

QUETTA VOICE

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“She Power” Project: Empowering Women in Balochistan Through Hygiene and Sanitation

Syed Ali Shah:

QUETTA: The launch of the “She Power” initiative in Balochistan marks a significant step toward improving the lives of women and girls by addressing critical hygiene and sanitation issues. Supported by the Chinese government as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), this project aims to enhance the health, quality of life, and educational opportunities for young women in the province.

Balochistan, known for its harsh climate and socio-economic challenges, is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Women and girls in the region face additional hardships due to poor access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities. These vulnerabilities are compounded by the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, which further strain the already scarce resources in rural areas.

Tackling Hygiene for Empowerment

During the high-level event to distribute hygiene kits, Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, highlighted the close connection between women’s socio-economic empowerment and access to adequate hygiene facilities. She emphasized that hygiene challenges directly affect women’s education, work opportunities, and leader-



Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti interacting with girls students at a school in Quetta: Photo provided by DGPR

ship roles, making it crucial to tackle these issues to foster healthier, more equitable communities. The “She Power” initiative plans to distribute 20,000 hygiene kits to schoolgirls across four districts in Balochistan. Each kit

contains essential hygiene products and educational materials aimed at promoting better health practices. These efforts will not only improve the health and well-being of young girls but also reduce absenteeism in schools, thus en-

hancing educational outcomes. **Climate Change and Women’s Vulnerability** The harsh realities of climate change in Balochistan, including droughts, water scarcity, and food insecurity, disproportionately affect women and girls. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri, Chairperson of the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights, stressed that lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities exacerbates these vulnerabilities. Women, often respon-

sible for household chores, spend hours fetching water, leaving them with little time for education or income-generating activities. Moreover, the lack of access to hygiene products can lead to social stigma, health complications, and missed opportunities for girls and women, further entrenching gender inequality. The “She Power” initiative seeks to change this narrative by providing the necessary resources for improved hygiene and health, creating a supportive environment that empowers women to lead healthier lives.

Driving Socio-Economic Change

The “She Power” project’s focus on hygiene and sanitation goes beyond immediate health benefits. By improving access to essential resources, the initiative lays the groundwork for long-term socio-economic change in Balochistan. With better health and education, women are better equipped to participate in the workforce and contribute to the economic development of their communities.

This initiative represents a vital step toward gender equality in Balochistan, where women continue to face significant barriers to education, employment, and leadership. By addressing these challenges, “She Power” is paving the way for a more inclusive and resilient future for women and girls across the province.

PML-N and PPP reach agreement on constitutional amendments

NEWS DESK: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Nawaz Sharif and Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari have held discussions during which the two leaders reached an agreement on constitutional amendments. Bilawal called on Nawaz Sharif at the Punjab House, where the former Prime Minister welcomed the PPP leader. The two leaders also exchanged views on the country’s political situation. The discussion primarily focused on judicial reforms and constitutional amendments.

They decided to present these amendments in Parliament following further consultation, with the timeline for this process to be determined in consultation with other political parties. Maryam Aurangzeb, Rana Sanaulah, Pervez Rashid, Irfan Siddique, and Ahsan Iqbal attended the meeting from the PML-N. Meanwhile, the PPP delegation included Yousaf Raza Gillani, Raja Pervez Ashraf, Khurshid Shah, Murtaza Wahab, Murtaza Javed Abbasi, Naveed Qamar, and Palwasha Khan. According to an earlier working



paper for the 26th Constitutional Amendment, one of the key proposals includes the establishment of a parallel Federal Constitutional Court, alongside the Supreme Court. The Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court will serve for three years, with retirement set at 68 years of age. Additionally, the amendment proposed that any member of parliament voting against party instructions will have their vote disregarded. The proposal also suggested that the authority to appoint the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the Chief Justice of

the Constitutional Court be transferred to the Prime Minister, based on recommendations from an eight-member committee of the National Assembly. One of the most notable amendments includes changes to Article 48 of the Constitution, which would prevent any court, tribunal, or authority from inquiring into advice sent by the Prime Minister or Cabinet to the President. Meanwhile, an amendment to Article 63 would ensure that votes cast against party instructions will no longer be counted. Another major proposal in the

working paper involves changes to Article 78 which advocates for the creation of the Federal Constitutional Court. Additionally, amendments to Article 175 suggest that judges of the High Courts and Sharia Courts will be appointed by a commission, with the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court heading this commission. The commission will consist of the two senior-most judges of the Constitutional Court, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and the two senior-most Supreme Court judges. Further, the commission will include the Minister of Law, the Attorney General, a senior advocate, and two members each from the National Assembly and Senate. For the appointment of judges to the Federal Constitutional Court, the commission will no longer involve Supreme Court judges, instead consisting of three additional judges from the Constitutional Court. Additionally, the working paper specifies that the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court will be appointed by the National Assembly’s committee, which will nominate one of the three senior-most judges.

