

PAKISTAN TODAY

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PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN TALK PEACE, RENEW TIES

- AFGHAN PRESIDENT HOLDS ONE-ON-ONE MEETING WITH PAKISTANI PM, DISCUSSES REGIONAL SECURITY AND GEOPOLITICS
- FM SAYS AFGHAN PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO PAKISTAN WOULD BRING BOTH COUNTRIES CLOSER AND STRENGTHEN BILATERAL RELATIONS



ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

PRIME Minister Imran Khan and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on Thursday held a one-on-one meeting here during which they agreed to open a new chapter of friendship and cooperation between both countries based on mutual trust and harmony for the benefit of their peoples.

The Afghan president arrived at the Prime Minister's House after holding delegation-level talks with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

A contingent of the armed forces presented a guard of honour and national anthems of both countries were played as Ghani was received by PM Imran. The premier introduced the Afghan president to members of his cabinet and other senior officials, while Ghani introduced Imran to members of the visiting delegation.

Earlier, in his meeting with Qureshi, President Ghani lauded Pakistan's efforts for peace in Afghanistan and the region.

The foreign minister conveyed Pakistan's commitment to continue playing its role for peace in Afghanistan with sincerity and an open heart.

"For decades now, the people of Afghanistan have suffered due to the security situation and instability prevalent in their country. That must end and Pakistan wants to play its due role in achieving that objective," FM Qureshi said.

"Pakistan has always emphasised the need for result-oriented talks. We firmly believe that is the only way to establish durable peace in Afghanistan."

The minister expressed confidence that the Afghan president's visit to Pakistan would bring the two countries closer and strengthen bilateral relations.

The two sides agreed to expedite implementation of the already decided strategy of fostering peace and brotherhood for the betterment and welfare of both countries.

They exchanged views on ways to enhance bilateral economy, trade and investment, and promote cooperation in communications, energy,

culture and people-to-people contact.

In an address in Islamabad later in the day, Foreign Minister Qureshi reiterated Pakistan's commitment to facilitate an intra-Afghan dialogue, which he said was essential for sustained peace in Afghanistan and the region.

"A better relationship between the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan is essential for us to achieve our aim of collective prosperity," said the foreign minister.

Qureshi asserted that Islamabad was keen on playing a constructive role in ensuring global and regional stability.

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NA unanimously passes defence budget

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GOVT AGREES TO BNP'S DEMANDS AHEAD OF CRUCIAL BUDGET VOTE

DEFENCE MINISTER KHATTAK SAYS GOVT HAS FORMED COMMITTEE TO ADDRESS ISSUE OF MISSING PERSONS IN BALOCHISTAN

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

THE Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government on Thursday announced that it had agreed to implement all six points raised by Balochistan National Party (BNP-M), as the ruling party scrambles support of its coalition partners ahead of the crucial vote on the federal budget.

The BNP-M, which is a 'confidence and supply' partner of the ruling PTI, had earlier threatened to abstain from voting on the budget, warning that it would go with whoever could address its grievances.

The announcement had sparked a flurry of activity from the government, which has a thin majority in the National Assembly and needs all the numbers it can muster ahead of the budget vote. It

had also prompted the opposition to reach out to BNP chief Akhtar Mengal, who subsequently attended several meetings hosted by opposition parties on how best to tackle the budget.

Despite all that, however, the BNP-M had stayed away from the multi-party conference organised by the opposition on Wednesday. Instead, Mengal and members of his party met Prime Minister Imran Khan and members of the government to discuss the six points of reservation that had been the cause of rising tensions between the two parties.

Interestingly, the joint resolution adopted by the opposition after the multi-party conference too had covered all six demands of the BNP-M.

Addressing journalists after a meeting between the two sides, PTI's Defence Minister Perviz Khattak and BNP chief Mengal said that an agreement had been reached between the two parties.

GOLD REFINERY TO BE SET UP IN BALOCHISTAN TO BENEFIT PROVINCE AND ITS PEOPLE; AFGHAN REFUGEES TO BE REPATRIATED 'RESPECTFULLY'

Briefly discussing the points agreed upon, Khattak said that the government has formed a committee to address the matter of missing persons in Balochistan.

"The other matter that was raised by the party was regarding water, and it has been promised that several small dams will be created in the province to help in water conservation. Furthermore, the feasibility for two larger dams is also being created and work will begin on them as soon as the process is completed," Khattak said.

"Another issue discussed in the meeting was the sense of insecurity that the people of Gwadar feel because of a large number of outsiders that are going to the area as it develops. There is a fear that these people may be able to obtain identification cards from the area and the Baloch majority may become a minority.

"We have assured the party that a bill will be brought into the National Assem-

bly to ensure that such an event does not take place and the rights of the people of Gwadar are protected," the defence minister said.

Khattak further announced that a gold refinery would be set up in Balochistan to benefit the province and its people.

Another one of the BNP-M's concerns was the unfulfilled promise of six per cent government jobs being provided to people of the province. "Regarding this, we have assured the party that the promise will be fulfilled and, with time, Balochistan will get its fair share of government jobs," Khattak said.

The last point on the agenda was about the respectful repatriation of Afghan refugees, which both sides have agreed on.

Mengal, when given the chance to speak, said that he was grateful that the government had taken the time to ease the party's concerns.

"However, it should be known that the differences between the two sides were not developed because of us," he said.

The BNP-M leader also pointed out that, during the discussion, the prime minister had assured him that no reductions will be made to the NFC award and that the 18th Amendment will not be rolled back.

"These rumours were floating around, but the truth is that making both these changes, we need a two-thirds majority (in the NA) and we do not have that. Thus, to the people creating these rumours, I would like to tell them that they should stop lying so much," Khattak interjected.

Mengal also told the media that he had suggested to the prime minister that a committee of political leaders be sent to Balochistan to properly understand the grievances of the people there.

"Once it returns, the committee should present a report to the parliament and then whatever decision is taken on the matter will be acceptable to us," he said.

IHC summons replies from PTM leaders in plea seeking ban on outfit

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday adjourned hearing into a plea seeking a ban on Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) till July 16. Justice Amir Farooq was hearing the case. Barrister Shoaib Razaqi in his arguments said that PTM is not a registered party and pleaded the court to pass a ruling to slap a ban on it for making anti-state statements. The social media accounts of the PTM leaders namely Manzoor Pashteen, Mohsin Dawar, Ali Wazir and Gulalai Ismail should be banned, he continued. No one would be allowed to give seditious statements under the name of freedom of expression, the court observed. The court has summoned replies from PTM leaders including, Manzoor Pashteen, Mohsin Dawar, Ali Wazir and Gulalai Ismail. A petition was filed in Islamabad High Court (IHC) against PTM for speaking against national institutions, including Pakistan Army, in the wake of 10-year-old Farishta Mohmand's rape case in the federal capital.

Prices of essential items rise at govt stores

ISLAMABAD: The utility stores have hiked the price of sugar and over 50 brands of everyday items. The utility stores have enhanced three rupees on per kilogram of sugar, from existing Rs69 per kilogramme to Rs72. The utility stores, which provide basic commodities to the general public at a subsidised rate, have increased prices of several general use items. According to the report, the prices of more than 50 brands of shampoo, soaps, and creams have been enhanced up to Rs20 at utility stores. The price of a 50-millilitre jar of a face cream has been increased by 10 rupees, from Rs217 to 227, the report said. Various brands' soaps prices go up by one to two rupee. **INP**

Court extends Zardari's physical remand till 8th



ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

An accountability court on Thursday extended Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari's physical remand in the fake accounts case till July 8, as the former president told the judge that he was not afraid of prison because he had spent 13 years in solitary confinement.

Zardari made the remarks during a lighthearted exchange with Judge Arshad Malik during the hearing.

Judge Malik wondered whether the headquarters

NOT AFRAID OF PRISON, ZARDARI TELLS ACCOUNTABILITY JUDGE

of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) should be shifted to a hospital to facilitate its corruption suspects who tend to frequently fall ill. While taking up an application filed by another suspect in the case, Omni Group CEO Abdul Ghani Majeed, seeking medical facilities while in NAB custody, Judge Malik wondered: "Shouldn't [we] just transfer the NAB headquarters to some hospital?" "If somebody sits in a room for two days after locking the door from the inside, they don't feel unwell," he observed. "But they become restless when they find out somebody has locked the door from the outside." He said the analogy suitably applied to the fake accounts case, in which he said suspects fall ill after being arrested. Zardari, who was at the rostrum, was quick to respond.

"We are not that weak, sahib," the PPP co-chairman said, adding that he was doing just fine. He further said he was not afraid of prisons because he had spent "13 years in solitary confinement".

"Not everyone is like you," the judge replied in a light vein. "Some people pick a fight with the lion and some get frightened by a small animal." At this, Zardari couldn't help himself from making a jibe at

his political rival, Prime Minister Imran Khan, saying: "[By that measure] our prime minister is even scared of a lizard." The judge replied: "no comments".

Earlier at the start of the hearing, Zardari objected to three suspects in the case being brought to the court in handcuffs. "These are educated boys, why have they been handcuffed?", he asked, adding that the case revolves around a "white-collar crime".

At this, the judge inquired whether the suspects had been handcuffed by NAB officials. He was informed by the accountability watchdog's representative that the suspects were brought to the court from jail by police and that NAB had not put them in handcuffs. Earlier, Zardari withdrew his interim bail applications filed with the Islamabad High Court (IHC) in three cases pertaining to the Park Lane Company, bulletproof cars and Toshakhana.

The former president conveyed his decision to withdraw his applications after he sought the permission of the bench comprising Justice Aamir Farooq and Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani to speak in the court. The hearing of the case was adjourned until July 8.

Pakistan and Afghanistan talk peace, renew ties

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

"No one has suffered more than these two bordering nations," he said, adding that better connectivity between the two nations was crucial for sustainable progress. President Ghani arrived in Pakistan on Thursday morning for a two-day visit on the invitation of PM Imran. Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce, Textiles, Industries Production and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood received him at Nur Khan airbase.

The Afghan president was accompanied by his Special Representative and Ambassador Extraordinaire to Pakistan Atif Mashal and a high-level delegation including ministers, advisers, senior officials and businessmen. President Ghani's two-day official visit is seen as part of the latest push to not only sort out differences with Pakistan on bilateral issues but also give new impetus to peace efforts. This is the Afghan president's first visit to Islamabad in over three-and-

half-years and comes at a time when peace talks between the United States and Afghan Taliban are believed to have entered a critical phase.

President Ghani will also travel to Lahore where he will participate in a business forum attended by business representatives from both the countries. He will offer Friday prayers at the Badshahi Mosque and then depart from Pakistan the same evening.

This is President Ghani's third visit to Pakistan and follows the recently held first review session of the landmark Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS).

The Afghan president had earlier undertaken a bilateral visit to Pakistan in November 2014 and subsequently came to attend the Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process (HoA) Ministerial Conference in Islamabad in December 2015.

Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have remained tense for years largely because of deepening



trust deficit between the two neighbours.

At the heart of the problem is suspicion in Kabul that Islamabad is still supporting the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan has its own list of grievances that include the Afghan government's lack of action against terrorist groups involved in cross-border attacks.



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CHINA OFFERS TO PLAY GUARANTOR FOR AFGHAN PEACE DEAL

ISLAMABAD
MIAN ABRAR

CHINA has offered to serve as guarantor for a proposed peace agreement in Afghanistan, an official statement said late on Wednesday. The offer comes on the heels of media reports suggesting that China is likely to host an international meeting regarding the Afghan

peace process, to be attended by officials from Pakistan, US, Europe and other neighboring countries of Afghanistan.

The offer was conveyed to Afghanistan's National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib by China's Special Envoy for Afghanistan Deng Xijun during a meeting in Kabul.

"Ambassador Xijun briefed NSA Mohib about the Chinese efforts in the peace process, and assured China's readi-

ness to offer as a guarantor role for any possible peace accord between the government and the Taliban group," Afghanistan's National Security Council said in a statement.

China is ready to facilitate an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace talks, Ambassador Xijun said, adding that without involvement of the Afghan government, any peace process will go nowhere.

NSA Mohib appreciated Chinese efforts in bringing peace and stability in Afghanistan, saying the Afghans had rendered huge sacrifices for peace, and those sacrifices should be honored.

The envoy briefed Mohib on China's recent efforts for peace talks, according to a statement from the national security adviser's office.

There have been multiple signs of cautious optimism from the US and

NATO about a potential peace deal in Afghanistan this year. In the past two days, NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg as well as US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have said a comprehensive peace agreement with the Taliban is within grasp.

The development comes as the US and Taliban are set to hold the seventh round of talks for peace later this month in Doha, Qatar.

ECP summons KP official over arrest of two tribal poll candidates

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday summoned Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Home and Tribal Affairs Secretary Ikramullah Khan after two independent candidates contesting from South Waziristan were arrested ahead of the upcoming elections in tribal areas. The secretary has been ordered to appear before the ECP in person at 11am on June 28.

