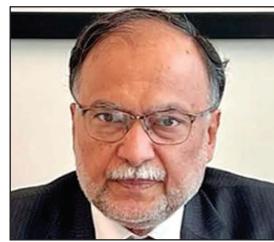




## Ahsan emphasizes engineers' Crucial role in shaping nation's progress



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal highlighted on Monday the pivotal role of engineers in shaping the nation's progress, describing them as

the backbone of any society.

Addressing the 2nd International Conference on new trends in Civil Engineering at University of Central Punjab (UCP) here on Monday, he highlighted engineers' significant contributions to key national projects such as the Mangla Dam, Tarbela Dam, motorways and nuclear programs, said a press release issued here.

The minister while commenting on the growing population of Pakistan said that according to the latest census, the country's population growth rate had increased from 2 percent to 2.55 percent and this put immense pressure on resources, agriculture and food security.

He pointed out that the demand for infrastructure has also escalated, saying that in 2013, the federal government's budget was 340 billion rupees. By 2018, it had increased to 1,000 billion rupees. However, now the budget had decreased to just 700 billion rupees.

Despite the economic challenges, he expressed optimism, pointing out that the stock market had reached a milestone of 100,000 points.

Iqbal emphasized that "if the nation works together, conditions can improve quickly".

He further said that in the 21st century, the survival of nations depends on the strength of their economies.

The planning minister acknowledged that Pakistan made significant progress since its independence still there were areas where the nation had to advance further, adding that he underscored the need for continued effort and innovation to keep pace with global developments.

Prof. Ahsan Iqbal emphasized the importance of national unity and collective reflection on the country's future direction and goals.

He urged that Pakistan's progress must be rooted in truth, integrity and realistic efforts, warning that relying on false narratives or distractions would hinder the nation's potential.

He stressed that for Pakistan to thrive, it must embrace a positive and constructive mindset, as the choices made today will define the nation's legacy for generations to come.

He reminded the participants of the conference that Pakistan was a brand and it was essential to restore its image by maintaining its ideals and thinking. Working together, Pakistan can overcome its challenges, as no external power can propel the country forward without its own efforts.

He urged engineers to come together as a united professional community and rise to the challenges ahead, emphasizing that while time and resources are limited, the opportunities to make a meaningful impact are vast and critical.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Ambassador of Qatar to Pakistan Ali Mubarak Ali Essa Al-Khater cutting cake to celebrate, Qatar's National Day.

## PM directs swift actions against agitators, vows to foil attempts of sabotaging economy

### PM Shehbaz reaffirms Pakistan's unwavering support for Lebanon's sovereignty & territorial integrity

#### VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed the relevant authorities to take swift actions against those involved in recent unrest, vandalism and chaos and damaging both public and private properties in Islamabad.

However, he directed to make it sure that no innocent and law-abiding citizen is arrested during the crackdown against those spreading chaos.

Chairing a review meeting on law and order situation, the prime minister stressed that the government will not allow anyone to disrupt the stability of the rapidly improving economy through creating chaos.

PM Shehbaz Sharif also ordered to make the process of identifying those inciting disorder more effective and to gather solid evidence against them. "Provide all necessary resources to the task force formed to take action against such elements," he said.

The prime minister also instructed to bring the Federal Prosecution Service under the Ministry of Law. He also asked the relevant authorities to complete the Islamabad Jail construction at the earliest and ensure immediate

release of funds for this purpose.

During the meeting, it was informed that the scope of the Islamabad Safe City project was being expanded besides increasing the number of Safe City cameras.

The meeting was also informed that the Islamabad Jail building will be completed by March next year.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, Advisor to PM Rana Sanaullah, Minister of State for Information Technology Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Coordinator to PM Rana Ihsan Afzal and other relevant high officials.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Main Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif spoke with Najib Mikati, Prime Minister of Lebanon on Monday.

While reiterating condemnation in the strongest terms of Israel's military aggression against Lebanon, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering support for Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He welcomed the ceasefire agreement for Lebanon and called for a similar ceasefire agreement for the people of Palestine. Noting the brotherly and warm relations

between Lebanon and Pakistan, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stated that the entire Pakistani nation stood in solidarity with the people of Lebanon during these challenging times. In this spirit, he noted, Pakistan provided humanitarian assistance to its brothers and sisters in Lebanon and stood ready to provide all possible support in future as well.

Both leaders exchanged notes on the evolving situation in Syria. Prime Minister sought Najib Mikati's personal intervention and support in facilitating immediate evacuation of Pakistani nationals, currently stranded in Syria through Beirut. Prime Minister Najib Mikati thanked the Prime Minister for Pakistan's unflinching support and principled position on Israel's military aggression against Lebanon. He noted that this exemplified the warm and brotherly ties between the two nations. He assured the Prime Minister that Lebanon would wholeheartedly welcome Pakistani nationals from Syria and extend all possible support to them in their safe return home.