Supreme Court Suspends Election Tribunal’s Verdict, Reinstates PPP’s Ali Madad Jattak

Dawood Ahmed:



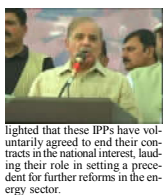
ISLAMABAD: In a significant legal development, the Supreme Court of Pakistan has suspended the judgment of the Election Tribunal Balochistan, reinstating Ali Madad Jattak, a Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) lawmaker. The Supreme Court has temporarily reversed that order. The Supreme Court has issued notices to all relevant departments and scheduled the next hearing for October 21st, where the case will be further examined. This suspension means Ali Madad Jattak will remain in office as a member of the Balochistan Provincial Assembly until a final decision is made. The ruling has temporarily put a hold on the political contest in PB-45, keeping the election results in limbo. The decision has attracted attention from political circles, as both PPP and PML-N compete for influence in the Balochistan Assembly, with the upcoming hearing set to be closely watched.

after JUI’s Usman Pirkanji challenged Jattak’s victory in the 2023 general elections. Pirkanji’s petition had led the tribunal to order a re-election in the constituency. But Jattak’s appeal to the Supreme Court has temporarily reversed that order. The Supreme Court has issued notices to all relevant departments and scheduled the next hearing for October 21st, where the case will be further examined. This suspension means Ali Madad Jattak will remain in office as a member of the Balochistan Provincial Assembly until a final decision is made. The ruling has temporarily put a hold on the political contest in PB-45, keeping the election results in limbo. The decision has attracted attention from political circles, as both PPP and PML-N compete for influence in the Balochistan Assembly, with the upcoming hearing set to be closely watched.

Govt ends contracts with five IPPs

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move, the government initiated on Thursday the termination of Independent Power Producers (IPP) agreements, which is expected to save consumers Rs60 billion annually and lead to a reduction in electricity tariffs. The decision, made during a federal cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, is expected to not only reduce consumers’ burden by lowering electricity tariffs but it will also help the national kitty to have a total saving of Rs411 billion.

In the first phase of the initiative, agreements with five IPPs—HUBCO, Lalpur, Saba Power, Roush Power, and Atlas Power—will be terminated. These efforts will not only save electricity consumers Rs60 billion annually but will also result in significant savings for the national treasury without any additional payments to the IPPs for outstanding dues. The Prime Minister high-



lighted that these IPPs have voluntarily agreed to end their contracts in the national interest, lauding their role in setting a precedent for further reforms in the energy sector. “These five IPPs have played a crucial role in initiating much-needed public relief,” the Prime Minister said, adding that the cabinet and the Task Force on Power Sector Reforms deserve praise for their efforts. Speaking on the occasion, the premier emphasized that the country’s economy is on a path to recovery, saying, “With the grace of Almighty Allah, the national economy is stabilising swiftly.”

He also reiterated the government’s commitment to the public, stating that they have fulfilled their promise of providing relief through hard work and dedication. An official statement from PM House stated that further reforms in the power sector are being planned, with other IPP agreements being planned to be renewed will gradually lower electricity tariffs. Roush Power, which was established under a Build-Operate-Transfer agreement, will be transferred to the government for privatization through the Privatization Commission. The other four IPPs will retain ownership, but the government will not make any additional payments post-agreement termination. The Prime Minister also expressed gratitude to overseas Pakistanis, noting that remittances reached a record \$8.5 billion last quarter, reflecting trust in government policies.

Cyber Crimes Circle Quetta Arrests Man for Online Harassment and Blackmail

Staff Reporter:

QUETTA: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crimes Circle in Quetta has arrested a suspect involved in online sexual harassment and blackmailing of a female citizen. The suspect, identified as Hameedullah, was apprehended during a raid in Satellite Town, Quetta. According to an FIA spokesperson, the accused had been harassing the victim through social media by creating fake Facebook accounts in her name. Using these accounts, he shared objectionable pictures and videos, threatening and blackmailing the victim’s family. During the operation, the FIA seized the suspect’s mobile phone, which contained key evidence, including the social media accounts used for the harassment. Authorities have launched an in-



vestigation following the arrest. This action is part of FIA’s ongoing efforts to combat cybercrime, particularly cases involving online harassment and

blackmail in Balochistan. For victims of cybercrime, the FIA has urged the public to report incidents immediately to protect themselves from further harm.

Is climate change responsible for irregular weather patterns

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The effect of pollution on the nutritional status of infants

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Senate hints at Replacing MDCAT with Cambridge or SAT Style Test

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Is climate change responsible for irregular weather patterns

Laiba Fatima:

Climate change is actually increasing in greenhouse gas emissions which brought significant changes in Earth's weather patterns. It is characterized by changes in weather over a longer period of species merely abnormal variations to the climate and its effect on different parts of the earth. The many causes contribute to climate change such as industrial processes that release greenhouse gases such as Methane (CH4) and nitrous oxide, deforestation, and biodiversity loss as species struggle to adapt to a changing environment. With the increase in earth's temperature since 1986, the winter season temperature of contiguous 48 states have increased by nearly 3°F, while spring temperatures have increased by about 2°F and same in the case with summer and fall temperatures which record an increase of about 1.5°F. The pattern of extreme weather conditions has become more common over the past decades in the United States such as irregularly hot summer days (high) at even faster rate. A 2019 study on abrupt change in weather patterns has caused the southwest to experience less precipitation than normal. However, the activities of a tropical storm in the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean has surpassed during the past 20 years. The southern United states is very sensitive to alter weather conditions specially to temperatures and to drought small changes in the availability of water specially in this arid region will cost them suppress their natural systems.