Muhammad Iqbal, who is contesting from PK-114, South Waziristan-1, and Muhammad Arif, who is contesting from PK-113, South Waziristan-1, were arrested

earlier this month on June 24 and June 19 respectively, "allegedly under Section 3 of the West Pakistan Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance, 1960 (MPO) for one month". They were detained by the deputy commissioner of South Waziristan and, according to ECP's notice, are locked up in jails of Haripur and Dera Ismail Khan, the notice said.

"The said act of the administration prior to conduct of election is tantamount to obstruct the election campaign and the constitutional duty of the Election Commission in respect of free, fair and transparent elections in accordance with Article 218(3) of the Constitution," the notice said.



Shehbaz, Bilawal meet Ghani, extend support for Afghan peace process

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari separately called on Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and expressed their support for the peace process in the country. During the meetings, the two leaders of the opposition and their delegations welcomed President Ghani over his arrival in Pakistan. They also discussed matters of mutual interest during the meetings. Ghani also condoned the death of ousted prime minister Nawaz Sharif's wife Begum Kulsoom Nawaz with Shehbaz Sharif. Earlier, the Afghan president landed in Islamabad on a two-day official visit to Pakistan on Prime Minister's Imran Khan invitation. Adviser on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood and other officials received Ghani at Nur Khan airbase.

Opposing debt commission an excuse to evade accountability: Firdous

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan on Thursday criticised the joint declaration of the opposition - which gathered a day earlier on a multiparty moot to devise a joint strategy against the government - for opposing the recently-formed inquiry commission to probe the utilisation of foreign debts in the past decade. "This is an excuse to evade accountability... They want to conceal the reality of the debt [taken in previous tenures of the PPP and the PML-N]," she wrote on her Twitter account. She said, while referring to the opposition parties, that they did not want national development instead they sought personal development. Awan said that rejecting the National Development Council (NDC) was equivalent to hindering the state's development and prosperity. Recently, Prime Minister Imran Khan announced to form the commission to probe how foreign debts swelled to Rs24,000 billion in the last decade.

'Incompetent' govt taking toll on Pakistan, says Maryam

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice-President Maryam Nawaz on Thursday continued to criticise the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government, reiterating her claim that its incompetence was damaging the country. She shared snapshots of a few English newspapers which highlighted the current economic conditions in Pakistan. Maryam Nawaz termed the ongoing times under PTI regime as "dark days". She tweeted: "Dark days. Incompetence has taken a toll on Pakistan." On Wednesday, the PML-N vice president said that the country's conditions will continue to decline until this "fake government" is in office. Talking to media after the All Parties Conference (APC), she said that the changing of Senate chairman will not solve the crisis but will definitely shake the "fake" government. Maryam warned the government to refrain from pushing the country's conditions towards the point of no return. She said, "The currency is on a constant decline and rupee's value has been drastically going down by Rs5 to 6 per dollar in a day." "Pakistan's national debt has seen an increase of \$14 billion in the month of June," she added. "The people are being oppressed on a daily basis due to the expected budget and their livelihood has been messed up by increasing inflation," she further said. **NEWS DESK**

CPNE urges govt to clear dues of media houses

LAHORE
STAFF REPORT

The Council of Newspaper Editors (CPNE) has urged the government to clear the pending dues of the media houses at the earliest and has asked the media houses to ensure the implementation of the Wage Board award. An emergency meeting of CPNE Wage Board Committee was held in this regard where the issues facing the media industry were discussed. The meeting was chaired by Wage Board Committee President Zia Shahid. The meeting was attended by Pakistan Today Editor-in-Chief Arif Nizami, Daily Awaz Editor-in-Chief Dr Jabbar Khattak, Express Group Chief Executive Editor Ijazul Haq and Legal Views Editor-in-Chief and honorary legal advisor of CPNE Safer Hussain Shah.

LHC grants bail to Sharifs' alleged frontman Mushtaq Chene

LAHORE
STAFF REPORT

A Lahore High Court (LHC) division bench on Thursday granted bail to Muhammad Mushtaq alias Chene involved in the Suleman Shehbaz money-laundering case. The court directed Mushtaq Chene to submit two surety bonds of Rs500,000 for availing the bail. The bench comprising Justice Ali Baqar Najafi and Justice Sardar Ahmad Naeem heard the post-arrest bail petition. Advocate Asad Manzoor Butt, on behalf of Mushtaq Chene, argued that his client was arrested by the bureau in connection with the Salman Shehbaz money-laundering case.

However, he said that his client had become an approver in the case and got his confessional statement recorded under Section 26 of the National Accountability Ordinance before a judicial magistrate on June 17, 2019. He further submitted that his client

extended complete cooperation with the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) authorities during the investigation but was sent to jail on judicial remand.

The counsel contended that his client was not required by the bureau for investigation any longer, therefore, he could be released from jail. He pleaded with the court to grant bail to his client whereas he was ready to furnish any sort of surety for the purpose. Besides submitting a reply, the NAB prosecutor stated that the accused disclosed true facts during the investigation and admitted that he facilitated money laundering worth Rs603 million for Salman Shehbaz due to business fraternity terms and political stature of the Sharif family.

The prosecutor emphasised that the NAB chairman had accepted his application for pardon while submitting that if the bureau did not have any objection, the accused be released on bail in accordance with the law.

Judicial remand of Khawaja brothers extended till July 11

LAHORE
STAFF REPORT

An accountability court on Thursday approved a 14-day extension in the judicial remand of Khawaja Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leaders Khawaja Saad Rafique and Khawaja Salman Rafique in the ongoing Paragon Housing Society scam.

Accountability Judge Jawadul Hasan ordered for the accused to be presented in court again on July 11. On June 18, the Lahore High Court (LHC) dismissed a bail petition filed by Saad Rafique. The Khawaja brothers were arrested by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) from court premises on December 11 when the LHC rejected their request for an extension in their pre-arrest bail in the case.

Since then, their remand has been extended multiple times.

NAB says that Saad, in connivance with his wife Ghazala Butt, brother Salman, Qaiser Amin Butt and Nadeem Zia, started a housing project named 'Air Avenue', which was later renamed 'Paragon City Limited'.

The accountability watchdog maintains that the housing scheme was set up illegally and the Rafique brothers, in connivance with Nadeem Zia and Qaiser Amin Butt, defrauded a large number of buyers. The bureau further claims that Saad got 40 kanals of land registered against his brother's name, extended the project illegally, and benefited by selling commercial plots amounting billions of rupees.

Delay in Al-Azizia case book preparation irks IHC

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) expressed displeasure at the delay in the preparation of a case book of Al-Azizia reference in which former premier Nawaz Sharif was implicated and is currently serving a jail sentence.

While hearing appeals, a two-member bench of the high court questioned why there was a delay in the preparation of the case book. The bench also observed the difficulty of hearing appeals in the absence of proper documentation.

Nawaz's counsel Khawaj Haris said that a chart had been prepared with the

relevant details, however, some documents were either missing or their order was not correct in the case book.

To this, Justice Amir said that the registrar office should be kept in the loop to avoid asking it for changes later. The judge also said that more than 20,000 pages have already been copied.

The bench also asked the NAB prosecutor whether the anti-graft body had emailed documents to the registrar office. Upon receiving an answer in the affirmative, Justice Amir asked why

NAB wanted additional documents to be included in the case book. The NAB prosecutor said that some documents were stale and the anti-graft body had submitted better copies.

Raising an objection to NAB prosecutor's statement, Nawaz's counsel said that these documents were not presented during the trial and if they are being added to the case book, he should be informed beforehand.

Over this, Justice Amir said that the court will make a schedule for hearing the appeals and the case parties must

state how much time they require. Haris told the court that it would be informed of the situation soon.

The court then directed the registrar office to expedite the task while avoiding the addition of irrelevant documents and adjourned the hearing until September.

Nawaz had challenged the accountability court's verdict in the Al-Azizia case in a petition filed with IHC while the anti-graft body had requested the court to extend the punishment of the former premier. **NEWS DESK**

Parents of HIV children want commitments to be honoured

RATODERO
PPI

The government has so far failed to establish treatment centers for children in Ratodero due to which HIV positive siblings are losing their lives and laps are being emptied gradually. This was stated by Asadullah Soomro, uncle of HIV positive little girl, Alisha Soomro, who expired here yesterday, while talking to newsmen on Thursday. He said: "Our family has four affected HIV children out of whom two are mine and two are of my brother's. He said whenever they visited ART Center in Larkana for getting medicines in this scorching heatwave, they were always given two syrups and vitamin tablets and nothing else due to which Alisha expired and other children were also indisposed. He said if proper treatment & drugs been given to Alisha, her life could have been saved. He said they both brothers were labourers and were earning daily to support their families. He said under these circumstances, how was it possible for them to take their children to Larkana and come back without getting any drugs which costed them more on travelling to & fro due to which their both families were suffering and facing severe hardships in this price hike era. He said: "Being parents, we cannot see our children dying before our eyes. Tall claims were made by the rulers who visited our town that all the HIV positive children and adults will be provided required treatment, drugs and laboratory facilities at their doorsteps, but nothing had been done as yet which had resulted in loss of precious human lives whose fault is none." "We cannot afford private medical treatment which is very costly. HIV positive children are also suffering from other co-infections treatment of which is also essential." He appealed to PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Faryal Talpur, who have been elected from this constituency as MNA & MPA respectively, to immediately fulfill their commitments, arrange establishment of treatment center, laboratory and ensure availability of all required medicines so that lives of innocent little children could be saved.

Police arrest two 'terrorists' involved in murder of cops

KARACHI
STAFF REPORT

Police claimed to have arrested two terrorists involved in killing of two policemen in Karachi's Mominabad area on June 17. Police have arrested two accomplices of terrorists, Zahid Mala and Rashid involved in the killing of constable, Allah Ditta and Ahmed Ali. Police also recovered weapons and a motorbike for their possession. Further probe is underway.



KARACHI: Children gather sea shells which washed up on the beach in the provincial capital. ONLINE

SHC ORDERS LEAS TO ENSURE RECOVERY OF MISSING PERSONS

KARACHI
STAFF REPORT

The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Thursday sought replies from Defence Secretary and Home Secretary of Sindh pertaining to the missing of over 50 citizens.

A two-member bench of SHC, comprising Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, heard the pleas seeking recovery of over 50 missing persons. The bench also sought a reply from Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) within 15 days regarding the disappearance of Pakistani-Canadian citizen.

A wife of missing citizen stated before the bench while crying that her husband had been missing since last six years, but there was no clue yet to his whereabouts. "My little children have grown up, but their father is still missing. He was taken away by unknown persons in a double cabin vehicle," she stated.

The bench remarked that police

repeatedly called the families of missing persons, but they never conducted investigation on other side. "Why Rangers did not conduct an inquiry against those who pick up the people publically?" the bench questioned.

Justice asked the Rangers prosecutor that where did they keep people for investigation? On which, he replied, rangers kept people in their custody for 90 days for investigation, but now they did not have such

powers. He stated that after investigating, they either release persons or hand over them to police.

"Missing persons are not under the custody of Rangers," he told the bench. The bench remarked that families of missing persons were passing through tough time, but the police became bound in Joint Investigation Teams (JITs). The court directed the police and other law enforcement agencies to ensure the recovery of missing persons.



Gold smuggling bid foiled at Karachi airport



KARACHI
STAFF REPORT

Customs officials on Thursday claimed to have foiled a gold smuggling bid from Karachi International Airport.

According to Customs Collector Feroz Alam, a team of Pakistan Customs was checking the luggage of a family, who was travelling to Dubai from Karachi airport during the search the officials recovered more than four-kilogram gold.

The Customs Collector said "The family claimed that they were asked to smuggle gold abroad by some jewellery tycoon."

The family is the resident of the Azizabad area of Karachi. "Foreign currency worth more than Rs20 million has been seized during the last two months," Feroz stated. The man his wife and daughter were trying to transport the gold secretly. The officials have registered a case against the suspects and started further investigation.

Karachi War Cemetery: A memorial to fallen soldiers of World War II

AGENCIES

Sitting under a lignon tree to avoid the midday broiling sun, Saeed Baqri told the history of the Karachi War Cemetery.

A few meters away, a gardener was busy watering the small trees and plants alongside the shallow graves aligned in long rows. Another was engaged in picking up fallen leaves from neatly levelled grassy ground.

"Their name liveth for evermore" reads a wall at the cemetery's entrance. A huge white cross stands in the middle of the grounds which bifurcates the rows. All the headstones are of equal size and white.

Unlike other architectural sites in the country's commercial capital which are fast losing their shine not only through the ravages of time but also due to the neglect of their supposed benefactors and greed of land grabbers, this historic place is well protected and well maintained.

Located in the city's eastern district and surrounded by military installations, the cemetery houses over 600 graves of

fallen soldiers, mostly from the United Kingdom, who fought in World War II.