Thereafter, the Prime Minister spoke to Pakistan's Ambassadors in Syria and Lebanon and instructed them to extend all possible assistance and cooperation to the stranded Pakistanis in Syria and facilitate their safe return home.

**Benefits of registering religious Madaris with the Ministry of Education have begun to yield positive results: Attaullah Tarar**

Says we will also listen to the suggestions of Maulana Fazlur Rehman on the matter



ISLAMABAD: An important meeting of Ulema and Mashaikh regarding the registration and reforms of religious seminaries was held in Islamabad on Monday.

Addressing the meeting, Minister for Education Dr. Khalid Maqbool

Siddiqui clarified that the decision to register seminaries was made with consensus in 2019. He emphasized that the aim was not to control the religious seminaries, but rather to ensure that the entire country could benefit from them. He said the Ministry of Education would continue to extend support to religious seminaries.

Minister for Religious Affairs Choudhary Salik Hussain said the government continues its efforts for better future of students of religious seminaries. He emphasized that contemporary education for these students is also important.

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar Advocate said the benefits of registering religious Madaris with the Ministry of Education have begun to yield positive results. He mentioned that students of the Madaris are now shining in various fields, including science and Information Technology. He said the registration mechanism was evolved after extensive consultations with religious scholars of all schools of thought. He said the main aim was to bring the students of religious Madaris to the national mainstream. He appreciated the cooperation of the religious scholars in this regard.

The Information Minister said we will also listen to the suggestions of JUI-F Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on the matter. He said it will be our endeavour to come up with a solution that is acceptable to all.

Addressing the meeting, Director General of Religious Education Ghulam Qamar recognized the role of seminaries for education of children of poor segments of the society. He said eighteen thousand and six hundred seminaries have got themselves registered. He said we are also providing teachers to the seminaries. This year technical training was provided to twenty five hundred students of seminaries.

Religious scholars and administrators of religious institutions from all schools of thought attended the meeting. SABAH

## Pakistan expresses deep sorrow over the tragic helicopter crash in Isparta, Turkiye

PM Shehbaz says he is deeply saddened to learn about the martyrdom of six Turkish soldiers



ISLAMABAD: The Government and people of Pakistan express deep sorrow over the tragic helicopter crash in Isparta, Turkiye, which claimed the lives of six military personnel, including Isparta Army Aviation School Commander Brigadier General Isa Bayindili.

Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch in a statement issued on Monday said that our heartfelt condolences go out to the families of the martyrs and the people of Turkiye. She said that Pakistan stands in solidi-

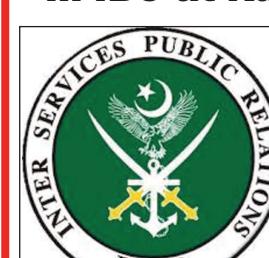
darity with our Turkish brothers and sisters in this moment of grief and pray for the swift recovery of the injured.

"May the departed souls rest in eternal peace" Mumtaz Zahra Baloch prayed.

Meanwhile Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is deeply saddened to learn about the martyrdom of six Turkish soldiers, who lost their lives in a helicopter accident in Isparta, Turkiye on Monday.

In a post on social media platform X, PM Shehbaz Sharif extended his heartfelt condolences to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish nation, and particularly the bereaved families, who lost their loved ones in this tragedy. SABAH

### Two Khwairj terrorists killed, one apprehended in IBO at Kulachi: ISPR



RAWALPINDI: Security Forces killed two Khwairj militants and one apprehended in injured condition in an intelligence based operation (IBO) in general area Kulachi (Dera Ismail Khan District).

"On reported presence of khwairj during the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged khwairj location, as a result of which, two Khwairj were sent to hell, while one Khairji was apprehended in injured condition," said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) here Monday.

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from these Khwairj, who remained actively involved in terrorist activities against the security forces as well as target killing of innocent civilians, it further said.

"Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other Khairji found in the area, as security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe-out the menace of terrorism from the country," the press release said. PR

## Afghan envoy calls on Deputy PM Ishaq Dar

### DPM expresses govt's full support for AJK's socioeconomic development



ISLAMABAD: Chargé d'affaires of Afghanistan, Sardar Ahmad Shakeeb Monday called on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at the Foreign Office.

During the meeting, they discussed the deep-rooted ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan and agreed to strengthen mutually beneficial relations.

Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ambassador Mohammad Sadiq also attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Monday met with the current and former

Prime Ministers of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The Deputy Prime Minister expressed the Government's full support for socioeconomic development of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, a Foreign Office news release said.

During the meeting, development projects in AJK were discussed.

## High-level delegation of foreign investors calls on Finance Minister

#### VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation of foreign investors and business professionals, mostly based in the United States, called on Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Monday.

The minister welcomed the delegation and briefed them about the country's recent macroeconomic progress, highlighting significant achievements in overcoming longstanding challenges, said a new release.

"Pakistan has historically struggled with twin deficits; however, due to improved export performance, the economy is now operating with a surplus in both fiscal and current accounts.

