

According to the monthly Economic Update and Outlook for October 2024, the economy showed constant recovery during first quarter and stability in both, the fiscal and external sectors, has been maintained, supported by significant financial inflows. Pakistan has received first tranche of US\$ 1.03 billion under International Monetary Fund (IMF) Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme, reinforcing macroeconomic stability. Moreover, successful hosting of SCO summit 2024 in Pakistan are paving the way for business and market confidence, it says.

According to report, the agricultural sector is benefiting from mechanization-based productivity. During FY2025 (Jul-Sep), imports of agricultural machinery increased by 115.9 percent to \$29.7 million. Urea offtake during Kharif 2024 recorded at 2,746 thousand tonnes while DAP offtake stood at 642 thousand tonnes. Overall fertilizer production during Jul-Sep FY2025 increased by 3.7 per-

cent to 2.45 million tons compared to last year. During Kharif-2024, water availability remained satisfactory. During Jul-Aug FY2025, the production of wheat threshers increased by 22.8 percent compared to last year. All these factors will positively impact the growth of agriculture sector.

Meanwhile, Large-Scale Manufacturing (LSM) on MoM basis observed a substantial growth of 4.7 percent in August 2024, reflecting the revival of economic activities. However, it has observed a slight dip of 0.2 percent during Jul-Aug FY2025, compared to 2.5 percent contraction in last year. On the other hand, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation has been on a consistent decline, reaching 44 months low in September. During Jul-September FY2025, CPI Inflation stood at 9.2% while it was 29.0% in the same period last year. YoY CPI Inflation in September 2024 was recorded at 6.9% - lowest level in 44 months, compared to 9.6% percent in the previous month and 31.4 percent in September 2023. During Jul-Aug FY2025, the net federal revenues grew by 20.8 percent to Rs 986.7 billion from Rs 816.6 billion same period last year. Both tax and non-tax revenues increased by 20.8 percent and 20.6 percent, respec-

On the other side, the total expenditures grew by 3.1 percent to Rs 1,635.5 billion during Jul-Aug FY2025 against Rs 1,585.7 billion last year. The markup expenditure declined by 6.3 percent owing to the gradual decline in the policy rate.

Consequently, the fiscal deficit reduced to 0.7 percent of GDP as against 0.8 percent of GDP last year. Additionally, the primary balance recorded a surplus of 0.05 percent of GDP. During Jul-Sep FY2025, the FBR net tax collection grew by 25.5 percent to Rs 2,562.9 billion as compared to Rs 2,041.5 billion same period last year. In September 2024, FBR collected 32.7 percent more taxes to reach Rs 1,107 billion from Rs 834 billion in September 2023. The external account position improved due to notable increase in exports and remittances notwithstanding increase in imports. During Jul-Sep FY2025, the current account deficit shrank to \$ 0.1 billion compared to \$ 1.2 billion last year. However, current account recorded surplus for the second consecutive month in September 2024. During Jul-Sep FY2025, goods exports increased by 7.8 percent, reaching \$ 7.5 billion, while imports were recorded at \$ 14.2 billion, compared to \$ 12.3 billion in last year (15.7% increase). This has

led to a trade deficit of \$ 6.7 billion, up from \$ 5.3 billion last year. During 1 July - 30 September, FY2025 money supply (M2) showed negative growth of 0.8 percent (Rs. -290.0 billion) compared to growth of 0.01 percent (Rs. 1.9 billion) last year. In September 2024, the KSE-100 index continued its bullish trend and closed at 81,114 points at month end.

During the month, the KSE-100 index gained 2,626 points, while market capitalization increased by Rs 134 billion to settle at Rs 10,619 billion. Social safety nets have been further enhanced to reach deprived segments of society. In September 2024, PPAF disbursed 24,913 interest-free loans amounting to Rs 1.2 billion. Highlighting the economic outlook, the report says, LSM continues to show mixed signals, with YoY growth remaining negative, yet MoM growth indicating signs of recovery. Industrial output is gradually stabilizing, and key sectors are beginning to ramp up production. Although challenges persist, particularly in the domestic market, the outlook remains cautiously optimistic. The positive monthly growth suggests momentum could gather in the coming months, supported by a favourable economic environment on both domestic and external fronts. DNA