Apart from the graves, the cemetery also contains three monuments to commemorate the more than 25,000 servicemen of the forces of united India who died during the war and 568 men who served the Allied forces in garrisons and died in different areas (now called Pakistan) during World War I.

The cemetery is maintained by the U.K.-based Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), which also takes care of scores of war cemeteries across the globe. The first grave a visitor encounters is that of Major K.B. Dawson from the 3rd Gurkha Rifles Regiment, who died on Dec 13, 1943 at the age of 29.

The region, now known as Pakistan, did not bear the direct brunt of the war, but its indirect involvement was huge. It had been declared a non-operational zone. "Thousands of injured soldiers were brought to Karachi during World War II, which housed one of the largest camp hospitals in undivided India," Baqri, who heads the CWGC's Pakistan,

Asia Pacific and Africa section, told Anadolu Agency. "Those who died during the course of treatment were buried in a nearby open field."

Following the end of World War II, he added, the CWGC, in line with other parts of the world, started building this cemetery, which was inaugurated by Pakistani President Iskander Mirza in 1951.

In addition to Karachi, the CWGC maintains a relatively smaller cemetery in the garrison city of Rawalpindi.

The commission has also identified 51 "abandoned sites" in northeastern Punjab province and northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province which house the graves of men who died during the two great wars. "This is our policy that whenever it is possible, we will maintain these sites as well," Baqri said.

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY: According to a plaque inscription, the Karachi cemetery houses 642 graves, including 525 British soldiers, and 109 men from undivided India. All those buried in the cemetery were non-Muslims, as the Muslim soldiers were laid to rest in their own bur-

ial ground.

"Most of the buried here were Christians. That's why you see a cross [erected] here", Baqri said. "They also included Sikhs, Parsis and even Jews."

"There are the graves of six Jewish soldiers," Baqri, who has been with the CWGC since 1983, said while pointing towards a section. A record book placed at the entrance, however, contains the names of all the soldiers who died in the line of duty, including Muslims.

Baqri, who succeeded his father, who had served as the chief caretaker of the war cemeteries in the region from 1967 to 1983, recalled some myths about the graveyard in a lighter vein.

"There had been several myths about this graveyard involving ghosts and vampires until the 1990s. 'I've been living here for the last five decades. There was nothing like that. Myths are just myths,' he said with a smile.

TREASURE: Apart from locals, the relatives and family members of the buried men also visit the cemetery.

Before the Sept 11, 2001 terrorist at-

tacks in the United States, Baqri said that not only family members but also foreigners would visit the site in large numbers, but their numbers had significantly declined in recent years due to security reasons. Arif Hassan, a Karachi-based architect, said the cemetery is an important part of Karachi's history.

"Karachi played an important role in the two world wars as it served as a key supply route to the Eastern Front," Hassan told Anadolu Agency.

"This war memorial sheds light on how and when Karachi was militarised by the British empire and what role this city played in the two world wars."

Baqri treats the site as more than a graveyard. "In the middle of the city, a well-protected Christian cemetery reflects the religious harmony in Pakistani society," he said.

"I being a Muslim take it as an honour to look after this cemetery, which is an important part of the history of our region. 'I'm going to retire in the next few months. I will cherish my association with this site for the rest of my life.'"

GOVT TAKING MEASURES TO PROVIDE RELIEF TO PEOPLE, SAYS BUZDAR

LAHORE
STAFF REPORT

PUNJAB Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar on Thursday said that the government is taking all possible measures to provide relief to common man and no efforts will be spared in this regard.

He said this while talking to lawmakers of Punjab Assembly who called on him in Lahore on Thursday.

The chief minister said that undue in-

crease in the prices of essential items will not be tolerated and the administration should initiate action against the elements responsible for creating artificial price-hike. He said that a Campus of King Edward Medical University will be set up in Muridke.

CM Buzdar also announced to restore 257 non-functional water supply schemes



in Lahore division and other parts of the province and informed that funds have already been allocated for that purpose.

Meanwhile, in a statement issued separately, the chief minister said that the opposition should shun negative politics as its All Parties Conference (APC) "drama" had been badly exposed before the people. He said that 220 million peo-

ple had rejected undemocratic behaviour of the opposition and the corrupt should fully understand that the nation is backing the ongoing accountability drive.

"Prime Minister Imran Khan is waging war against corruption while the opposition is busy in saving their ill-gotten money," he said, adding that the fate of APC is written on the wall for the opposition.

"Only strict accountability of the corrupt can pave way for a prosperous Pakistan," he concluded.

Fighting obesity with a single cup of coffee

ISLAMABAD
ONLINE

Scientists say they have conducted 'the first study in humans to show that something like a cup of coffee can have a direct effect on our brown fat functions.' A simple cup of coffee may hold the key to tackling obesity and diabetes, suggests new research. Brown fat — which people sometimes refer to as "good" fat — helps the body turn nutrients into energy and generate heat. Unlike brown fat, another type of fat that scientists call white or yellow fat results from the excessive storage of calories.

Whereas medical experts associate white fat with obesity and metabolic disorders such as diabetes, brown fat may help people stay lean and maintain a healthy body weight. Some researchers have suggested that prompting the body to turn white fat into brown fat could be a successful way to fight obesity, and studies have focused on specific pathways that could facilitate this fat burning process. Brown fat metabolizes food into energy by activating the so-called uncoupling protein 1 (UCP1), which exists in the mitochondria of brown adipose tissue. Previous studies have linked caffeine consumption with weight loss and higher energy expenditure. However, scientists had not yet studied the link between coffee and UCP1 activation, so a team of researchers from the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom, set out to look into this area. Professor Michael Symonds, from the School of Medicine at the University of Nottingham, is one of the corresponding and lead authors of the study, which appears in the journal *Scientific Reports*. How 1 cup of coffee affects brown fat Prof. Symonds and team carried out both in vitro and in vivo experiments to see the effect of caffeine on brown fat heat generation, or thermogenesis. First, they exposed fat-storing cells, or adipocytes — that they derived from stem cells — to caffeine. They noticed that caffeine exposure raised levels of UCP1 and boosted the cells' metabolism.



IGP assures security of Chinese nationals working on CPEC projects

LAHORE
STAFF REPORT

Inspector General Police Punjab Captain (r) Arif Nawaz Khan said that fool proof security of Chinese professionals who are working on different projects of CPEC across province is the priority of Punjab Police whereas professionally trained force equipped with latest equipment, Special Protection Unit (SPU) is working hard for it. He further said that in addition to DIG SPU, DPOs of relevant districts also regularly visiting the sites to review the security arrangements and this force is provided with fast-moving vehicles, bullet-proof jackets, helmets and other modern equipment so that they can perform their official duties efficiently. He expressed these views during a meeting with Chinese Consul General Long Dingbin at Central Police Office on Thursday. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest along with security of Chinese citizens were discussed. Addl IG Operations Inam Ghani was also present at this occasion.

Could certain gut bacteria protect against food allergy?

ISLAMABAD
ONLINE

New research reinforces the idea that the absence of certain bacteria in the gut can cause food allergy, a condition that affects millions of people. The study also suggests that replenishing key gut bacteria could offer a way to treat food allergy. Scientists at Boston Children's Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital, also in Boston, MA, found that babies and children with food allergies are missing certain species of gut bacteria. When the team gave the missing bacteria to mice, the microbes protected the animals from food allergies. The researchers also mapped the mouse cell and bacteria interactions behind the protective effect. They describe their findings in a recent *Nature Medicine* paper. Previous studies have reached similar conclusions about the links between gut bacteria and food allergy. However, they did not conduct detailed analyses of the interactions at the cellular level. "We identified culturable human-origin bacteria that modulate the immune system to become tolerant to food allergens," says co-senior study author Dr. Lynn Bry, director of the Massachusetts Host-Microbiome Center at Brigham and Women's Hospital. The findings point to a new way to treat food allergy that uses beneficial bacteria to alter the wiring of the immune system. Rather than targeting any particular food allergen, this method could potentially treat all food allergies in one go. Such an approach is very different from oral immunotherapy, in which the aim is to raise the threshold of allergic response through tiny, increasing exposures to the relevant food allergen. "This represents a sea change in our approach to therapeutics for food allergies," Dr. Bry adds.

Sikh yatrees arrive for Ranjeet Singh's 180th death anniversary

LAHORE
APP

Around 500 Indian Sikh yatrees arrived at Wahga railway station on Thursday by a special train to observe the 180th death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh.

Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) Chairman Dr. Amer Ahmad, Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (PSGPC) Pardhan Sardar Tara Singh and

other board officials received them warmly at the railway station.

"Talking to the media after reaching Gurdwara Dera Sahib Lahore, group leader Sardar Randeep Singh said that they were thankful to the government of Pakistan for providing them maximum number of visas.

Other Sikh leaders said that both countries Pakistan and India should make policies which would help establish peace and bring prosperity in the region. "Pakistan is sacred for us

and we love it and we come here with a message of peace and brotherhood," the Sikh leaders said. Sardar Tara Singh welcomed the yatrees and said that the ETPB made the best arrangements for the visitors.

The central ceremony of anniversary of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh will be held at Gurdwara Dera Sahib Lahore on June 29 in which hundreds of Sikh yatrees from all over the world including India and local Sikhs will participate.

Governor assures implementation of minority rights

LAHORE
STAFF REPORT

Punjab Governor Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar met a minority delegation here on Thursday and assured that he would take personal interest to make rules of business of the Hindu Marriage Act 2017 implemented in the province.

The National Lobbying Delegation for Minority Rights, a group composed of several minority members, had a meeting with Sarwar at the Governor House and presented their demands on their personal laws.

The Hindu Marriage Act was enacted in 1949 but since then there were no rules of business made and implemented which is why the Act was still not in force.

The community never had any laws to the governor their marriage and other family laws. Through the Act is legislated in 2017, but due to lack of rule of business, they are still dysfunctional.

The Delegation also presented a request for amendment in Christian Divorce Act 1869 and Christian Divorce Act 1872. These laws have never been amended since

their enactment during British rule. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has several times assured the Christian community that their personal laws will be overhauled.

Since the promulgation of the 18th Constitutional Amendment, religious minorities have become a minority subject.

Under Article 144 of Constitution, however, a provincial assembly can pass a resolution to delegate powers to the federation to legislate on such provincial matters. Chaudhary Sarwar assured the Delegation that he would person-

ally interest to have a resolution passed by the Punjab Assembly in favor of amendments in the Christian personal laws.

The Delegation was comprised of Hyderabad based lawyer M. Parkash Mehtani, rights activist Krishan Sharma from Mithi, legal expert Purbhu Satyami, Dr. Ashothama Lohano from Batin, rights activist Haroon Sarab Dayal from Peshawar, Kinnard College University lecturer Ayra Inderyas, rights lawyer Atif Jameel and politician Habkook Gill from Faisalabad and Lahore-based journalist Asif Aqeel.

Scientists track Parkinson's journey from gut to brain in mice

ISLAMABAD
ONLINE

The theory that Parkinson's disease can start in the gut has gained further support in a recent study in mice. Scientists prompted toxic protein to form in the gut and tracked each step of its journey to the brain via the vagus nerve.

A new mouse model offers precious insights into how Parkinson's affects the brain. Researchers at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, in Baltimore, MD, conducted their investigation in a new mouse model of Parkinson's disease.

The new model replicates a number of early and late signs and symptoms of Parkinson's disease, including some that are not movement-related. The team found that they could get the mice to develop these features by injecting their guts with "preformed fibrils" of alpha-synuclein, the protein that forms toxic clumps in the brains of people with Parkinson's disease.

A paper that appears in the journal *Neuron* describes the mouse model and the study findings.

"Since this model starts in the gut," says co-senior study author Ted M. Dawson, who is a professor of

neurology at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, "one can use it [to] study the full spectrum and time course of the pathogenesis of Parkinson's disease."

He explains that such a model could allow researchers to test ways to halt Parkinson's at different stages, from before symptoms emerge to full-blown disease. Parkinson's, the gut, and alpha-synuclein Parkinson's is a disease that progressively destroys brain tissue. It kills brain cells that make a chemical messenger called dopamine that helps with motor function, or movement control.

A hallmark of Parkinson's disease is the clumping of badly-folded versions of alpha-synuclein protein in the affected regions of the brain. Pathologists have observed these clumps in post-mortem brain exams of people with Parkinson's disease.

The main motor symptoms of Parkinson's disease include movement that is slow, stiffness, rigidity, tremor, and balance problems. Difficulties with swallowing and speaking can also occur.

Symptoms unrelated to motor function can also arise in Parkinson's disease.

WHY WAR WITH IRAN ISN'T IN THE UNITED STATES' INTERESTS



GEOPOLITICAL FUTURES
KANDER SNYDER

THE US-Iran standoff continues to evolve quickly, yet the blow-by-blow commentary covering tanker attacks, a downed drone, and reversed orders for airstrikes from the White House fails to consider the strategic logic behind an intervention, if in fact the Trump administration decides to intervene. With that in mind, it's worth taking a moment to imagine what a war between the two would actually look like.