Bangladesh has been fighting the effects of climate change for decades. Due to rising sea levels coastal communities and island nations are at higher risk associated with climate crisis. Bangladesh is at number 7 on German watch's Climate Risk Index (CRI) for cumulative risk between 2000 and 2019, same is the case with Philippines. In short I can say that Man is the only contributor of climate change and irregular weather patterns. Day by day trees have been cut down for construction purposes. Our life is totally dependent on trees as tree is a natural sink of CO2 (carcinogenic gas) it trees have been cut down in the same manner who will absorb CO2 and in the end will accumulate in air rising the temperature. and evaporation. Climate change is a serious concern which is costing our lives we need to stop this. We have to create awareness among people about climate change by arranging seminars on this issue, by cutting down trees we have to plant more trees in place of this only this we can save our planet from this devastating process which is costing our lives and biodiversity.

The effect of pollution on the nutritional status of infants

Marwa Amin:

Pollution is a global problem which is increasing day by day. Pollution not only destroys our natural environment but also our human health. Its harmful effects on respiratory system is well documented not only on humans but also on infants killing them prematurely. According to WHO About 92% of people are living in the world where the air quality is unhealthy and specially when infants breathe in such polluted air it badly affects their respiratory system which is underdeveloped. However polluted air accounts for 20% of newborn deaths worldwide, having complications of low birth weight and preterm birth. Children are more vulnerable to pollution as compare to adults as their bodies are not fully developed and their developing lungs and brain are more prone to air pollution, same is the case with their immune system which is weaker than adults. It mostly increases the risk of respiratory diseases (pneumonia, asthma and premature death) and their ability to fight it. It also affects the learning and developmental potential of a child for example when a child get sick it might miss their school which further

limit their learning process. As per records in 2019, 6,000,000 infants died in their first month of life from health affects associated with air pollution exposure. The uncontrollable deaths of infants associated with air pollution are related mostly to household air pollution while rest are due to PM2.5. In sub-Saharan African nearly 86% (236,000) deaths of infants is associated with household air pollution while in South Asia billion of infants reaches to 50% (186,000) attributable to household air pollution. As far as concern with Pakistan so it record a highest death toll of infants in a year and pneumonia is a leading cause of it. Biomass fuel (wood, crop residues, animal dung) which is mostly used in every house of Pakistan leading to incomplete combustion which cause a serious health concern specially in infants which are developing. Contaminated water resources also cause diarrhea in children. Pollution can also cause long term consequences like Malnutrition, stunted growth and impaired immune system. We need to stop this we have to grow our infant in pollution free environment.

Efforts must be made to reduce pollution globally this is crucial not only for current generations but also for future generations. Trees must be planted as it clean the air. While playing children should be restricted to their home. Seminars should be organized for public awareness against this evil. Industrial waste should be disposed off at safer site which should not pollute air quality and also water. Small steps should be taken to abolish pollution, only this we can save our infants from premature death.

Public-Private Partnerships: A Solution to Balochistan's Education Crisis

Editor: Asim Khan

The recent dismissal of 114 absentee teachers in Balochistan marks a pivotal moment in the province's long-overdue effort to address the crisis in its education sector. With an inquiry underway against an additional 2,000 teachers, the Balochistan government is sending a clear message: education is no longer to be taken lightly. Chronic absenteeism has plagued the region's schools for years, compromising the quality of education for countless children. The actions taken by the provincial government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Rabeela Hameed Khan Durran, reflect a commendable commitment to accountability, transparency, and educational reform.

Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti deserves appreciation for upholding the banner of teachers recruitment and directing the education department to make sure out of school children are in schools. This bold move is not an isolated effort but part of a broader strategy that includes reopening 400 previously non-functional schools, enhancing educational infrastructure, and establishing Management Committees (SMCs) to engage local communities in governance. These initiatives are critical in a province where vast rural areas and underdeveloped regions have long suffered from a lack of access to quality education. Reopening these schools, particularly in remote educational opportunities and bringing long-term benefits to underserved communities.

However, while these steps are vital, Balochistan faces deep-seated structural challenges that will require more comprehensive solutions. The province's shortage of educational facilities, coupled with the continued lack of qualified and committed teachers, underscores the need for further innovation.

In this context, an approach recently introduced by the Punjab government could offer a promising model. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has announced plans to hand over thousands of government-run schools to private-public partnerships (PPPs) to improve the quality of education. This initiative seeks to leverage the expertise and resources of the private sector to address inefficiencies within the public system. Balochistan, with its unique challenges, could benefit greatly from such a strategy.

The PPP model could provide much-needed support in teacher training, curriculum development, and school management. By incorporating private sector efficiency with public accountability, it could address the chronic problems of absenteeism and underdevelopment. It also allows for innovative educational approaches, as well as better oversight through community involvement, echoing the role SMCs are already playing in Balochistan.

While the province's government has made significant strides in improving the educational and adapting the PPP model could be a game changer. A partnership between public and private entities has the potential to create a sustainable system, offering both modern educational resources and stringent oversight to ensure that students receive the education they deserve.

Rabeela Hameed Khan Durran's vision of a robust, effective education system is laudable, and the ongoing reforms are a step in the right direction. But if Balochistan is to truly turn the page on its troubled education sector, it must embrace innovative solutions like public-private partnerships to bring about the transformative changes that its children so desperately need. Only by doing so can the province ensure a brighter, more promising future for the next generation.

Stressed hospitality

By F.S. Aijazuddin:

In Pakistan we plan with finesse, and then execute in distress. Some still recall the obstacles placed by the then chief minister of Punjab in the way of the Lahore Lit Fest in earlier years. Annoyed at the criticism of his Orange Line (a permanent unsightly scar across the face of once lovely Lahore), he withdrew permission at the penultimate minute for the Lit Fest to be held at the Lahore Arts Council. Hurriedly, the Lit Fest had to relocate to a local hotel. To the chagrin of the audience, attractions like the Indian film star Shar-mila Tagore could be barely heard over the noise of generators in makeshift auditoria.