Foreign exchange reserves have

been brought down to single digits, and the policy rate is moving in the right direction," he said.

He further elaborated on the government's comprehensive reform agenda, encompassing privatization, state-owned enterprise (SOE) restructuring, rightsizing of the federal government, and pension reforms.

The minister also addressed two existential challenges faced by Pakistan: rapid population growth and climate change. "With a population growth rate exceeding 2%, we face severe implications for food security, child stunting, and out-of-school children.

Vulnerabilities exacerbate these issues, making it imperative to secure both financial and technical assistance to tackle these challenges effectively," he remarked.

The minister mentioned that he has



emphasized the importance of these priorities in discussions with international partners, including World Bank President Ajay Banga. Ambassador Ali Jehangir Siddiqui informed the minister about the composition

Finance Division and Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) were also present.

The delegation put together by Ambassador Ali Jehangir Siddiqui of the JS Bank comprised leading entrepreneurs, business practitioners and professionals from diverse sectors, including technology, academia, and finance, with lead members such as Auren Hoffman Chief Executive Officer of SafeGraph, Kristen Edwards Marqua (Hakluyt & Company), Michael Levi (The D.E. Shaw Group), Dr. Jeff Chang (Rad AI), and others.

The briefing was followed by a detailed question-and-answer session. Addressing a query on implementing International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions and structural reforms, the minister said: "The willingness and ability to execute reforms are crucial. While we have significant work ahead, as long as we

maintain commitment and momentum, and stay the course, we will achieve the desired outcomes."

Responding to another question, he stressed the role of the private sector in driving economic growth. "Policy frameworks and continuity are the government's responsibility, but the private sector must lead the economy. The government's focus is on creating an enabling environment to support this transition," he said. The delegation appreciated the government's efforts in stabilizing the economy and discussed opportunities for collaboration in areas such as innovation, investment, and financial inclusion.

The meeting concluded with a shared resolve to strengthen U.S.-Pakistan cooperation in achieving mutual economic goals and addressing shared challenges.

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## The policies will continue

SARMAD KHAWAJA

With Mr Trump's election as US president, there is one big question right now about democracy and rule of law worldwide. Will they weaken? At first glance, the answer is yes. The Republican Party that Mr Trump leads is eerily similar to several European parties where the extreme right-wing has taken hold: AfD in Germany, Le Pen's National Rally in France, Meloni's The Brothers of Italy, who are directly descended from Mussolini's fascists, Austria's Freedom Party, which calls its leader Volkskanzler – the Nazi term used for Hitler – Poland's Justice Party, Greece's Golden Dawn party, etc as well to our very own PTI. Such parties have caused "the level of democracy enjoyed by the average person in the world in 2023 (to fall) to 1985 levels", says the V-Dem Institute in its latest World Democracy Report.

So, Mr Trump's agenda should worry us if we care about democracy and rule of law. But look closer and you see nothing new in his fundamental policies. On these, he sees eye to eye with the Democrats: hawkishness towards China, unremitting increases in the US war budget, and unconditional support of Israel.

None bodes well for democratic norms and rule of law worldwide. Yet, these policies don't change no matter who the president is. A closer look at each explains these continuities: First, why hawkishness towards China? Because a rising China threatens US economic dominance.

China "is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it", says Mr Anthony Blinken – and rightly so. China has pulled ahead in several vital technologies such as lithium batteries, microchips, high-speed railways, and electric vehicles. Its production speed and scales are 5-10 times faster and higher than anywhere else. It accounts for a third of world manufacturing production or three times more than the US's share. And its global trade and investments eclipse those of the US. So, the US will keep hurling China: ramp up anti-China rhetoric, demonise it, impose trade barriers and sanctions, fracture the world trading system, and undermine the WTO.

If Mr Trump imposes 60 per cent or more tariffs on Chinese imports, as promised, and more Huawei-like sanctions, which cut Huawei's access to advanced US technologies, the trade war with China will aggravate. But China isn't taking it lying down. The Huawei sanctions didn't work. It found alternate supply chains, and roared back, firming up its leading position in the global telecom market.

You can't slow China down this way. Its planned economy is versatile. It bends and bows at will. It has reduced dependence on exports as its key driver of growth. And it comfortably maintains GDP growth of over 5.0 per cent propelled by state-led investments and growing consumer demand.

Instead, a trade war hurts the US more and drags us all, the rest of the world, down. For instance, tariffs on Chinese goods will be inflationary, and Chinese loans to finance US debt (\$749 billion) may be jeopardised. And since the US and China account for 43 per cent of the world's GDP, whatever happens between the two affects the rest of the world. A sneeze in their relations causes a worldwide cold, which must be avoided at all costs.

Second, why does the US war budget rise unremittingly? On the surface the answer is to make the world 'safe for democracy' and 'the American way of life,' which means controlling the oceans and servicing 700 military bases in 80 countries, including 313 around China, to cordon, contain, isolate, and punish it.