By now, the U.S. should have learned a thing or two from the Vietnam and Iraq wars. Distant foreign conflicts are difficult to win without a well-defined case for what success looks like and an overwhelming military commitment, the kind the American public is usually unwilling to provide unless faced with a massive and immediate threat. Small-scale engagements accomplish little and are instead more likely to evolve into larger conflicts. Installing foreign governments in the American image is more difficult, costly, time-consuming and even deadly than leaders are likely to claim. Backing a local proxy is often unpalatable for the country's sense of ethics,

but U.S. adversaries often have no such qualms. Those proxies are often an ineffective substitute for a U.S. military presence when it comes to pursuing U.S. objectives. And without a substantial, long-term commitment of U.S. forces, such wars are more likely to open a power vacuum when the U.S. withdraws. The result: a collapsed government, an invasion by a neighbor, a revolution that creates new and uncertain structures – or some combination of these. In fact, the U.S. has had few true victories in the wars it has fought since World War II.

Consider the U.S. government's options, then, for a war with Iran. If the U.S. chooses a kinetic response, the first and most likely option would be a limited strike, similar in scale to or perhaps somewhat greater than the strikes on Syria that the Trump administration ordered on Syria in April 2017 and 2018. But Iran is not Syria. Iran has a sophisticated air defense infrastructure and plenty of air denial capability, increasing the chance of U.S. casualties. Further, a limited air strike probably wouldn't accomplish anything meaningful. It might take out a handful of radar and air defense installations, sending a political signal but affecting in no real way the strategic reality on the ground. The only time U.S. air power alone has significantly shifted the reality on the ground was in Kosovo, but Iran today is far more powerful than Serbia in 1999.

Instead, a limited strike has a good chance of working against US interests. Iran's economy is hurting, and its society appears more divided as citizens continue to grow frustrated with the government. The U.S. has deployed sanctions as a strategy to hobble the economy enough to create social pressure on Tehran, forcing the government to spend less on its defenses and its funding of militias in Syria and Iraq. And so far, they've been effective. If the U.S. sustained this tactic, over time Iran's domestic situation

would worsen, and its citizenry would be more likely to blame its leadership for their problems. And that would likely intensify the divisions within the government that are already emerging, resulting in either a more Western-friendly government or one dominated by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Even limited U.S. airstrikes, however, would increase the probability of the IRGC consolidating power. Where sanctions may help create division, an attack would unite Iran's hard-liners and reformers against the U.S. That unity would likely occur under the aegis of the hard-liners who have been warning all along that this day would come if Iran were foolish enough to trust the U.S. As the most powerful entity in the country, the IRGC would probably take over, and do so with popular support.

Ground force is a less likely choice for the U.S., even with limited objectives (like eliminating specific military equipment or securing passage through the Strait of Hormuz). But it would be more likely to achieve what the U.S. really wants: for Iran to recall its foreign militias so that they will defend the home front. But when a military force is rapidly removed without a replacement ready to take its place, it creates a power vacuum and, therefore, an opportunity for others to fill the void. In this case – the Islamic State and other jihadist groups. Timing matters too. The pace at which Iran withdraws its militias from Syria and Iraq, states that are already precariously fragile, will create an outsized risk to violently alter the regional balance of power.

If the Islamic State moves back into the space vacated by Iran, it would be the U.S. that would have to again deal with this problem, which would require reoccupying parts of Iraq while fighting Iran. That, in turn, would likely entail support from Syrian and Iraqi Kurdish forces, which would again put pressure on U.S.-Turkey relations. But the Syrian Kurds may

not see a long-term alliance with the U.S. as in its best interest after the U.S. threatened to leave them high and dry in December 2018. They could instead seek out a political resolution with Damascus, backed by Russia, that would protect them from Turkey. It's possible that if the Islamic State re-emerged, Russia could step in to back Kurdish groups such as the Syrian Democratic Forces to fight back. But that would mean the U.S. would be depending on Russian assistance to cover its western flank, and in exchange for such cooperation Russia would likely demand U.S. concessions in places like Ukraine. In short, going all-in with Iran would require either a large-scale U.S. occupation or dependence on Russia in Syria and Iraq to prevent the Islamic State from coming back. Neither of those are appealing options for Washington.

If it's regime change that the U.S. is after in Iran, the risks are even greater. The fallout would look much like that of the second Iraq war, but on a far greater scale. Installing a pro-American regime isn't easy, but it can easily fail. The U.S. would have to commit to an indefinite occupation of Iran or again risk the emergence of a power vacuum. And it would still have to deal with the rest of the Middle East. In the best-case scenario, the U.S. would install a new head of government while facing a lengthy insurgency, which would likely include the vestiges of the IRGC and its heavy weaponry. After a long, costly occupation, the U.S. would withdraw, leaving Iran's leaders to face opposition on their own. The half-life of U.S.-installed leaders in the Middle East is not long – just ask the shah of Iran.

Whether limited airstrikes or a full-scale invasion, a U.S. military confrontation with Iran would create more problems for the U.S. than it solves. As barbs are traded on the international stage, it's these kinds of strategic considerations that Washington will need to consider before going to war.

Look beyond radicalisation



NEW STATESMAN
SARAH MANAVIS

The culture of the internet and the world of devout religious faith are two areas that, for outsiders, can be immediately challenging – they are rife with lingo, rituals and historically layered rites of passage. In his debut book *Follow Me, Akhi: The Online World of British Muslims*, the journalist Hussein Keshvani attempts to unpick these two cultures and their intersection.

The book has been billed as explaining how radicalisation happens in online Muslim communities; the title and introduction both draw on a message Keshvani received encouraging him to leave his Western life to join Islamic State. However, Keshvani spends far more time discussing how radical spaces can be reclaimed from extremism and the ways in which British Muslims (a majority of whom are below the age of 25) are creatively using the internet to drive people to their faith. *Tales of meme communities, Muslim Tinder, Islamic Instapets and Muslim gamers* are just a handful of the colourful stories told in *Follow Me, Akhi*.

Particularly compelling is the way that Keshvani portrays Islam's biggest online haters, humanising the people behind the social media accounts that post dehumanising messages about Muslims. In a section on Islamophobia and the alt-right, Keshvani visits the home of one of these anonymous Twitter users, Phil, who had spent months harassing Keshvani with hate speech on the platform. Keshvani paints the picture of a sad man, living in untidy accommodation, recently divorced. It's a bracing glimpse of the real lives that lurk behind the abusive accounts we see online.

Though Keshvani is welcomed warmly into Phil's home, his host is unapologetic and unrepentant about his behaviour. Reminding the reader that Phil is still sending hundreds of messages of hate speech every

MUSLIMS ARE CREATIVELY USING THE WEB TO ALLOW THEIR FAITH TO FLOURISH

month, Keshvani ends the section with Phil's response to a tweet from Sadiq Khan announcing plans to tackle hate crime in London: "I've got a meme for this," Phil sniggered, showing me a picture of a poorly drawn caricature of Khan's head transplanted on to the body of a pig, the Arabic word *haram* written on its side. Mayor Khan wants to ban this," Phil tweeted. "Would be a shame if it got retweeted."

Through such stories Keshvani makes it clear that the online world of Muslims is not only a place of community but also of constant abuse from radicalised white people.

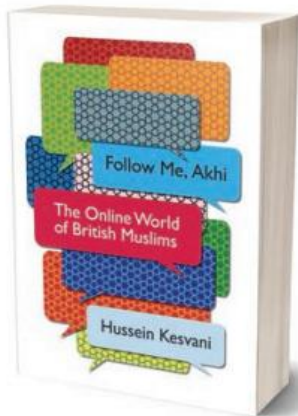
The book encourages us to think about the impact of the internet not merely in commercial and generational terms. It can also encourage faith to flourish. Keshvani shows how YouTube and Instagram have helped Muslims become closer to their religion: the ability to access more teachings and a greater number of imams has made Islam more relatable than traditional mosque environments. He introduces us to Facebook groups and gamer forums that have created safe spaces for LGBT+ and black Muslims. And he explains how Tumblr has become a haven for Muslim

meaning in his life, until he decided to take up arms and fight for Islamic State.) Keshvani writes that many Muslims say they don't want to "air their dirty laundry", fearing they may add to the bad reputation that Islam gets in the West. But he handles these issues delicately and artfully, demonstrating that, despite the actions of a few misguided people, British Muslims are in the main using the internet to create a safer world for themselves.

Occasionally the writing and editing make the book a little bit hard to follow: keeping track of Arabic terms for religious rituals and the various names of online spaces can prove difficult. Overall, though, *Follow Me, Akhi* is deeply researched, surprising and considerate. It portrays the online world of British Muslims as diverse, rich and fraught – but above all else innovative, exciting and criminally under-reported.

Follow Me, Akhi: The Online World of British Muslims by Hussein Keshvani, C Hurst & Co, 206pp, £12.99.

Sarah Manavis is the New Statesman's tech and digital culture writer.



For a more peaceful vision of the future, look to the Olympics



L A TIMES
HENRY KISSINGER

Humanity has never lived under a single unified world order. When it has been maintained at all, order has been achieved only within the shifting bounds of limited regions, and even then there have been inevitable tensions and clashes.

But one bright spot in global relations has endured for more than a century: the Olympic Games. Under the auspices of the Games, the nations of the world come together despite the differences in culture and history that define their diverse systems. In the peaceful competition of the Olympics, the achievement of one nation encourages the efforts of others, spurring all to new heights in human excellence.

When Baron Pierre de Coubertin, a French educator and historian, revived the ancient Olympic tradition in 1894, his political world was dominated by suspicion. The map of Europe had been redrawn and psychological adjustments to the change were still underway. Imperial ambitions were causing dislocation and conflict around the world, and stability on the continent, though attained for the time being, felt — and was — impermanent. But De Coubertin managed to transcend this historical moment with a vision of amity and trust, inspired by a ritual originating from ancient Greece, a place and time still more turbulent than his own.

That animating spirit of international confidence has proved capable of withstanding periods of social division, political exhaustion, and total upheaval. This year, we celebrate the 125th anniversary of the International Olympic Committee and the 25th anniversary of the first United Nations' Olympic Truce, an international resolution of armistice that reiterates our common commitment to the Games' original purpose: "peace through sport." I have now lived through 46 Olympic Games, many of which I have had the privilege of attending in person. I have shared the pleasure with my children and grandchildren. Each iteration of the Games over the years has had its own significance, informed by the challenges and the triumphs of the contemporary moment.

Throughout its history, the Olympics has demonstrated its ability to promote human understanding even where political agreement has proved elusive. There have been many instances in which the Games exercised this capacity, perhaps the most extraordinary of which were the eight years from 1956 to 1964, in which East and West Germans competed as a single team even as the Cold War reached its climax and the world was brought to the brink of nuclear war.

The Games have also served as a showcase of global progress toward De Coubertin's initial aim of comity between peoples. The opening ceremony of the 1992 Games was one such occasion. On the stadium floor in Barcelona that July night, newly independent nations of Central Europe made their proud Olympic debut. The Germans again entered under one flag. South Africa, emerging from the darkness of apartheid, returned to the Games after a three-decade absence. The most recent example was the joint march of the teams of the two Koreas at the opening ceremony of the Winter Games in 2018.

At times, the Olympics have been marred by violence, from the murder of Israeli athletes to the transformation, post-Olympics, of Sarajevo's venues into killing fields during the Bosnian War. But the world's checked history does not preclude its improvement, nor does it detract from the inherent value of the Olympic spirit.

The Olympic Games offer a glimpse of a wider truth: The presence of competition does not necessitate the advent of conflict. The Games demonstrate our shared capacity to make commonality, and not difference, and, in so doing, opens the possibility of compartmentalizing our national and regional interests, contending with each other in one area while collaborating in another.

Of course, the Games alone cannot prevent wars or end conflicts. But, by providing a framework in which competition and cooperation coexist, the Olympics may be taken as inspiration in an international search for understanding through and alongside contestation.

The countries of the world are today inextricably linked. They will continue to affect each other and, in some places, compete. Some see this as a challenge but the Olympic Games can be a valuable symbol of how to compete in a peaceful way. In my view, the Games present a lens in which to look beyond this moment in history and focus on building bonds that enhance mutual understanding, promote peace, and drive our shared pursuit of the many forms of human greatness.

Henry Kissinger, an honour member of the International Olympic Committee, is a former U.S. secretary of State.

IRAN ON COURSE TO EXCEED NUCLEAR PACT LIMIT WITHIN DAYS

VIENNA/TOKYO
AGENCIES

IRAN is on course to breach a threshold in its nuclear agreement with world powers within days by accumulating more enriched uranium than permitted, although it has not done so yet, diplomats said, citing the latest data from U.N. inspectors.