This year, the opening of the Lahore Biennale 2024, which by its definition takes more than a year to plan, fell victim to politics. What should have been a momentous, joyous event for our country was crippled by a dharna by a disgruntled party. Everyone with an opinion has a right to

express their views. We might, however, learn a lesson from the Japanese. A visitor there once noticed a trio of Japanese factory workers standing outside the gate.

They held placards listing their demands. When asked, they explained that they were on strike on behalf of all their colleagues. There was no need for the rest of the workers to strike. They would continue working so that production would not be interrupted. This year, the opening of the Lahore Biennale fell victim to politics.

With us, protest is synonymous with disruption. We cannot complain without causing chaos. A prequel to the Lahore Biennale compressed Lahore's past into its present. It was an art exhibition held in the house off Temple Road where the author Ved Mehta grew up in the 1940s. Ved's family lived in a mohalla known then as Mehta gali. He made his

father's house famous (the gate still has the marble plaque bearing the name 'Dr. Amolak Ram Mehta') in his autobiography Face to Face (1957). The house remains as his family left it in 1947, sans contents and sans its soul.

Each room had been converted into a mini gallery, showcasing the talent of individual artists. The inner courtyard where Ved played became a theatre. For an hour, Lahore's past was recalled by films—Life in the Walled City of Lahore—made by Shiraz Hashmi in 1991. The Shireen studied at the National College of Arts, Lahore where her talent as a painter glinted like a gem in a sea of dark lignite. She leaped from the limitation of a canvass to the big screen, and thereafter the coming arms of the West.

Her film on Lahore is Kiplingstyle. It shows the days of round-topped hat-wearers, the round of milkmen, the gleeful, competitive abandon of kite-flying, the rhythm of workers hammering silver into water-thin slivers.

By Khurram Husain:

It is odd that the government has recruited former State Bank governor Reza Baqir as a consultant to work on building its Sovereign Wealth Fund. Baqir has little experience building organisations. Besides, his tenure at the State Bank has left a legion of unanswered questions. Baqir entered the State Bank amid high inflation and an abrupt change of guard at the finance ministry, when Asad Umar was ousted unceremoniously to be replaced with Hafeez Shaikh. Pakistan signed an IMF programme within a fortnight of Shaikh's arrival, something Umar had struggled with for almost seven months. Interest rates were already high in those days since Pakistan was still recovering from se-

vere balance-of-payments stress as well as a period of combat inflation fuelled by record-high printing of money. Direct government borrowing as a proportion of total broad money supply crossed 50 per cent in May 2019, having spiralled from 20 per cent in 2017. The State Bank had already hiked interest rates all through the pre-2020 boom, but from May raised them by 250 basis points to 13.25pc where they stood for a while from all directions. It was at that point that Baqir took a hit from all they traced through his aggressive monetary policy. He had a hostile reception from the business community, and rumours swirled that at one event some attendees tried to physically accost him. His attempts to explain the high interest rates as a necessary evil, and his emergency funding line himself remained steady.

fast about the need for a tight monetary policy in order to combat inflation. It worked. Inflation came down, and by early 2020, the economy was beginning to stabilise in a situation very similar to the one we are in now, with inflation coming off its peaks, the primary deficit closing, reserves stabilising, the current account deficit narrowing, but with still remaining moribund. Is Pakistan ready for growth? I asked Hafeez Shaikh during those days. His answer was no, not yet. Indicators showed Pakistan's inflation was far more aggravated than his peers. But then, Covid-19 hit and everything changed. Immediately, the IMF programme was suspended, a \$1.4 billion emergency funding line was thrown to Pakistan

Lopsided economic reforms

BY Ali Tauqeer Sheikh:

A RECENT article by Nathan Porter, IMF's Pakistan mission chief, and his colleague, visiting Pakistan's economic situation provided a comprehensive overview of the key considerations and decisions vis-a-vis the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) that will guide our economic reform programme. The article rightly mentions that Pakistan faces significant fiscal constraints, including high public debt, budget deficits, and limited revenue collection — constraints that limit the ability to allocate resources for climate adaptation and mitigation. Pakistan cannot afford to delay climate action any longer. The absence of any mention of climate risks highlights a significant gap in the current approach to Pakistan's economic turnaround. This oversight is particularly of concern as climate policy is not designed to support climate resilience and mitigation efforts while pursuing macroeconomic stability. Despite the success

of the recent Stand-by Agreement (SBA), we still grapple with resource scarcity, which makes it difficult to address development and climate resilience. We have thus far not integrated climate considerations into budgetary processes, revenue generation, and expenditure management. The article rightly mentions that Pakistan faces significant fiscal constraints, including high public debt, budget deficits, and limited revenue collection — constraints that limit the ability to allocate resources for climate adaptation and mitigation.

Pakistan needs to implement reforms that balance economic growth with climate resilience. Given its high vulnerability to climate disasters, Pakistan faces threats to access and utilise domestic and international climate financing opportunities to expand the narrow fiscal space. Instead of pursuing a blindfolded reform agenda, a more thoughtful approach is to implement well-planned fiscal and institutional reforms that balance economic growth with climate resilience. The linkages between climate vulnerability and climate finance are many, and reflect our need to address immediate climate-related risks while building long-term resilience. Recognising and leveraging these linkages can lead to more effective and integrated approaches to building overall resilience. Both vulnerability reduction and climate finance need to prioritise community resilience. The challenge is to balance the immediate climate response to extreme weather events with long-term resilience investments.