Dismantling American military hegemony is not on anyone's radar in the US. And the numbers show it: the 2024 \$1.9 trillion US war budget is more than the countries with the next nine largest war budgets combined. And, rarely in the past half century have there been years when this amount was less than in the previous year confirming president (General) Eisenhower's concerns about the 'unwarranted influence of the military-industrial complex,' and turning the US into a garrison state promoting the shadowy needs of an all-powerful military elite. These are the real reasons for the US's unremittingly rising war budget.

Finally, about the US backing Israel's military and territorial interests. The authors of 'The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy' say this is because the Israel lobby has a firm grip on the US system of power and influence – its legislature, executive, think tanks, and media – led by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which drives the US into the blind endorsement of everything Israel does.

For instance, AIPAC takes credit for passing more than a hundred pro-Israel bills/resolutions annually, such as the House of Representatives resolution last year celebrating the US\$94.7 billion aid given and promised to Israel during 1998-2028. Taming AIPAC's influence is impossible.

All in all, with Mr Trump, the embrace of these policies will continue. But hawkishness towards China, unremitting rise in the US war budget, and unconditional support of Israel make a toxic brew. They will make Mr Trump's presidency a grim reality.

But one all too familiar, and nothing out of the usual line of business.

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GHASSAN CHARBEL

**T**he long night in Damascus was nothing short of seismic. Opponents could not have predicted the rapid collapse of the Syrian regime. The army was not prepared to fight the opposition advance that was gaining momentum. Russia did not want to get involved and Hezbollah was exhausted.

Bashar Assad saw the writing on the wall. It happens. The errors committed by the ruler accumulated and he had no other choice than to seek exile. So, he got on that plane and left.

Syria on Sunday woke up to a new and unbelievable reality. It did not find the man who had been in power for 24 years. The man who was believed to be different and who would not face the same fate as others. No one believed that the American tanks would advance and tear down his statues like they did to Saddam Hussein's statues in Baghdad. He was not worried as he watched Libyans chase down Muammar Qaddafi and end his life and years of rule.

It never occurred to him that he could face the same fate as Ali Abdullah Saleh at the hands of the Houthis. He dismissed the scenes of Hosni Mubarak in court. He never believed that he would suffer the same fate as Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali. Assad was confident that he was strong, different and capable of weathering the storms. Assad believed that he inherited from his father a regime that could fight fires and contain earthquakes, which were many during his long term.

He lived through the earthquake of the Sept. 11, 2001, attack and

ordered his security agencies to cooperate in a limited capacity with the Americans. He had not yet developed his leanings toward Iran, but the American invasion of Iraq pushed him in that direction. He feared that the Baath Party's rule would be the American campaign's next target after it was done with Iraq. Damascus and Tehran had a mutual interest in destabilizing the

of thousands of people were killed and millions displaced. He resorted to barrel bombs and chemical weapons. The opposition drew near his palace, but the Vladimir Putin-Qassem Soleimani understanding helped him fend off the earthquake. Assad came to power in the year 2000, six months after Putin assumed control of Russia and the international scene and less than

played a big game with a hostile player called Benjamin Netanyahu, who would have a say in deciding Assad's fate. Netanyahu destroyed Gaza and then shifted to the timing of the American elections to take out the Hezbollah leadership.

Balances were upended. In Idlib, Assad's opponents were waiting for the right opportunity to pounce. They never believed in the "de-escalation" agreement and "Trump time."

Erdogan chose to punish Assad, who repeatedly refused offers to hold a meeting. He punished Assad and Syria's Kurds as well.

Ahmed Al-Sharaa, known as Abu Mohammed Al-Golani, lit the spark. The still waters became a flood that swept Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Damascus. Soleimani and Nasrallah were no longer there to help Assad. The supreme leader did not have an answer and Putin was mired in the bloodbath in Ukraine.

Fates were decided in Damascus during that long night. It changed the fate of Syria and its regional position. It changed the regional scene. It severed the route of exporting the revolution and the smuggling of rockets from Tehran to Beirut. Hezbollah was brought down to size from its regional role to returning to UN Security Council Resolution 1701. One night in Damascus changed balances in Lebanon.

The scene was different yesterday. Syria is without Assad and without Hezbollah. Assad got on that plane and left. An entire era is over. The president left Syria and the region is left to grapple with the "day after" and its challenges.

Ghassan Charbel is editor-in-chief of Ashraq Al-Awsat newspaper. X: @GhassanCharbel

This article first appeared in Ashraq Al-Awsat.

Syria on Sunday woke up to a new and unbelievable reality. It did not find the man who had

been in power for 24 years

"American formula" in Iraq. Syria opened its borders to militiamen wanting to resist the American occupation of Iraq.

The second earthquake would come from Beirut. On Feb. 14, 2005, Rafik Hariri was assassinated in the Lebanese capital. The massive anger

of the Lebanese people forced Assad to withdraw his forces from Lebanon. In Syria, there was a growing

belief that the country's influence

that was cultivated by Hafez Assad

was starting to wane under Bashar.