France, one of the European powers caught in the middle in an escalating confrontation between Washington and Tehran, said it would ask U.S. President Donald Trump to suspend some sanctions on Iran to allow negotiations to defuse the crisis.

A week after Trump called off air strikes on Iran minutes before impact, world leaders are trying to pull the two countries back from the brink, warning that a mistake on either side could lead to war.

"I want to convince Trump that it is in his interest to re-open a negotiation process (and) go back on certain sanctions to give negotiations a chance," French President Emmanuel Macron said in Japan, where he is due to meet Trump on the sidelines of a summit in coming days.

A move by Tehran that clearly breached its 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers would transform the diplomatic landscape and probably force European countries to take sides.



Macron said he had two priorities: de-escalating military tension and keeping Iran from violating the accord, which European countries still hope to save even though Trump ignored their advice and quit it last year.

The latest data from U.N. inspectors suggested Iran had not yet violated the deal on Thursday, despite having named it as a day when it might do so.

"They haven't reached the limit... It's more likely to be at the weekend if they do it," said one diplomat in Vienna, headquarters of the U.N. nuclear agency IAEA, on condition of anonymity.

'OBLITERATION': The United States withdrew from the pact last year under which Iran accepted curbs on its nuclear program in return for access to international trade. Iran has said it wants to abide by the agreement but cannot do so indefinitely as new U.S. sanctions mean it is receiving none of the benefits.

The escalating crisis has put the United States in the position of demanding its European allies enforce Iranian compliance with an accord Washington itself rejects.

The United States sharply tightened its sanctions last month, ordering all

countries to halt purchases of Iranian oil, the main source of revenue to feed Iran's 80 million people.

Trump's aborted air strikes last week were the culmination of weeks of heightened military tension. Washington accused Iran of being behind attacks on ships in the Gulf, which it denies.

Last week Iran shot down a U.S. drone it said was in its air space. The United States said it was in international skies.

Since the aborted air strikes last week there have been no major incidents, but rhetoric on both sides has become menacing.

This week Trump threatened Iran's "obliteration" if it attacked U.S. interests while Rouhani, typically the mild-mannered face of the Tehran government, called White House policy "mentally retarded". Trump later said he hoped to avoid war, which would be short and not involve boots on the ground.

IRANIAN RESPONSE: In the latest volley in the war of words, Iran's parliament speaker Ali Larijani said the downing of the U.S. drone had taught Washington the cost of violating Iranian air space.

"Iran's reaction will be stronger if they repeat their mistake of violating our borders," Iran's Tasnim news agency quoted Larijani as saying.

The Trump administration says its ultimate goal is to force Iran back to the

Zarif says 'short war' with Iran is an illusion

DUBAI
AGENCIES

Iran's foreign minister said on Twitter on Thursday that U.S. President Donald Trump's view that a conflict with Iran would be a "short war" was an illusion and that his threat of "obliteration" amounted to threatening "genocide". "Obliteration=genocide=war crime," Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Twitter. "Short war" with Iran is an illusion," Trump said on Wednesday he was "not talking boots on the ground" should he take military action against Iran, adding that "I'm just saying if something would happen, it wouldn't last very long." He threatened on Tuesday to obliterate parts of Iran if it attacked "anything American".

table for negotiations. It argues that the 2015 deal, negotiated under Trump's predecessor Barack Obama, was too weak because it is not permanent and does not cover non-nuclear issues, such as Iran's missile program and regional behavior.

Iran says it cannot negotiate further unless the United States observes the existing agreement and lifts sanctions.

Tunisian president hospitalised 'in severe health crisis'

TUNIS
AGENCIES

Tunisia's 92-year-old president, Beji Caid Essebsi, a major player in the country's transition to democracy since 2011, was taken to a military hospital on Thursday after suffering a "severe health crisis", the presidency said.

One of his advisers told Reuters he was in a "very critical" condition but was alive, denying media reports he had died.

No more details were immediately available. Essebsi was hospitalized last week as well, for what the presidency described as non-serious treatment.

Essebsi has been a prominent figure in Tunisia since the overthrow of Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali in 2011, which was followed by uprisings against autocratic leaders across the



Middle East, including in nearby Libya and Egypt.

Tunisia set itself on a path to democracy without much of the violence seen elsewhere, although it has been the target of militant Islamists over the years.

One dead, several hurt in suicide attacks in Tunisian capital

TUNIS
AGENCIES

Two suicide bombers blew themselves up in separate attacks on police in the Tunisian capital on Thursday, killing one police officer and wounding several other people, the government said.

It was not immediately known who was behind the attacks, which come months before an election and at the peak of a tourist season in which Tunisia is hoping for a record number of visitors.

Separately on Thursday, 92-year-old President Beji Caid Essebsi was taken to a military hospital after suffering a "severe health crisis", the presidency said.

The first suicide bomber targeted a police patrol in Charles de Gaulle Street in central Tunis. One police officer was killed and at least one other as well as three civilians

were wounded, the Interior Ministry said.

Shortly afterwards, a second suicide bomber blew himself up near a police station in al-Gorjani district. Four people were wounded, the Interior Ministry said.

Heavily armed police cordoned off the locations of the attacks, one of which was about 200 meters away from the French embassy. Reuters witnesses saw people rushing away from the scene, while the body of one suicide bomber lay on the ground. Ambulance cars arrived.

"I was shopping with my daughter and we heard a big explosion. We saw the body of the terrorist lying on the ground near a police vehicle after he blew himself up," said a man who gave his name only as Mohamed.

Interior Ministry spokesman Sofian Zaak said the attackers had not yet been identified, and he called on the public to show strength and not panic.

People appeared to heed that message: Within minutes of the attacks, they could be seen sitting as usual in cafes up and down Habib Bourghiba, the main street.

In a show of more open defiance, some 300 people gathered on the same street and held up pamphlets saying: "We do not fear terror, Tunisia is no place for terrorism." They chanted the national anthem and slogans praising the security forces.

Tunisia has been battling militant groups operating in remote areas near the border with Algeria since an uprising overthrew autocratic leader Zine Abidine Ben Ali in 2011. High unemployment has also stoked unrest in recent years. Last October, a woman blew herself up in the center of the capital Tunis, wounding 15 people including 10 police officers in an explosion that broke a long period of calm after dozens had died in militant attacks in 2015.

Trump peace plan conference is blip on Israel's radar as political, Iran crises swirl

JERUSALEM
AGENCIES

A U.S.-led conference in Bahrain designed to drum up investment in the Palestinian economy and pave a path to peace with Israel has gone largely unremarked by Israelis preoccupied with a political crisis and their arch-foe Iran.

Palestinians, who view the Trump administration as biased towards Israel, boycotted this week's meeting in Manama.

It was also held without an official Israeli delegation. Organizers said privately this was due to worry about a further dent to the event's credibility after an election in Israel in April election failed to produce a new coalition government.

With Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu facing proliferating challengers in a new election due in September, and beset by corruption scandals, the hazier-than-ever peacemaking horizon with the Palesti-

tinians drew scant discussion in Israeli media. Economy Minister Eli Cohen went as far as to suggest that Bahrain may have closed the door on further diplomacy.

"We saw that, even in an economic conference where the Palestinians were meant to come and get money, to come and get tools and inducements, to come and develop their economy, they did not come," he told Israel's Reshet 13 TV. "We see, really, that they do not want a peace accord. They simply don't want us here... Again, the Palestinians' true face has been exposed."

The Palestinians, who have shunned the United States since it recognized disputed Jerusalem as Israel's capital in late 2017, suspected the conference sought to lure them into surrendering their statehood goal in return for global financial relief.

It is not clear whether a peace plan promised by the Trump administration will call for a "two-state solution" sought by the Palestinian Authority and backed interna-



tionally, which involves creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Netanyahu voiced conditional accept-

ance in 2009 of a future demilitarized Palestinian state. He has since said its creation would not happen on his watch and

that he plans to annex some Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank, communities many countries view as illegal. Stalled since 2014, peacemaking has been on a backburner for some Israelis, while others feel a need to work for coexistence.

"This is a matter that's important to me. We need an end to this situation," said Jerusalem chief Israel Bachar, 45.

"It's a little odd that the Americans held this (Bahrain) conference without convening the two main parties involved. I don't think it's helpful to try to impose things from outside," Netanyahu described the Bahrain gathering as part of a U.S. effort "to bring about a better future and solve the region's problems".

Two days before it opened, he toured the strategic Jordan Valley, the easternmost part of the West Bank that borders Jordan, with U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton and said Israel must retain a presence there in any peace deal.

APC and the government

The opposition at bay

AFTER being hounded for nearly 11 months, opposition parties got together on Wednesday to evolve a joint strategy to take on the government. All were resentful of the ongoing witch hunting of government opponents. They also condemned the way government policies were making the life of practically every section of society miserable. They maintained that the elections were engineered to install Imran Khan as Prime Minister. The combined opposition decided to observe July 25 as a 'black day'. It remains to be seen if the opposition can organize an impressive show.

Some of the opposition members advised extreme steps to create a crisis-like situation leading to fresh elections. Others however advocated a gradual building of pressure. The suggestion that the opposition parliamentarians tender mass resignations and the workers of the parties lock down the federal capital were rejected as being premature. Instead the APC decided to undertake the exposure of the government's policies both inside and outside Parliament. The opposition will try to remove the pro-administration Senate Chairman, albeit through legal and constitutional ways.

To enhance the sphere of its political influence, the combined opposition decided to raise some of the social issues the government has consistently ignored. These include forced disappearances and arbitrary detentions. It called for the production orders of the two Waziristan MNAs currently under detention and demanded forming a parliamentary committee on Waziristan so that all facts can be laid before the nation. There was also an agreement to call for legislation against the torture of prisoners and for detention centres in the tribal areas to be converted into regular jails. The APC demanded open courts to decide cases against the prisoners. The APC was opposed to giving any role to the institutions in politics. The gathering also called for the removal of unannounced restrictions and censorship of the media besides legislation ensuring protection of the journalists.

There is a need on the part of the government to abandon its rigid and unwavering stand against the opposition that can only turn the government into a hostage to unscrupulous allies. The PTI administration can have a more peaceful tenure if it develops normal working relations with the opposition.

The rupee goes on falling

Is there a target level?

THE government seems unable to arrest the fall of the rupee. It hit Rs163 to the dollar on Wednesday, a precipitate loss of Rs6 that came after remaining at Rs157 for about a week in the interbank market. Even that was a high level, for it had been at about Rs121 last May, so the decline since then was about 35 percent. This continuous fall has covered an IMF agreement which has not yet been approved by the IMF Board. The agreement was followed by the change of the State Bank Governor, the new appointee being the former IMF Country head in Egypt. That new Governor said that the free float could not be introduced in Pakistan, and also met Prime Minister Imran Khan the day of the precipitate fall.

There was some pressure on the forex market, because there was some recent repayment of debt, which meant that the State Bank had reason to pick up dollars from the open market, but that was not the reason for the fall. The fact that commercial banks had bought heavily indicated that speculative pressure was building up on the rupee. That is not a good sign, especially when forex reserves are small enough to prevent the State Bank from intervening in the market, which is the so-called managed float.

The State Bank does have much room to manoeuvre, because the current account deficit in the financial year closing at the end of the month would be \$13 billion, as opposed to \$19.9 billion the year before. However, all the money obtained from friendly countries, like China, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, cannot be spent by flooding the market with dollars to keep the rupee stable. The government may have agreed with the IMF to a rate for the dollar, but the danger which seems to threaten is that it may slide below that rate because of speculation. The only way to overcome the trade and current account deficits would be to increase exports. So far, devaluing the rupee has not done the trick, with the associated cost of making prices of imported goods like fuel and medicines skyrocketing. It is more than time for the government to look for out-of-the-box solutions. Such solutions do not lie with either the IMF or its nominees.

PAKISTAN TODAY

Dedicated to the legacy of the late Hameed Nizami

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One dies, one lives

Nawaz and Morsi have much in common while being very different

At Penpoint

M.A. NIAZI

THE death of Mohamed Morsi in dramatic fashion, after having a heart attack in open court, moved Maryam Nawaz Sharif to say defiantly that her father Mian Nawaz Sharif was no Morsi, only drew attention to the similarities between the two leaders, and their two countries.

There are major similarities between Egypt and Pakistan. Both were the centres of ancient civilizations, respectively the Pharaonic and the Indus Valley. This happened long before either area converted to Islam. And both remain centred around rivers, the Nile in the case of Egypt and the Indus for Pakistan. Both were under British rule, out of which both emerged around the same time. Both are leading cotton growers. While both are Muslim, only Egypt was Arabised. Egypt was conquered for Islam from the Byzantine Empire by an Arab army, while Pakistan was conquered by Mahmud of Ghazni, and its people were converted by Turkish holy men.