Integration of climate considerations into

fiscal risk management has become increasingly important. Pakistan's Post-Disaster Needs Assessment developed by the Planning Commission after the 2022 floods, created a bridge between immediate recovery efforts and longer-term resilience building. Why, then, was the EFF not climate-proofed? Likewise, the debt management office at the Finance Division should incorporate climate-related fiscal risks into its debt sustainability analyses and long-term projections. This could involve scenario planning that accounts for potential climate shocks and their impact on Pakistan's ability to service its debt. There may still be an opportunity for the Planning Commission and DMO to engage the IMF for their Climate Change Capacity Building and Management Programme that is designed.

through those months, even as Tarin and Baqir's exchange rate extravaganza, the State Bank kept interest rates low, even as the system was grating with price instability with each passing month. By November 2021, the State Bank moved into emergency mode as inflation turned into a raging fire, but it was too late. By 2022, when he left, Pakistan was on its way to being engulfed by a ferocious inflationary fire. Nobody wanted interest rates hiked or the exchange rate devalued. In May of 2021, the first signs of instability landed on Pakistan's shores as the exchange rate began grating and inflation began registering hikes once more. Nobody wanted the moment for Baqir to return to the government to return to a saner monetary policy coupled with sound fiscal bases. Instead,

Rule by consultants

domestic as well as foreign, coupled with large state-owned enterprises, growth registered the strongest revival ever in Pakistan's history, going from nearly zero to 7pc in one year. The elation in the government was also historic. Rarely have I seen ministers from government and supporters of a political party celebrating the return of growth with such exuberant fanfare. But there was a problem: it was all temporary. Months into the revival of growth, Shaikh began talking once more to the Fund for the revival of the programme, and by March of 2021, around the same time as the Covid-19 crisis was coming in for the post-Covid year, the first programme revival was negotiated. The whole stimulus-

lead growth euphoria was set down, almost as if it never happened. But Khan Farid Shaikh within days of the programme revival and bailout was replaced by Shaukat Tarin.

And thence began the problem. Nobody was in the mood to unwind the stimulus and return to the Fund programme now that the Covid threat had passed, and Baqir obliged.

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this was on the former SBF programme's watch, which began touting its monetary stimulus being equal to 5pc of GDP as one of its primary successes. The resultant inflationary fire was ours to handle.

Baqir had begun his tenure amid high inflation, caused by large-scale money printing requiring high interest rates. He left behind an inflationary inferno fuelled by money printing the scale of which has few precedents in our history, necessitating interest rate peaks that were also the highest we've seen.

Today, he is back to advise the government on how to build a Sovereign Wealth Fund. My only wish is that history should not be made again.

Marriage halls, restaurants in Islamabad ordered to shut down

ISLAMABAD (INP): As preparations intensify for the upcoming Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Islamabad, local authorities have beefed up security measures, issuing notices to traders across the capital.

The police have ordered the closure of marriage halls, cafes, restaurants, and snooker clubs from October 12 to 16 to ensure smooth proceedings during the high-profile event.

The decision has been taken to enhance security and minimise public movement in sensitive areas. These notices were issued to

the traders concerned by station house officers (SHOs) of various police stations. The police has emphasised that action will be taken against the businesses and traders not complying with the orders.

To further ensure compliance, the police has also demanded shorty bonds from traders as a commitment to uphold the order. Traders who fail to adhere to the directives face potential legal action.

The government has announced three public holidays in Islamabad, and Rawalpindi from October 14 to 16 in connection with the 23rd meet-

ing of the SCO, set to take place in the capital.

A notification, issued by the Cabinet Division after receiving approval from the prime minister, confirmed that both twin cities will observe these holidays to facilitate security arrangements and ensure smooth proceedings during the high-profile international event.

Therefore, this means that the people of the twin cities are likely to get a four-day weekend, as 13th is a Sunday before the three holidays announced. The

Pakistan Army has been deployed in

Islamabad for the SCO summit.

The Islamabad High Court has also issued a ruling stating that illegal gatherings will not be tolerated in the federal capital, particularly in light of the SCO Summit.

Chief Justice Aamir Farooq delivered the written order after hearing a plea made by local businessmen regarding protests in Islamabad. The court directive emphasised the importance of maintaining order during this critical event, instructing the Islamabad administration and government to designate appropriate areas for any protests.



HYDERABAD: Provincial President PPP Nisar Ahmed Khoro speaking a press conference at Sagir House.

'MOKU-HANGA, prints from Pakistan' exhibition inaugurated at NAG

ISLAMABAD (INP): WADA Mitsuhro, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, on Tuesday inaugurated the exhibition "MOKU-HANGA, prints from Pakistan" at the

National Art Gallery (NAG), Islamabad showcasing a unique fusion of traditional Japanese woodblock printing techniques with "MOKU-HANGA" techniques with the Pakistani

artistic sensibilities. The exhibition, which runs until October 15, has been organized by the Pakistan-Japan Cultural Association Islamabad (PJCA) in collaboration with Khado

Khaal Gallery, COMSATS University, National Testing Service-Pakistan (NTS), Embassy of Japan in Islamabad and the Pakistan National Council of the Arts.

While speaking at the inaugural ceremony, Ambassador WADA said that MOKU-HANGA, a traditional Japanese woodblock printing technique, has been a cornerstone

of Japanese art for centuries. "This exhibition not only showcases the beauty and elegance of MOKU-HANGA but also serves as a bridge between our cultures, promoting cross-cultural understanding and appreciation," said the Ambassador.