In 2006, when Hezbollah feared that

the Lebanese March 14 movement

would alter Lebanon's regional

stance, it went to war with Israel,

helping to break Damascus' interna-

tional isolation.

In the early 2010s, the so-called Arab

Spring swept through the region.

Like many others, Assad believed

that opening just a small window of

change would bring down the entire

house. So, he cracked down on the

protests and did not hold back in his

brutality and oppression. Hundreds

three years before Recep Tayyip Erdogan would arrive on the scene in Turkiye. Add Supreme Leader Ali

Khamenei into the mix and you get an idea of the type of men who left their mark on Assad's fate.

One day, Putin did not hesitate to criticize Assad's mistakes in front of an Iraqi delegation who had complained about the Syrian ruler. But Putin's calculations would change when he decided to crown the capture of Crimea by establishing a foothold on the Mediterranean. And so, he allowed Russia's aerial intervention in Syria. Assad and Recep Tayyip Erdogan had a strange relationship. They got along very well at first but, after falling out, they never saw eye to eye again. So, Assad turned to Hassan Nasrallah. Hezbollah became more powerful than the Syrian army, deepening tensions in Syria.

When Yahya Sinwar launched his Al-

Aqsa Flood Operation, Nasrallah

soon followed by declaring a "sup-

port front." Assad turned to keep a dis-

tance from the developments. He

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

**I**n 1996 the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was formed by cricket player Imran Khan to oppose government corruption and promote social welfare. It remained uncompetitive and marginal until the 2010s, when it took a decidedly populist approach to politics, organizing large rallies and courting several veteran politicians. In the 2013 elections the party received the second highest number of votes for seats in the National Assembly and won leadership of the provincial government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Its popularity continued to surge, especially as a corruption scandal shook confidence in the ruling party in the run-up to the 2018 elections; it emerged as the National Assembly's largest party after elec-

tions were held.

Ethnic interests are served by organizations such as the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (formerly the Mujahir Qaumi Movement) in Karachi and Hyderabad, the Sindhi National Front in Sindh, and the Balochistan Students Union in Balochistan.

Pakistan's military has been led from inception by a highly trained and professional officer corps that has not hesitated, as a body, to involve itself in politics. The military consists of an army (the largest of the uniformed services), air force, and navy, as well as various paramilitary forces. Each of the services is headed by a chief of staff, and the chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff is the senior officer of the military hierarchy.

The Pakistani military is one of the

largest and best-trained in the world.

Troops serve on a voluntary basis, and there is seldom a shortage of manpower. Military life in Pakistan is viewed as prestigious, and soldiers both active and retired can expect numerous perks and benefits from service. Enlisted personnel are given the chance to improve themselves through study and education, and officers are trained through the service academy or through several of the country's professional colleges.

The army is extremely well supplied, having devoted much of its considerable resources to the domestic production of weapons. The army has several thousand main battle tanks, armoured personnel carriers, and artillery pieces (both towed and self-propelled). The army also fields multi-

To be continued....

## Tech

### WhatsApp users can now easily send sticker packs to anyone



next to a desired sticker pack and tap "Send" to use this feature.

Once they hit the "Send" button, the entire pack is shared as a message in the chat, allowing the recipients to easily download it and start using the stickers right away with just a few taps.

This update addresses a frustration, common among users previously.

Before this feature was introduced, users who were interested in a particular sticker pack from another user had to ask that user to send each sticker one by one so they could save it as a favourite.

Now, with the new functionality, expanding sticker collections has been made simpler.

If you don't have this feature, it is important to note that some accounts may receive it over the coming weeks, as indicated in the official changelog.

However, the new feature is available for iOS users who install the latest update of WhatsApp from the App Store.

## Health

### No let-up in high dengue incidence in KP as onset of winter delayed

PESHAWAR: With the start of winter delayed due to climatic changes, dengue hemorrhagic fever continues to spread in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province with 19 new cases reported on Saturday. The virus is also in circulation due to frequent travel by people across regions, according to officials. They said the dengue cases reported in the province this year had risen to 4,167.

The steady incidence has belied the earlier claim of authorities about a significant decline in cases by mid-November in light of previous trends.

When contacted, director (public health) Dr

Irshad Rogni said winter wasn't severe enough

to eliminate mosquitoes — the carrier and trans-

mitter of dengue virus — and the situation had

been exacerbated by the frequent travel, the main

cause of its transportation from one region to

another. "We have a lot of vector population and

the virus is coming in from other cities to affect

residents. The delayed winter onset has led to the

presence of the vector in the province for which

we have enhanced public awareness of safety

measures," he said.

According to a report of the Integrated Disease

Surveillance and Response System at the Direc-

torate General Health Services Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, the province has 60 active dengue

cases and nine patients are under treatment in

hospitals. A total of 4,104 cases have recovered

from the disease.

This year, dengue has killed three people in the

province, including two in Nowshera district and one in Swabi district.