One of the major similarities has been the prominence of their militaries. Both are large and have not just a prominent role in politics, but the respective economies. Economics provides a recent connection, for Egypt's IMF Representative was a US-trained Pakistani, who was only recently tapped to become Governor of Pakistan's central bank. Both militaries have had a perennial enemy, which seems to justify their right to rule. In Egypt's case it was Israel, though since the 1977 Camp David Accords that has not been the case, and in Pakistan's India, and there too the USA is doing its best to bring about a reconciliation.

Politically, Mian Nawaz and Morsi are not identical, but share similarities, starting with their ages. Nawaz at 69 is actually two years older than Morsi, who was 67. Nawaz is neither an academic nor an intellectual (though he has a law degree); Morsi was an engineer with a Ph.D. from California who was once employed by NASA for a short time. He had been convicted on one charge of espionage for Qatar, and was

being tried on another. Mian Nawaz was ousted for corruption, there was no such allegation against Morsi. There was also a vast difference between their tenures: Nawaz had first held office in 1981, and had first been Prime Minister in 1990, being in his third tenure when removed in 2017. Morsi was elected President in 2012, his only previous office being as an ordinary member of the People's Assembly from 2000 to 2005, and was overthrown in 2013.

Both were right-wing, though Mian Nawaz was never as close to the Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan as Morsi was to the Ikhwanul Muslimine (Muslim Brotherhood). While the Jamaat and the Ikhwan have enjoyed friendly relations, the Jamaat has not been as successful electorally. It was a little late, for while the Ikhwan cooperated with Naguib and Nasser in their 1952 coup (after the Ikhwan founder Hassan Al-Banna was assassinated by government intelligence), the Jamaat did not cooperate with the Ayub Martial Law.

The Jamaat and the Ikhwan have another similarity: they were both active in the Afghan jihad. Osama bin Laden's successor as head of Al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian ophthalmologist who had been an Ikhwan member from his school days. Mian Nawaz has no record of any association with the Jamaat except for its inclusion in the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad from 1988 to 1993, under his Presidency. In fact, his electoral career began in 1985 with him defeating the Jamaat Lahore Amir, Asad Gilani, for the National Assembly seat he had won along with his provincial seat. An easy means of reminder would be that Mian Nawaz is clean-shaven, while Morsi sported a beard.

Morsi was overthrown by the man he had elevated to be head of the military, as Defence Minister, Field Marshal Abdul Fattah Sisi. Mian Nawaz was overthrown in 1999 by the man he had appointed COAS, Gen Pervez Musharraf. Mian Nawaz was lucky enough to come back to power, and get another chance to appoint a COAS.

It should be remembered that Mian Nawaz does have a history of heart disease, including a quadruple bypass, not to forget that his father also had heart disease. On the other hand, while Morsi did not have any history, falling into that

category of heart patients for whom the first symptom of heart disease was a fatal heart attack. However, he did have some predisposing factors known: both high blood pressure and diabetes. He also had a benign brain tumour and seizures on the left side of his face. A pain he had suffered in the left arm was apparently not examined seriously enough, or else his heart disease would have been detected.

It is perhaps interesting that Mian Nawaz and Morsi both provide a commentary on civilian versus military medicine. Nawaz's attempt to try General Musharraf for high treason failed, not least because he holed up in the Armed Forces Institute of Cardiology instead of appearing in court (which he had to do eventually). Morsi's tenure was dominated by the trial of his predecessor, Hosni Mubarak, the air force chief who became President because he was Anwar Sadat's Vice-President, and who ruled for almost 30 years. Mubarak is still alive, though he had been tried while lying in the dock in a hospital bed, at 91 a tribute to the system of medicine which treats him.

One major difference between the two men is that Mian Nawaz's family (brother, daughter and nephew) are in politics, but not Morsi's. Morsi was brought into prominence by the Ikhwan, and after his overthrow, his political legacy reverted to his party. Nawaz's daughter's statement, that he was no Morsi, has received a blow by the rejection of his bail application by the Islamabad High Court, which he had made on medical grounds. While his family is dissatisfied by both his health and his treatment, no foreign rights group has warned of anything, as was the case with Morsi. However, it should not be forgotten that the lives of us all, Morsi and Nawaz, are in the hands of the Almighty, and while Maryam's statement is a filial wish, it cannot be relied on.

Morsi's death in court comes after the 2018 election where Field Marshal Sisi won 97 percent of the vote on turnout of 41 percent. Mian Nawaz on the other hand still remains relevant to Pakistani politics in a way Morsi was not to the Egyptians.

M.A. Niazi is a member of the staff.

Sehat Insaf Card

Relief for the poor

HINA RIAZ

HEALTH is as a fundamental human right. For a nation to prosper, everyone must have access to quality healthcare. Healthy people make a healthy nation, good health allows children to learn and adults to earn, and play their role in the social and economic development of a country.

In the developing countries, the health budget is considered as an investment instead of an expenditure. The developed countries have ensured provision of healthcare for all under the blanket of the health insurance system; the expenses of which are borne by either the government or social security departments.

In Pakistan, people are afraid of falling ill; accounting less for the disease and more for the financial burden it brings. The patient's family has to face financial consequences in addition. Unexpected illness drags the poor into the pit of borrowing, forcing them assets sell out and spend lifetime savings.

The provision of quality healthcare to the public is the foremost responsibility of the state. Fortunately, Punjab has a Health Minister who was a top medical professional. Dr. Yasmin Raashid has correctly measured the pulse of healthcare service delivery and introduced Sehat Insaf Card to transform the existing healthcare system.

Approximately 7.2 million families consisting of 32 million people below the poverty line will benefit initially. Anyone earning less than \$2 (Rs 300) per day will be entitled to benefit. The scheme covers approximately 30 percent of the population of Punjab at present with a scope to cover the entire population in the next few years.

Initially, the scheme has been announced only for the marginalized. Therefore, the data of National Socio Economic Registry (NSER) has been utilized for registration of deserving people; which is further verified by NADRA for

transparency.

The Sehat Insaf Card provides comprehensive cover to beneficiaries, and holders will be entitled to free-of-cost hospitalization, emergency services, in-patient services (all medical and surgical cases), fractures/injuries, referral transportation, maternity services and free follow-ups. In addition to the secondary care services, eight major diseases will be also covered under priority cover package, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes mellitus, burns and road traffic accidents, last-stage renal diseases and dialysis, chronic diseases (TB, Hep A/B/C, HIV, chronic liver disease), organ failure, oncology and neurosurgical services.

The card holder may get treatment worth up to Rs 720,000 annually. That Rs 720,000 can be further topped up if needed. If a card holder or his family member gets any major disease which is expensive, then the treatment won't be stopped due to exhaustion of insurance amount, but the government can provide a further Rs 360,000 per family per annum and get the treatment completed.

Apart from the medical facilities, the Card provides support in transportation also. The transportation cost of Rs 1,000 will be paid to per family per visit. Another valued feature is the provision of burial support. If a patient dies while admitted, burial support of Rs 10,000 will be paid to the bereaved family.

Another feature is the inclusion of both public and private hospitals on the panel list. Before this scheme the poor could not even imagine going to private hospitals, but now they can confidently walk into these hospitals and avail treatment. To ensure quality treatment, hospitals with adequate medical facilities have been taken on the panel. 111 hospitals are empaneled till now.

The Sehat Insaf Card will improve service delivery in public sector hospitals. As the treatment in government hospitals is either free or low-cost, the patient load is immense. With a lot of patients, these hospitals fail to provide adequate services which results in referrals and complaints. The Sehat Insaf Card has unlocked choices for the public, as they can opt for any empaneled hospital, government or private. The

inclusion of private hospitals will reduce the burden on public sector hospitals and this will result in an inevitable improvement of quality.

The implementation of this scheme has been started. In the first phase, Sehat Insaf Cards have been introduced in 23 districts, but the project will soon be extended to all 36 districts. The distribution of Sehat Insaf Cards under the Sehat Sahulat Program is a great initiative. Pakistan has not seen such schemes at this scale. Now people with low incomes won't be deprived of treatment.

The facility of Sehat Insaf Card is by no means less than the health insurance provided in developed countries. Treatment will not be denied to any patients for lack of money. It will be provided by the government.

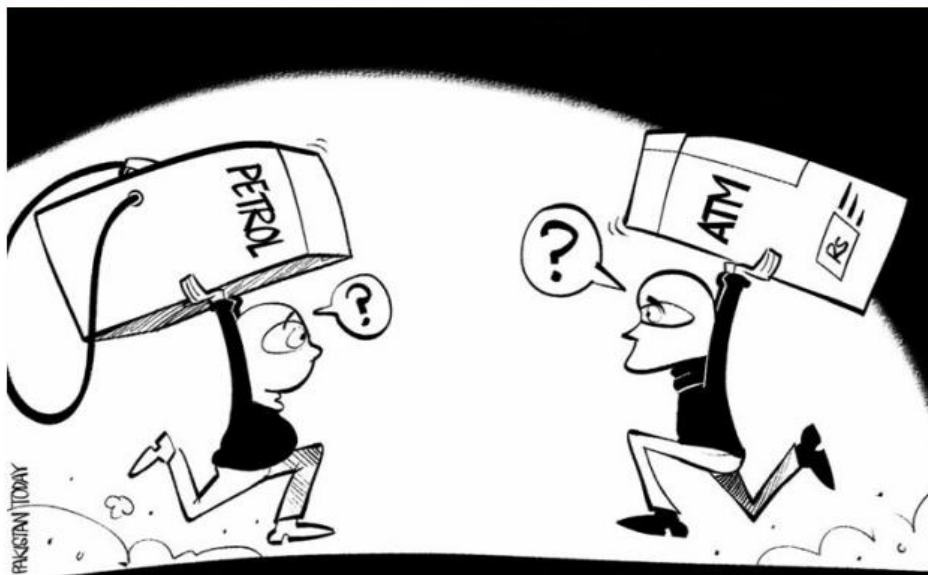
The federal government has launched Sehat Insaf Card scheme in the country. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had introduced Sehat Insaf Card scheme in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during its last term. The implementation of health cards garnered widespread success there previously and now this facility is being provided to the poor population of Punjab also.

The Sehat Insaf Card is going to be a game changer in the health sector of Punjab. It will put an end to the suffering of poor and marginalized people by allowing them to get timely treatment in standard hospitals with dignity. The poor people who used to struggle for the treatment of their dear ones won't have to beg in front of anyone, no one will have to trade their self-esteem, and no mother will have to sell the assets of the home to treat her child. The poor will have equal access to the health facilities.

With a sense of security, people will have peace of mind that the well-being of their families is taken care of. Healthy people will shape a healthy society which will boost financial and social activities. The country will progress according to Prime Minister Imran Khan's vision. He is optimistic about gaining Pakistan a dignified place in the world. He envisions a new Pakistan where justice is for all, where health is for all. A Pakistan liberated from poverty, disease, unemployment and illiteracy.

Let us keep our fingers crossed that one day Pakistan will achieve the dream of quality healthcare for all. Sehat Insaf Card is only the first step, albeit giant one, towards this goal.

Hina Riaz is a freelance columnist.



Cyber war in the US-Iran escalation

► The current conflict may depend on cyber war

ZAHEEMA IQBAL AND HAMMAAD SALIK

US-IRAN tensions have escalated since the withdrawal of the USA from the Iran nuclear deal. This resulted in harsh sanctions exacerbating the sharp decline of Iran's economy. The US government has prohibited trade with many Iranian business sectors, including carpets, pistachios, aviation and gold. Cyberattacks are the latest episode in the "Ghost Wars" as both Iran and the USA are heavily engaged in targeting each other's cyberspace. Even if the current US campaign fails to dislodge the Tehran government, it could cause significant long-term damage to Iran's economic, military and scientific infrastructure, setting back the country's military ambitions in the region. This outcome is probably most feasible for US allies in the Middle East, who aren't worried about the prospect of the USA committing to an open-ended military conflict with Iran.

The Trump Administration was ready to decertify Iranian compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), despite a lack of evidence of Iranian violations. For critics of the JCPOA, this represented a move in the right direction; the goal of US policy should be the end of the Islamic Republic and the overthrow of the existing regime in Tehran. Instead of an invasion, the USA would likely induce regime collapse through a policy of military and economic strangulation, led by airstrikes, sea-launched cruise missile strikes and the vigorous employment of special cyber operations forces.

The recent cyberattacks led by US Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM) in coordination with US Central Command (CENTCOM) against Iranian defense and ballistic missile control systems can be linked to the White House announcement and the issuance of FY19 Cyber Strategy in which USA claimed to go offensive in cyberwarfare while USSTRATCOM is on standby in case of escalation. This cyber-attack can be termed as a reaction to the shooting down of a US RQ-4A Global Hawk BAMS-D surveillance drone with a Khordad-3 surface-to-air missile over the Strait of Hormuz and limpet mine attacks on oil tankers in Gulf of Oman for which the USA blamed the IRGC, which was already designated a foreign terrorist group by the Trump administration earlier this year. According to DHS and NSA there is a sudden influx in digital traffic from Iran to the USA, suggesting attacks on US core critical infrastructures.