Mr. Jamal Shah, President PJCA said in his welcome address noted that Pakistan-Japan Cultural Association Islamabad (PJCA) is delighted to present the exhibition "MOKU-HANGA, prints from Pakistan" for the art lovers. This exhibition has been beautifully showcased in collaboration with Pakistani artists that

reflects the diversity and richness of our shared culture, he added. Prof. Dr. Shahida Mansoor, the curator of the exhibition, expressing her views said that this pioneering project brings together Pakistani artists and Japanese experts to explore the centuries-old MOKU-HANGA

printmaking technique, characterized by its use of water-based inks and delicate, subtle results. She said MOKU-HANGA is created on hand made paper and the warm glow of these prints is due to water-based pigments and organic materials and humble tools made from natural materials.

The Ambassador and President PJCA gave away the commendation certificate to Prof. Dr. Shahida Mansoor, the Curator of the Exhibition, appreciation certificate to the participating artists. The exhibition will travel to Peshawar after Islamabad.

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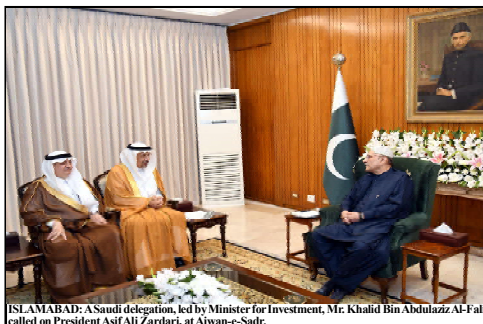
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QUETTA: Parliamentary Secretary Rababa Buledi addressing on ceremony to mark World Mental Health Day organized by Balochistan Psychologist Association.



ISLAMABAD: A Saudi delegation, led by Minister for Investment, Mr. Khalid Bin Abdulaziz Al-Falih, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aivan-e-Sadr.

AT UN, Pakistan demands probe into 'theft and illicit sale' of nuclear materials in India

UNITED NATIONS (INP): Pakistan has urged the United Nations Security Council to thoroughly investigate the "recurring" incidents of theft and illicit sale of nuclear and other radioactive materials in neighbouring India.

A recent Indian media report said that police had arrested three smugglers in the western Gopalganj district of Bihar with a rare Californium stone which is a highly radioactive and fetches a high price in the international market.

"The Security Council should be deeply concerned at the recurring incidents of theft and illicit sale of nuclear and other radio-

active materials in our Eastern neighbour," Ambassador Munir Akram suggested the existence of a black market for sensitive materials.

At the same time, the Pakistani envoy said, "While preventing non-state actors from acquiring sensitive materials, rights of States to take specific steps to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

"In the latest incident last August 2024, a group was found in illegal possession of a large quantity of highly radioactive and toxic substance Californium, worth US\$ 100 million," he said, adding that three incidents of theft of Californium were reported also in India in 2021.

These incidents,

nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons and their means of delivery, in particular for terrorist purposes.

The resolution requires all States to adopt and enforce appropriate laws to this effect as well as other effective measures to prevent the proliferation of these weapons and their means of delivery to non-state actors, in particular for terrorist purposes.

In his remarks, Ambassador Munir Akram told the committee that Pakistan, as a responsible nuclear weapons state, had participated actively in the formulation and negotiation of UNSC's Resolution 1540, and implemented its obligations under it.

'Precarious' situation in IIOJK threatens international peace, security; Pakistan

UNITED NATIONS (INP): India's refusal to implement United Nations Security Council resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir, which grant the Kashmiri people their right to self-determination, poses a threat to regional and international peace and security, a senior Pakistani diplomat told a UN committee.

Highlighting India's rejection of dialogue, the Pakistani envoy, who was speaking in a general debate, said New Delhi threatens aggression against Pakistan.

In this regard, he cited the statements made by Indian foreign and defence ministers as well as the Army Chief threatening to cross the Line of Control (LoC) and "take-over" Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

India's massive arms build-up includes destabilizing weapons systems and technologies, he said, noting that it is the world's largest arms importer. "It (India) has been increasing readiness of its nuclear arsenal including through militarization of its delivery systems despite a record of accidental launches," he said, while

calling for a mutual "Strategic Restraint Regime", which is based on three interlocking and mutually reinforcing elements of conflict resolution, nuclear and missile restraint and conventional arms balance.

"Such a State can only be a net destabilizer" rather than a "net security provider",

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QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Quetta Saad Bin Asad along with DG NADRAM Muhammad Kashif addressing a press conference.

Cook backs Root to become top run-scorer in tests

LONDON (INP): Joe Root's hunger and consistency can help him become the top run-scorer in test cricket, fellow Englishman Alastair Cook said after he surpassed him as the country's most successful batsman in the format.

Root eclipsed Cook's tally of 12,472 runs when he reached 71 not out with an elegantly driven boundary on day three of the first test against Pakistan and

the former captain celebrated with a wave to the dressing room. He went on to score a cen-

tury after lunch. "Root would have known (he had broken the record). You just do, don't you? And what a shot to do it," Cook told the BBC. "Probably for Root now, he's got bigger fish to fry."

"I don't know what his exact aim is, but he's not lost that hunger and desire to keep on scoring runs," Cook said Root, who is now fifth in the all-time list of run-scorers, can set his sights on overhauling Indian maestro Tendulkar who is at the top with 15,921 runs.