Peshawar district has reported 1,339 cases, Mar-

dan 333, Mansehra 243, Abbottabad 242, Kohat

234, Nowshera 215, Lakki Marwat 207, Hangu 205,

Lower Kohistan 201, Charsadda 162, Bannu 132 and Haripur 114.

Dr Irshad said that besides frequent public travel, the transportation of goods, especially old tyres, were also causing the virus to spread.

"Used tyres are the mainstay of dengue spread.

We have frequently been urging the people to pre-

vent accumulation of water in tyres to deny breed-



## Reiterates the need for a focused approach toward farthest districts, emphasizing that these areas require more attention

Outlines a policy approach to visit the farthest districts of each province personally



**GWADAR:** As part of his commitment to enhancing service delivery and ensuring access to justice, the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afzali, has outlined a policy approach to visit the farthest districts of each province personally. This initiative aims to assess the facilities and challenges faced in dispensing justice at remote location.

In line with this vision, the Chief Justice Yahya Afzali made his first formal official visit to the farthest district of Balochistan (Gwadar), on Monday. The District and Session Judges of the remote districts, including Turbat, Panjgur, Washuk, Musakhel, Chagai, Harnai, Awaran, Barkhan, Kharan, and Zhob, joined the Chief Justice. During the meeting, the Chief Justice of Pakistan assured the judicial officers that he would ensure that they are given good environment, where they can work smoothly and safely. He further underscored the importance of upholding the dignity of judicial officers, whether presiding over a civil court or a superior court and maintaining the majesty and integrity of the judiciary across the nation. Acknowledging the unwavering dedication of judicial officers serving in remote and underprivileged areas of the country, the Chief Justice commended their exemplary efforts. He encouraged them to further strengthen their resolve and prioritize adjudication of cases to ensure justice is delivered efficiently and effectively to litigants.

The Chief Justice reiterated the need for a focused approach toward farthest districts, emphasizing that these areas require more attention. He asked them to share insights and identify specific resources gaps which is hampering dispensation of justice so that it can be addressed. He requested the respective High Courts to ensure that the best judicial officers are posted to such districts with a minimum term and that these officers are well looked after. He proposed that foreign training and other opportunities should be given to such judicial officers on priority by the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (LJPC). He further recommended that an e-campus facility be provided to district judicial officers wherever possible, to enhance their access to continuous learning and development. He emphasized the development of a system where posting in the farthest districts would be considered a privilege, aiming to encourage the judiciary to embrace such assignments enthusiastically. The Chief Justice clarified that these measures are not intended to undermine the support already provided by the provincial government and high courts but rather to supplement it. **SABAH**



**DUBAI:** Ambassador Faisal Tirmizi met with Omar Almuhaire, Director, Government Relations at the Dubai Port World. Both sides reviewed mutually beneficial partnership and discussed ways to further enhance regional connectivity and port linkages between Pakistan and the UAE.

## Pakistan cognizant of the importance of protecting rights of all segments of society: Zardari

Says we should not forget our brothers & sisters in IIOJK, who have been subjected to the worst forms of state terrorism



**VOM Report**

**ISLAMABAD:** President Asif Ali Zardari has said that Pakistan is cognizant of the importance of protecting the rights of all segments of society, including women, children, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and minorities. It is my firm belief that democracy, peace, freedom, and human rights are intertwined, and protecting people's rights is indispensable to building a stable and prosperous country, he said.

This was stated by President Asif Ali Zardari in his message on the International Human Rights Day.

President Asif Ali Zardari said that today, we

are commemorating International Human Rights Day to reiterate our commitment to promoting and protecting human rights at every level of our society. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, reflects the principles enunciated by Islam. The Constitution of Pakistan also guarantees fundamental rights to all its citizens and we remain steadfast in advancing human rights to empower our people.

President Asif Ali Zardari said that Pakistan is cognizant of the importance of protecting the rights of all segments of society, including women, children, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and minorities. It is my firm belief that democracy, peace, freedom, and human rights are intertwined, and protecting people's rights is indispensable to building a stable and prosperous country, he said.

President Asif Ali Zardari said that despite challenges, we are committed to implementing legal, economic, and social frameworks to safeguard human rights and minimize violations.

Pakistan, in collaboration with Provincial Governments, United Nations Agencies, and civil society organizations, is working to protect vulnerable communities. Initiatives

like the National Commission for Human Rights, the Women Empowerment Package, the Action Plan for Human Rights, and the Toll-Free Human Rights Helpline (1099) reflect Pakistan's commitment to protecting human rights. Pakistan is also continuously undertaking legal and administrative reforms to fulfill its international obligations and safeguard the rights of people.

President Asif Ali Zardari said that on this International Human Rights Day, we should not forget our brothers and sisters in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), who have been subjected to the worst forms of state terrorism and are being deprived of their social, political and economic rights. We also strongly condemn the ethnic cleansing and genocide of the Palestinian people by Israel in Gaza and other Occupied Palestinian territories. We urge the international community to take practical measures to end the barbarism of Israel in Palestine, he said.