On 22 June US CYBERCOM Mission Command was tasked to go offensive in Iranian cyberspace. These short yet effective cyberattacks, codenamed "Operation Hellfire", were aimed to cripple Iranian computers which are designated to control air defense systems and ballistic missile launch pads. As per various sources, the cyber-attacks had disabled the weapons and missile system of Iran. However, some other sources suggest that it was intended to disable the systems offline for a period of

time. For the USA to launch an aggressive attack on Iran, it relies heavily on its naval presence—the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and a Bomber Task Force integrated to the Central Command are already strategically deployed in the Gulf of Oman for quick responsiveness, also the USA will rely on its Gulf allies to provide air bases for operations alongside naval deployment. To carry out successive air strikes, the first logical step was to take down the Iranian air defense systems and ballistic missile controls. Other military officials suggest this was just as an act of power to show Iran that their defense networks could easily be penetrated. Earlier this year in a similar operation, servers belonging to the Internet Research Agency (IRA) in St Petersburg Russia were also jammed and brought offline in a Cyber Command operation called Synthetic Theology.

Whatever the case may be, Iran has had a contentious cyber history with the USA. In the past, Iran has also been engaged in hacking US government companies, banks, energy sector, dams and agencies. The Iranian state-backed actors involved in cyberattacks dubbed "Refined Kitten" has been continuously targeting the US defence and energy sector for years. The Department of Homeland Security has also stated that Iran has increased digital attacks against the US government since the escalation between the two countries. Cybersecurity firms like FireEye and CrowdStrike said that Iranian state backed APT (Advanced Persistent Threat) Groups have launched massive cyberattacks against US critical infrastructure, including oil and gas. These APTs have been using spear-phishing emails to lure Federal and State employees to gain access into the US systems. According to sources, CrowdStrike has also shared images of spear-phishing emails. One such email appeared to come from the Executive Office of the President and seemed to be trying to hire people for an economic advisory position. Another email was more generic in nature and appeared to have Microsoft Outlook's global address signature. The most recent explosion and massive fire on 21 June rocked a refinery complex in South Philadelphia, one of the largest on the East coast. This is one such example in which Iran has used "destructive-wiper" attacks. The US Government is still investigating the events but the digital trace and evidences show it as a cyber-attack. These cyberattacks appear to have started shortly after the Trump Administration imposed sanctions on the Iranian petrochemi-

Cyber war is not a magic nuke one can fly over and drop one day. It takes decades of planning and preparation. With so much technological advancement in the last few decades, cyber wars are now one of the most difficult wars to defend against

cal sector.

Development in cyberweaponry takes years to create a new weapon. The cyberattack of Stuxnet on Iranian nuclear system damaged more than 70 percent of nuclear centrifuges earlier in 2009. The attack was launched by the joint US-Israeli forces in an operation called "Operation Olympic Games" against Iran nuclear facilities at Natanz. The Stuxnet is also considered as world's first known "digital weapon" which was an experiment to test the US cyber warfare capabilities. US military strategists came up with a blueprint with selective indicators targeting Iran's core critical infrastructure in a vicious plan called 'Nitro Zeus'. The early stages of the Nitro Zeus are to target Iran's existing military infrastructure, including air bases, naval bases and ballistic missile installations. These attacks would do significant damage, notwithstanding existing Iranian air defenses, which would also come under attack. Iran's naval and air forces would suffer terribly, and widespread strikes would also exact a toll on Iran's ground and missile forces.

The action by US Cyber Command shows the increasingly mature cyber warfare capabilities and the aggressive cyber strategy under the leadership of President Trump. Over the last year, the Trump Administration has focused on continuously engaging with adversaries in cyberspace and undertaking more offensive operations. In the Cyber Strategy, Trump vows to his people to preserve peace and security by strengthening the ability of the USA—in concert with its allies and partner—to deter and, if necessary, punish those who use cyber tools for malicious purposes.

As nations enhance their abilities to be engaged in cyberspace offensively, their ability to pick and initiate a war physically is drastically reduced. Cyber war is not a magic nuke one can fly over and drop one day. It takes decades of planning and preparation. With so much technological advancement in the last few decades, cyber wars are now one of the most difficult wars to defend against.

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India's Super-power ambition

MODI 2.0 wants India to become a US\$5 trillion economy, and a master of Indian Ocean, Pax Indica. But, to become a superpower, India needs to shed its binary hyphenating with Pakistan bogey. India is getting isolated in the comity of nations because of its hostility towards Pakistan.

India is faced with a multitude of problems at home and abroad. India's hegemony forced Nepal to veer towards China. Modi dictated to Nepal that it should craft Nepal's Constitution to protect the interests of Hindus in that country. In Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, as well as Maldives, India's fortunes depend on the ebb and flow of governments in power. For now, Myanmar is balancing India and China. In Afghanistan, if the ongoing US negotiations with Taliban succeed and the group becomes a partner in the government in Kabul, New Delhi's strategic interests and influence in that country would dwindle. Washington has threatened to impose sanctions on India if it continues to buy Iranian oil and goes ahead with the already signed deal to acquire the S-400 missile system from Russia. Washington's hostility may lead to disintegration of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, the group linking the US, Japan, Australia and India to counter China's expansionism. Already, Washington has removed India from the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), a preferential trade programme offering lower tariffs to exports from developing countries.

The myth of India's superpower status explodes spectacularly in the multilateral arena as the country continues to remain excluded from major institutions of global governance. Despite being Asia's third largest economy, India is still not a member of the influential Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. Although it is a major donor of development aid across South Asia and Africa, a membership in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development still eludes India. It is also not a member of G7, a central institution of the world's leading democracies. India is the world's largest democracy, with the third-largest military in the world. It is a top troop-contributor to UN peacekeeping. Still, it is not a permanent member of the UN Security Council. At the UN General Assembly, too, India's heft has suffered due to New Delhi's steadily dwindling support of the Palestinian cause amidst soaring ties with Israel.

MARYUM MALIK
Rawalpindi

Uderage driving

CHILDREN, not yet of a legal age, must focus on studying, playing, etc. But sadly, underage driving is becoming increasingly common. It may be due to negligence on the part of parents. Underage driving, because it leads to many road accidents, is creating a lot of problems for parents as well as for others. On the other hand, it is the responsibility of government to enforce rules on underage driving. Unfortunately, the authorities have failed to overcome this major problem which has caused many deaths. So it is my humble request to the government of Balochistan that it should take serious action against this problem and ensure the safety of citizens allowing them to live a peaceful life.

HASEENA BEZANJO
Kech

Child Abuse

CHILD abuse is widely prevalent in Pakistan. There were nearly 1600 reported cases of child abuse in recent years. To make matters worse, nearly 80% of child abuse cases in Pakistan are unreported. Furthermore, cases of sexual abuse are not reported because, as a religious custom, sexual contact with a person is frowned upon. This is why reporting these types of cases to the police remains a taboo in the country.

Like racism and sexism, this issue needs to be dealt with. After all, children are the future.

SABA HASSAN
Karachi

Street fighting

STREET fighting is a horrible issue which plagues the streets of Karachi. It normally takes place in areas with a less educated population. Though political influence of political parties has drastically declined, aftereffects still exist. This menace is one of them. Normally, street fights start over little issues. Exchange of hot words and abusive language enfolds maximum number of people of the area and the conflict ends in bloodshed. The concerned authorities seem helpless to get rid of this menace. It is better to impose a ban on a gathering of five or more people in case a street fight occurs and if anyone is found violating, they should be penalized severely so that no one would ever think of getting involved in such fights.

FAISAL ANSAR
Karachi

Dual nationality holders

It is a matter of great concern that despite clear instructions of Apex Court, dual nationality holders occupy key positions in sensitive organizations like the State Bank of Pakistan, the Security Exchange Commission Pakistan, and the FBR.

According to a report, there are 1,116 persons with dual and foreign nationality in government service. A total of 1,249 foreign spouses of government officials have also been identified during the investigation. These individuals are a grave threat to the country. Their services should be discontinued immediately for the sake of country.

MARYAM SHOKET
Islamabad

FRESH PROTESTS HIT HONG KONG AS ACTIVISTS SEEK VOICE AT G20

HONG KONG
AGENCIES

PROTESTERS in Hong Kong blocked roads and forced workers to leave the justice secretary's offices on Thursday in the latest unrest to rock the city over an extradition bill that has now been suspended.

Millions have thronged the streets in the past three weeks to demand that the bill, which would allow criminal suspects to be sent to mainland China for trial in courts controlled by the Chinese Communist Party, be scrapped altogether.

"You know what everybody has deep in their hearts - is that this is about our future and it's very very personal," said 53-year-old Brian Kern, who was attending the protests.

In sweltering heat of 32 degrees C (89.6°F), some protesters chanted, "Withdraw civil law, release martyrs... Teresa Cheng, come out," referring to the justice secretary. Others shouted, "Condemn excessive force by police and release protesters."

Police formed a cordon to block the demonstrators and one officer held a banner warning them away. Minor scuffles broke out between pro-democracy group

Demosists and officers.

"Fight for Justice", "Free Hong Kong," and "Democracy Now" were some of the demands emblazoned on protest banners.

Police chief Stephen Lo warned of consequences for outbreaks of violence and condemned what he said was an environment of hostility making his officers' task difficult.

BATON CHARGE: In the early hours, riot police wielding batons and shields chased dozens of protesters as they broke up a siege of police headquarters. By nightfall on Thursday, only around 200 protesters remained. Black-clad and masked, they sat peacefully outside government headquarters.

The demonstrators have seized on this week's G20 summit of world leaders in Japan to appeal for Hong Kong's plight to be put on the agenda, a move certain to rile Beijing, which has vowed not to tolerate such discussion.

"We know that the G20 is coming. We want to grasp this opportunity to voice for ourselves," said Jack Cool Tsang, 30, a theater technician who took a day off work to protest.

Images of police firing rubber bullets and tear gas beneath gleaming skyscrapers this month near the heart of the finan-



cial center grabbed global headlines and drew condemnation from international rights groups and protest organizers.

Hong Kong chief executive Carrie Lam, who has kept a low profile since her latest public apology over a week ago, bowed to public pressure and suspended the bill a day after the violent protests but stopped short of cancelling the measure outright and rejected repeated calls to step down.

Opponents of the extradition bill fear being placed at the mercy of a justice system rights group say is plagued by torture, forced confessions and arbitrary detentions.

The demonstrations, which pose the greatest popular challenge to Chinese President Xi Jinping since he took power in 2012, have repeatedly forced the temporary closure of government offices, blocked major roads and caused massive

disruptions.

Since Hong Kong returned to Chinese rule in 1997, it has been governed under a "one country, two systems" formula that allows freedoms not enjoyed in mainland China, including the liberty to protest and an independent judiciary.

But many accuse China of increased meddling over the years, by obstructing democratic reform, interfering with elections, suppressing young activists, as well as being behind the disappearance of five Hong Kong-based booksellers who specialized in works critical of Chinese leaders.

LAM VOICES SUPPORT FOR POLICE: A Hong Kong government statement said Lam had met senior police officers to express thanks for their dedication during the protests and gave them her full support to maintain law and order in the city.

"She said she understands that members of the force and their family members have been put under pressure and that a small number of people even provoked the police intentionally, which is not acceptable," the statement said.

Lam also met representatives in the education and religious sectors, senior civil servants as well as foreign consuls to exchange views on the "current social situation," it said.

Japan PM Abe says hopes for 'new era' in Japan-China relations

OSAKA: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Thursday he wanted to elevate ties with China to create a new era for Asia's biggest economies, and invited President to Xi Jinping to Japan next spring. "Around the time of the cherry blossoms next spring, I would like to welcome President Xi as a state guest to Japan, and hope to further elevate ties between Japan and China to the next level," Abe told Xi at the outset of a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Osaka, west Japan. China-Japan ties have long been strained by territorial disputes over a group of tiny East China Sea islets and the legacy of Japan's World War II aggression. But Tokyo and Beijing have sought to improve relations more recently, with Abe visiting Beijing in October last year when both countries pledged to forge closer ties and signed a broad range of agreements including a currency swap pact. **AGENCIES**

Germany's Merkel seen shaking for second time this month, but heads to G20

BERLIN
AGENCIES

German Chancellor Angela Merkel was seen shaking as she met President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on Thursday, her second such bout within two weeks, but her spokesman said she was fine and she headed off to Japan for this weekend's G20 summit.

Merkel, 64, has no history of serious health issues. She was attending a farewell ceremony for Justice Minister Katrin Barley, who is leaving to become a lawmaker in the European Parliament, when the incident occurred.

Standing next to Steinmeier as he addressed the gathering, Merkel started shaking visibly in her upper body, then crossed her arms as if to brace herself. She was offered a glass of water but declined to drink it while Steinmeier spoke.