"I can see Root overhauling Tendulkar's record. When I retired, I

thought there was every chance that my record will be broken. I thought only the effects of captaincy and the hunger that takes out of you would stop him," Cook added.

"The fact that Ben Stokes has taken over the captaincy has helped Root. He's been lucky with injuries. All great players who played for a long time have been lucky with injuries."

"You just never know what's around the corner, but it has to be something like that could stop him. But I don't see that happen-

ing for Root to lose that hunger and ability to keep driving himself forward for the next couple of years."

Root's effort also drew praise from England great Michael Atherton, who witnessed his feat in Multan.

"It's a remarkable achievement, he's been a remarkable player," Atherton said on Sky Sports.

"He's been so consistent over the years and he's done it in a way which is so pleasing on the eye. He's a nice lad, which adds another element to it."

Senate hints at Replacing MDCAT with Cambridge or SAT Style Test

ISLAMABAD: The Senate's Standing Committee for Health has proposed replacing the Medical and Dental College Admission Test (MDCAT) with a standardized test like the American Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) or Cambridge style. This move comes in response to allegations of irregularities and corruption surrounding the MDCAT, which is administered by the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC).

Dr. Mukhtar Malik, the Prime Minister's Health Coordinator, presented the proposal to the committee, highlighting the significant financial waste associated with the MDCAT and an IT-based solution.

He argued that the potential SAT-style test would reduce the

Syed Muhammad Yaseen:

likelihood of irregularities and ensure greater transparency in the admissions process.

"Every year they put our future at stake and only a few recommended aspirants get their seats", Miss Naila Kakar, Member of Students Nexus by SMY, an educational platform, stated. The proposal aligns with recent developments in the medical admissions landscape.

On October 10, 2024, the Islamabad High Court halted the admission processes of the PMDC and the Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Medical University (SZABMU) following allegations of errors in the MDCAT exam. Student's advocates claimed that nearly 30 questions in the SZABMU MDCAT 2024 were incorrect.

Similar allegations of paper leaks and irregularities have marred previous MDCAT exams, including the DUHS MDCAT 2024.

In response to these concerns, the Sindh High Court halted the admission process for medical and dental colleges in Sindh for 15 days.

While the Intelligence Bureau has reported no evidence of paper leaks or irregularities in this year's PMDC MDCAT, the Senate committee's proposal reflects a growing desire for a more transparent and equitable system for medical admissions in Pakistan.

The Author is a 3rd Year MBBS student, and founder of Students Nexus by SMY, an educational platform. He can be reached at @SyedontheX platform.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, along with Chairman FBR, Mr. Rashid Mahmood Langrial, addressed a press conference to brief about the study conducted by FBR regarding sales tax evasion across different sectors of the economy.

Awareness campaign vital to protect ozone related issues in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Ozone layer depletion is a serious global environmental challenge, creating a multitude of socioeconomic and health problems in

Pakistan. To overcome its detrimental impacts, there is a dire need for launching a robust public awareness campaign.

Muhammad Saleem Shaikh, spokesperson for the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, expressed these views while talking to WealthPK.

"Raising public awareness about the importance of protecting the ozone layer and its negative impacts on health and environment will encourage the industrial

sector and people to use ozone-friendly products. It will also go a long way towards decreasing the impacts of climate change".

Shaikh, who is also a climate change education specialist, shared that ozone layer depletion had emerged as a critical environmental issue, resulting from the release of certain human-made chemicals, primarily chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and halons. However, tackling this challenge requires a multi-faceted approach, particularly raising public awareness.

He said, "Efforts to restore

the ozone layer over the past few decades are at risk of being reversed due to the harmful chemical emissions and unsustainable practices worldwide, compromising the earth's defence against the harmful solar ultraviolet radiation".

In the stratosphere, about 15-35 kilometres above the earth's surface, the ozone layer protects the earth from the sun's high-energy UV radiation, particularly UV-B and UV-C rays, and keeps the earth's temperature moderate, and the cycle of different eco-systems regular.

The implications of ozone layer depletion are severe and significantly harm different economic sectors. It badly affects agricultural productivity and the quality of staple foods - rice, wheat, and soybean. It also damages the early developmental stages of aquatic animals, including shrimp, fish, and crabs.

"The healthcare cost also increases due to the ozone holes, as they allow the ultraviolet (UV) radiation to reach the earth and affect natural ecosystems and humans.

It causes skin cancer, impaired immune system, cataracts and damages the respiratory tract tissues," he explained.

Shedding light on climate

Pakistan committed to work closely with KSA in diverse fields: Dar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar has expressed Pakistan's firm commitment to working closely with Saudi Arabia to explore the

potential for cooperation in various fields between the two countries.

Addressing Pak-Saudi Business Forum in Islamabad on Tuesday, he said Pakistan offers a wide range of investment opportunities especially in the areas of IT, mines and minerals, renewable energy and

agriculture and livestock.

Deputy Prime Minister said that Pakistan is actively fostering innovation, enhancing its infrastructure and streamlining regulatory framework to create an investment friendly climate.

Addressing Business Forum, Saudi Minister of Investment Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al-Falih said his country has been and will continue to be Pakistan's partner and help it achieve economic stability.

In his remarks, Finance

change and the ministry's initiatives being taken to protect the ozone layer, the media spokesperson said with the collaboration of national and international stakeholders, the ministry had initiated multiple programmes to phase out the ozone-depleting substances (ODS).