President Asif Ali Zardari said "On this day, let's pledge to fulfill our shared responsibility to protect and promote human rights to create a society based on equality, justice and human dignity".

## NAB recovers Rs 3.8 trillion in one year: Chairman

**ISLAMABAD:** Chairman National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lt Gen Nazir Ahmed said on Monday that the Bureau has set a historic record by recovering Rs 3.8 trillion, or \$13.57 billion, in just one year.



Speaking at a special event in connection with Anti-Corruption Day, the NAB Chairman said that the Bureau had directly or indirectly recovered Rs 6.1 trillion since its establishment.

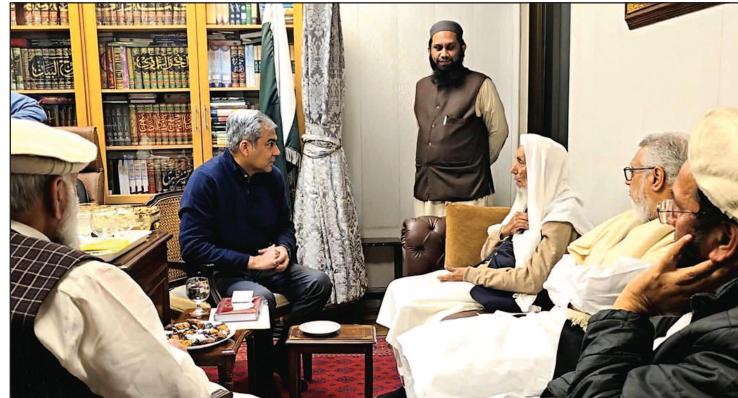
He commended the outstanding performance of NAB Karachi, NAB Sukkur, and NAB KPK. NAB Karachi and Sukkur regions have collectively saved Rs 2.4 trillion and Rs 1.1 trillion, respectively, by recovering forest land across an area of 1.8 million hectares. Similarly, NAB Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has achieved indirect and consequential savings of Rs 194.937 billion, he said.

In addition, the NAB has processed 22,000 applications. Due to reforms, the filing of false complaints has been discouraged, leading to a reduction in such complaints from 4,000 per month to just 400 per month, the Chairman expressed. The Chairman NAB emphasized that corruption, in any form, is the greatest barrier to sustainable development and economic prosperity. He reiterated NAB's commitment to fighting corruption, safeguarding national assets, recovering embezzled funds, and returning them to the public. The event was attended by NAB Deputy Chairman Sohail Nasir, the UNODC Representative in Pakistan, and a large number of senior NAB officers. The NAB Chairman stated that 65 percent of the country's population is under the age of 30, and the youth represent the future.

He highlighted that a comprehensive plan has been developed to engage them in the anti-corruption movement. To achieve this, a public awareness program will be launched with the support of educational and research institutions, along with various stakeholders. He mentioned that NAB is not only dedicated to combating corruption but has also shown exceptional performance in safeguarding national assets, recovering stolen funds, and returning them to the public.

The Chairman also noted that NAB has implemented a visitor feedback system, which not only aids in controlling corruption but also enhances the institution's performance. Additionally, work is being carried out in the power sector with the cooperation of National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), and its positive impact will be felt soon. He urged NAB officers to work with utmost dedication and enthusiasm to swiftly provide relief to victims in the real estate sector. The NAB Chairman also mentioned that NAB has signed MoUs with 10 countries to expedite the resolution of corruption cases. On the occasion, UNODC representative Troels Vester emphasized that youth are the future leaders of the anti-corruption movement. He stated that there are currently around 1.2 billion youth worldwide, and their active participation will play a crucial role in combating corruption. He also emphasized that corruption impacts every aspect of life, and all possible support will be extended to the efforts being made to address it in Pakistan. Awards were presented to the top-performing NAB officers during the seminar. The awardees included Rashid Badar and Mirza Aleem Baig from NAB Karachi, Rafi Jan from NAB KP, Khattab Gul from NAB Sukkur, Rashid Badar from NAB Lahore, and Mohsin Haroon, Mian Umar Nadeem, and Umair Ahmed from NAB Rawalpindi. APP

## Mohsin Naqvi meets Rahim Ashrafi



**ISLAMABAD:** Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met with Maulana Fazal Rahim Ashrafi, Patron-in-Chief of the Wafaq ul Madaris and other eminent scholars at Jamia Ashrafiyah. The interior minister inquired about the health of Maulana Fazal Rahim Ashrafi and expressed his best wishes for him.

During the meeting, the seminaries' bill was

### CJCSC, Service Chiefs & Armed Forces of Pak solemnly observe the 53rd martyrdom anniversary of Sowar Muhammad Hussain Shaheed

**RAWALPINDI:** The Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, the Service Chiefs, and the Armed Forces of Pakistan solemnly observe the 53rd martyrdom anniversary of Sowar Muhammad Hussain Shaheed, Nishan-e-Haider, with profound reverence and gratitude. According to the statement issued by the ISPR, on this day in 1971, during the Indo-Pak War at the Zafarwal-Shakargarh Sector, Sowar Muhammad Hussain Shaheed displayed unparalleled courage and extraordinary devotion to duty. By identifying enemy tanks and directing the crew of recoilless rifles, he contributed to the destruction of 16 enemy tanks. During this valiant act, he was struck in the chest by enemy machine-gun fire and embraced the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. The anniversary of Sowar Muhammad Hussain Shaheed stands as an enduring testament to the unwavering commitment and supreme sacrifices of the Armed Forces of Pakistan in safeguarding the sovereignty and dignity of the motherland. Let us honor and draw inspiration from the sacrifices of our national heroes, whose bravery and devotion to the nation remain an eternal source of pride. PR

## State-religious scholars collaboration vital for society's progress: Salik



**ISLAMABAD:** Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Monday emphasized the importance of strengthening ties between the state and religious scholars to foster societal development. Addressing a conference on the 'Positive Impact of Madaris Registration under Directorate General of Religious Education (DGRE)' here at a local hotel, he underlined the significant role of religious scholars and mosques in guiding the public.

"Religious scholars and the state need to work closely together, as they are the primary source of guidance for the people. We must focus on

our objectives to understand our goals and those of our opponents," he remarked.

The minister raised a critical question about the future of students graduating from madaris (religious seminaries), stating, "What does the future hold for these students? Graduates of madaris can contribute to fields beyond Islamic studies. It is essential to provide them with opportunities equal to those

available to college graduates."

Chaudhry Salik stressed the importance of integrating both religious and technical education for madaris students, highlighting its potential to bring positive change to society. "Providing dual education, religious and technical, is the need of the hour. We are committed to introducing measures that ensure a brighter future for seminary students," he added.

The minister reiterated the government's dedication to improving the educational and professional opportunities for madaris graduates, enabling them to play a broader role in the nation's development.

## Chinese, Pakistani companies sign MoU on smart agriculture



**BELIJING:** A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Chinese company AI Force Tech and Punjab Agriculture Department of Pakistan on Monday to set up a robotic agricultural equipment manufacturing plant in Punjab. The signing ceremony was witnessed by Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Chief Minister Punjab, during her week-long visit to China from Dec 8th to 15th, China Economic Net (CEN) reported.

The Chief Minister dilated upon agriculture sector reforms in Punjab during her meeting with

AI Force Tech founder Dr. Han and its CEO. She inspected the latest agricultural tools equipped with robotic technology. She observed the robotic machinery, and assured the company of her government's full cooperation in manufacturing the modern robotic agricultural machinery in Punjab.

She said, "It is our determination to make farmers prosperous by adopting modern agricultural technology," adding, "On my invitation, a delegation of AI Force Tech will visit Punjab soon for the purpose."



**LAHORE:** Pakistan Navy celebrated 53rd HANGOR Day to commemorate the historic event in which Pakistan Navy Submarine HANGOR sank Indian Navy Frigate KHUKRI and crippled INS KIRPAN during the 1971 war in a spectacular display of naval warfare. To pay special tribute, Pakistan Navy observes 9th December as HANGOR Day, a reminder of the unmatched courage and unwavering commitment demonstrated by Submarine

HANGOR during the war. This year, an impressive ceremony was held at Pakistan Navy War College, Lahore. Former Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Abdul Aziz Mirza (Retd) graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Submarine HANGOR remains a symbol of pride for Pakistan Navy. Her gallant action during 1971 war was not only a remarkable tactical achievement that resulted in the sinking of Indian Navy's Frigate but

also effectively thwarted and marginalized Indian aggression, particularly on the Western front. The event holds a distinguished place in naval history as the first and only successful kill by a conventional submarine since World War II. On the occasion, Vice Admiral Ahmed Tasnim (Retd), who served as the Commanding Officer of Submarine HANGOR during the operation, paid rich tribute to the valiant crew for their service in defending the motherland. He highlighted that HANGOR is a luminous chapter in Pakistan Navy's history and will always be remembered.

He also elaborated on the factors that contributed to the development of extraordinary leadership skills among all ranks and emphasized their significance in leading the nation during times of adversity. Pakistan Navy Submarine HANGOR was the first of the Daphne Class submarines acquired from France. Commissioned in 1969, it served Pakistan Navy with honour until its decommissioning in 2006. In recognition of their bravery, the valiant crew of HANGOR was awarded four Sitara-e-Jurat, six Tamgha-e-Jurat, and sixteen Imtiazi Asnaad. To honor its legacy, the submarines being jointly manufactured by Pakistan and China have been named HANGOR Class submarines. The ceremony was attended by a large number of serving and retired PN officers, CPOs/Sailors, Navy civilians, MARSEW participants, faculty members from various public and private universities, and students from Bahria College, Lahore. PR