He said, "As a signatory to the Montreal Protocol, Pakistan has successfully eliminated the consumption of CFCs and is continuously working to phase out hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs). It helped reduce the greenhouse gas emissions and recovery of the ozone layer".

For over a decade, the ministry has taken various steps to protect the ozone layer and promote sustainable development. These steps have been appreciated and recognised at various international forums, such as the HCFC Phase-out Management Plan (HPMP). However, to fulfil the said aims, community-based coordination is crucial, and the present government is diligently working on it, the senior ministry official added.

Talking to WealthPK about the importance of a public awareness campaign to protect the ozone layer, Muhammad Saleem Mangrio, Executive Director of Centre for Rural Change.



PESHAWAR: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi participating in Grand Jirga organized by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the Federal Cabinet.

PM Shehbaz announces termination of contracts with five IPPs

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif has announced that the federal government is terminating contracts with five Independent Power Producers (IPPs) in the first phase.

Chairing the federal cabinet meeting in Islamabad on Thursday, he said this has been done after the mutual consent of the owners of the IPPs. The

Prime Minister informed the Cabinet that only the outstanding amounts owed to these IPPs will be paid, without any interest.

He highlighted that termi-

nation of these contracts will save power consumers about sixty billion rupees and provide a benefit of around four hundred and eleven billion rupees to the national exchequer.

Shehbaz Sharif said it was the outcome of the strenuous collective efforts of the entire government team. He also recognized the inputs and support of the allied parties in this regard. He especially mentioned that Army Staff General Asim Munir, who took personal interest in the whole matter. The Prime

Minister described the development as a beginning of a

journey which he said will be converted into progress and prosperity of the people.

Shehbaz Sharif also mentioned the relief provided by both the Federal and Punjab governments to the power consumers during the months of summer. The Prime

Minister expressed satisfaction that the economy is gradually heading towards stability. He pointed out that the remittances for the first quarter touched the record level of 8.8 billion dollars. This, he said, is a confidence that Pakistan's economy is moving forward.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia to deepen economic cooperation

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing cooperation in key areas such as the economy, agriculture, mining and information technology.

Both sides underlined the need to work together to build a prosperous and peaceful future for the region as well as for the Islamic World.

This was discussed during a meeting between President Asif Ali Zardari and the visiting delegation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), led by Saudi Minister for Investment, Mr. Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al-Falih, at Awwan-e-Sadr.

Welcoming the delegation, the President emphasized the longstanding and time-tested relationship between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

He expressed Pakistan's desire to elevate these ties into a long-term strategic and economic partnership, underscoring that such collaboration would bring the two brotherly

nations further closer.

The President reaffirmed Pakistan's deep respect for the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and reiterated Pakistan's unwavering commitment to stand in solidarity with Saudi Arabia.

The President also praised the visionary leadership of Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud. He highly commended the remarkable progress Saudi Arabia was making under Vision 2030 and expressed gratitude for the Kingdom's continued support to Pakistan during challenging times. The President said that he was happy to witness the progress and prosperity of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al-Falih said that Saudi Arabia recognised the strategic geographical significance of Pakistan and its potential of natural resources and renewable energy. He informed that Saudi Arabia had planned to invest in the infrastructure and mining sectors of Pakistan and, in this regard, his delegation would sign 25 agreements in different sectors that would boost economic cooperations between the two brotherly nations. He expressed the hope that the signing of the agreements would mark a new era of economic cooperation between the two countries. Both sides emphasized to increase collaboration in the areas of Agriculture and Information Technology.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Petroleum, Senator Musadik Masood Malik, Minister for Commerce, Mr. Jam Kamal Khan, Minister for Privatization, Mr. Abdul Azeem Khan, Minister for Interior, Senator Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Minister for Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony, Chaudhry Salik Hussain and Senator Saleem Mandivwalla.

The Saudi Ambassador, Mr. Nawaf Saad Al Malki was also present in the meeting.



HYDERABAD: Leader of MQM Pakistan Khalid Maqbool Sadiqi addressing a press conference at Latifabad.

Don't accept constitutional court in any way: Raja

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a recent statement, Secretary General of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Salman Akram Raja, expressed skepticism regarding

the government's proposal to establish a constitutional court, declaring that it is unlikely to be realized.

Speaking to a private TV channel, Raja emphasized the pivotal role of Maulana Fazlur Rehman in the approval of any constitutional amendments, describing his contributions as both "key and historical."

Raja noted that Rehman, leveraging his extensive religious and political background, is positioned to counteract what he termed a "series of distortions" in the constitution.

He suggested that if constitutional cases begin to impact other legal matters, a constitutional bench should be formed, akin to practices in India, without the need for a separate constitutional court.

"We do not accept the Constitutional Court in any way," Raja stated, affirming that PTI's proposals would be incorporated into the draft prepared by Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) once it is released for discussion.

Additionally, PTI leader Muhammad Khan reiterated concerns over legislative practices, arguing that the government is undermining the Parliament by imposing legislation without proper consensus.

"We are confident our members will not waver on constitutional amendments," he asserted.

In contrast, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressed journalists, indicating that the timeline for passing the proposed constitutional amendments is flexible on the PPP's part.

He projected that the amendments could be finalized by October 25, while emphasizing the importance of consensus among political parties, including the option for a consensus vote.

As negotiations continue, the political landscape remains dynamic, with both PTI and PPP leaders positioning themselves strategically amid ongoing discussions about constitutional reforms.