Berlin is in the throes of a heatwave.

After the ceremony with Steinmeier, Merkel went on to the Bundestag (lower house of parliament) for the swearing-in of the new justice minister. She showed no signs of shaking and looked relaxed, chatting and laughing with Vice Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Asked if the chancellor would take part in this weekend's G20 meeting in Japan, the spokesman said: "Everything is taking place as planned. The chancellor is well." Merkel later left on a flight to Osaka for the G20 meeting.

Another government official told Reuters that while Merkel attributed the

tremors on June 18 to drinking too little water and too much coffee on a hot day, Thursday's episode was more a psychological issue as she tried desperately to avoid a repeat.

"The memory of the incident last week led to the situation today - so (it was) a psychologically driven process," the official said. "There is nothing to worry about." Merkel was seen shaking when she met visiting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on June 18 but later said she felt better after drinking some water. Were Merkel to be incapacitated, Steinmeier would appoint a cabinet minister as acting chancellor until parliament elects a new chancellor. This need not be Scholz, a member of the Social Democrats, junior partner in Merkel's ruling grand coalition.

WORK ETHIC: Merkel, in power for 14 years, is renowned for her work ethic and has a reputation for outlasting other leaders at European Union summits with her ability to focus on the details of complex discussions deep into the night.

In the past, she has joked that she is a "sleep camel" who can go days with just a few hours of sleep as long as she gets a full night of shut-eye at the weekend. She is due to go on holiday later in the summer.

Merkel has loomed large on the European stage since 2005, helping guide the EU through the euro zone crisis and opening Germany's doors to migrants fleeing war in the Middle East in 2015 - a move that still divides the bloc and her country.

Former allies of Turkey's Erdogan plan rival party after Istanbul defeat

ANKARA
AGENCIES

Two senior figures in Turkish President's Tayyip Erdogan's ruling party are planning to launch a rival political group this year, people familiar with the matter said, a move that could further erode support for the country's long-time leader on the heels of a stinging electoral defeat in Istanbul.

Behind the breakaway plans are former deputy prime minister Ali Babacan and former president Abdullah Gul, both founding members of Erdogan's AK Party (AKP), according to two political advisers.

Sunday's re-run mayoral election delivered the second loss in recent months for the AK Party (AKP) in Turkey's largest city, a bitter setback for the president who has ruled for 16 years. It has also emboldened critics within his own party who have for years hinted at plans to form a rival party because of dissatisfaction over Erdogan's increasing powers over the party and government.

With economic recession, unemployment and inflation hurting Turkish voters and eating into the AKP's support base, any further erosion - even just a few percentage points of voter support - could be deeply damaging for the party, which already relies on an alliance with nationalists for its parliamentary majority.

"Babacan and Gul will most likely form the party in the fall," said one of the advisers, who is close to Babacan.

The new party's policies would mirror the early years of the AKP, the adviser added. When the AKP was launched in 2001, it blended an Islamist-rooted outlook with a pro-Western, democratic and liberal market approach which enjoyed broad popular backing.

The two men have been considering establishing the party for around six months, but the process has been given momentum by the AKP's loss of Turkey's main cities in the March 31 municipal elections, said the other adviser, who is familiar with the plans for the new party.

He did not say how the party would be funded but said the preparation so far had included meetings with current AKP parliamentarians, other politicians and academics.

Neither Babacan nor Gul could be reached for comment. The politicians haven't publicly com-



mented on the plans, but Gul broke ranks with the AKP last month to signal his discontent at the decision to annul the initial opposition victory in Istanbul after a series of appeals from Erdogan's party.

In a tweet, he compared the decision to re-run the election to a 2007 constitutional court ruling raising the number of parliamentarians required to approve a new president - which was viewed as an attempt to obstruct his path to the presidency.

Babacan served as economy and foreign minister in the first years of AKP government before becoming deputy prime minister, a role he held from 2009 to 2015. Gul was president from 2007 until 2014, when then-prime minister Erdogan moved to the presidency.

'AKP MONOPOLY': There are many precedents for new parties in Turkey, including two years ago when disgruntled members of the nationalist MHP party broke away to form the Iyi (Good) Party. It won 10% of the vote in last year's parliamentary election.

The adviser close to Babacan said there was support from AKP members of parliament for the breakaway group, without specifying how many.

He added that he expected "a few surprising important supporters," but didn't provide names.

If a new party is established, it could lead to more resignations and defections from the AKP, breaking its hold over a large swathe of pious and conservative voters, said Galip Dalay, a visiting scholar at Oxford University.

"The AKP's monopoly over the conservative sector of society will be broken," he said.

DRIVEN CAMPAIGNER: Erdogan has recovered from setbacks before. In June 2015 his party failed to win an outright parliamentary majority, leading to months of stalemate before it regained a majority in another election just five months later.

A relentless and driven campaigner, he has been at the heart of more than a dozen successful elections. But AKP officials have privately criticized the way the party approached both the March 31 and June 23 elections.

Erdogan campaigned for weeks ahead of the March local elections, delivering up to eight combative speeches a day. He accused opponents, including the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), of links to terrorism and said the vote was a matter of survival.

The HDP denies any links to terrorism.

That failed to stop the AKP losing in the capital Ankara and Istanbul during the country-wide local elections in March, leading some senior party members to say that the tone of the campaign had put off many voters who were more concerned with the cost of living and supply of local services.

Ahead of Sunday's re-run vote in Istanbul, the AKP tried to win over Kurdish voters with a less confrontational campaign, only to find that the change of tack had angered some supporters of its nationalist ally, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP).

CORPORATE CORNER



Samsung Electronics Co Ltd on Thursday announced the launch of its 2019 TV line, including new QLED BK, QLED 4K & UHD models. PRESS RELEASE



KARACHI: Jaffer Business Systems (JBS) and 1LINK have partnered to enhance the overall infrastructure of the banking sector with modern technology transformation. PRESS RELEASE

Expats allows to operate bank accounts without biometric verification

ISLAMABAD
PFI

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has allowed the expatriates to continue operating their bank accounts in the country without biometric verification after proving their identity as Overseas Pakistanis in their local banks. This was revealed by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Sayed Zulfikar Abbas Bukhari in a tweet on Thursday. He expressed hope that the step would facilitate Pakistani diaspora living across the globe. Earlier, the SBP had asked Pakistani banks to register their all account holders through biometric verification in order to block fake bank accounts and to discourage money laundering and terror financing.

IMF board to approve Pakistan bailout package on July 3

BUSINESS DESK

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will give final approval to the bailout package for Pakistan on July 3. According to reports, Adviser to Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue Dr Hafeez Shaikh will proceed to Washington along with his financial team to sign an agreement with the IMF. The IMF board will approve \$6 billion bailout package for Pakistan in three years under the extended fund facility. Prime Minister Imran Khan's government and the IMF have already in principle signed a staff agreement in this regard. The government has already fulfilled all the IMF conditions before signing of the agreement. The government in its budget proposals for the next financial year has added Rs357 billion loan from the IMF. An IMF team will visit Islamabad every three months to review the economic indicators of the country. The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) has given the approval to increase the natural gas prices, one of the conditions of the IMF for its bailout package. The ECC approved to hike the natural gas tariff for domestic consumers by 190pc and on average 31pc for all other categories. Moreover, fulfilling another condition of the IMF, the value of Pak rupee went above Rs160 against the US dollar.

Chinese envoy calls for 'subsidising polices' to attract investors at SEZs

ISLAMABAD
IMP

Chinese Deputy Chief of Missions Zhao Lijian on Thursday called for introducing 'subsidising policies' to attract the investors at special economic zones (SEZs).

Zhao Lijian was heading a delegation from the Chinese Embassy which participated in an in-house interactive session hosted by Islamabad Institute of Conflict Resolution (IICR). The IICR chief executive welcomed and extended her gratitude to the Chinese delegation.

Later, Zhao Lijian addressed the audience and shed insight into the China Pakistan Economic Corridor. He said as the second phase of CPEC has started with a focus on infra-

structural development, the federal and provincial governments should introduce subsidising policies in order to attract the investors at special economic zones.

"Another aspect which is on the CPEC checklist is the development of the social sector," he said, adding that the Chinese government has launched a pilot project for poverty elevation, through which a significant growth would be witnessed in the socio-economic fabric of Pakistan.

Zhao expressed that there was a special focus on the agriculture sector where the Chinese government was willing to help Pakistan with its expertise and technology.

The Chinese envoy said that CPEC and Belt & Road Initiative were inclusive projects and

were open for all.

"By the end of this month, one of the milestones will be achieved with the completion of a 660MW power plant at Thar. I anticipate that another power plant in Balochistan will be completed by the end of August this year."

Commenting on the trade war between Beijing and Washington, Zhao said that China has no intention to engage its potential and energy on any sort of war with the United States. "We want to normalise the tensions as both countries are interdependent on each other."

IICR Chairman Maj Gen Raza Muhammad thanked Zhao for delivering an interesting and comprehensive session. He said that the people of Pakistan, as well as the government, want to see CPEC successful.

PM HINTS AT EXTENDING AMNESTY DEADLINE

BUSINESS DESK

PRIME Minister Imran Khan on Thursday hinted at extending the deadline of the Asset Declaration Scheme after "an increase in the demands of the public".

"I am considering it (extension) because there's a lot of pressure, and lots of people are saying that there is too little time left to register," he said while interacting with members of the business community on a special PTV News telethon via video link. "I will discuss the possibility with Federal Board of Revenue Chairman Shabbir Zaidi and Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance Abdul Hafeez Shaikh over the next 48 hours."

Prime Minister Khan noted that leaving things until the last minute was a Pakistani trait. "I remember when we used to hold fundraisers for Shaikat Khanum (Hospital), no one used to buy tickets until the last day," he recalled.

It is pertinent to mention that until an official notification with regard to any extension is issued, the deadline would remain the same as announced earlier by the government, i.e. June 30th.

The government's tax amnesty scheme is aimed at whitening of undisclosed expenditures, sales and assets, including foreign assets, at non-

'I AM CONSIDERING IT BECAUSE THERE'S A LOT OF PRESSURE, AND LOTS OF PEOPLE ARE SAYING THAT THERE IS TOO LITTLE TIME LEFT TO REGISTER'

inal tax rates. It was approved by the cabinet after much deliberation and was announced earlier this month by Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh.

The scheme had come into effect through a presidential ordinance, which offered a period of 45 days to people for declaration of their undeclared assets, expenditures, and sales along with payment of taxes until June 30 this year.

The scheme has five main pillars — scope, default surcharge, exclusions, tax rates and conditions. It can be availed by all companies, associations of persons and individuals only to whiten their assets, expenditures and sales not declared until June 30, 2018. There is no provision for whitening undeclared incomes, either domestic and foreign.

Under the scheme, assets within the country

and abroad (except for real estate) can be whitened after paying a rate of four per cent. The whitened cash assets will have to be kept in Pakistani bank accounts.

For people wanting to keep their whitened money abroad, a rate of 6pc will be charged.

For the declaration of real estate, its value will be considered 1.5 times more than the FBR-assigned value to bring it at par with the market rate, Dr Shaikh had said.

The amnesty scheme also has the facility for citizens to whiten their benami accounts and properties before the Benami Transaction (Prohibition) Act, 2017, is enforced.

The scheme was announced two days after the government reached a staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund about a \$6bn bailout to implement an "ambitious structural reform agenda" over a period of 39 months.

In a video message on May 30, the prime minister had said that the scheme was a "chance for [the people] to declare their benami properties and bank accounts" so they can become a part of the tax net.

He revealed that only 1 per cent of the population pays taxes. "1pc Pakistanis are bearing the burden of 220 million people. This is impossible," he said. "No country can serve its people if the citizens don't pay taxes."

Senate body recommends tax exemption for utility stores

ISLAMABAD
APP

The Senate's Functional Committee on Problems of Less Developed Areas in its meeting on Thursday recommended that the Utility Stores Corporation (USC) is a welfare organisation it must be exempted from taxes.

The committee was deliberating over the performance and challenges of USC, according to an official statement.

USC Managing Director Omar Lodhi informed the committee that the corporation was paying taxes worth Rs6 billion annually to the Federal Board of Revenue.

"The issues that weigh the organisation down are taxes and Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules, which compel USC to go for the lowest possible bidder," he stated. "The trend of hiring daily wage labourers is another issue that is affecting the corporation, making it impossible to nab corruption and hoarding."

While discussing the implementation of recommendations made in the previous meetings, committee chairman Senator Usman Khan Kakar enquired about the status of setting up mobile stores in remote areas such as Chitral, Musakhel, Sorab, Awaran, Kachi, Bolan, Mastung, Achakzai, Toba, Kakri, Qamadin, Karez.

On this, the USC managing director informed that the setting up of

mobile stores at this point and time would cause a further burden on the budget, which is barely enough to pay the salaries.

He said that in the next few months, the organisation would be in a better position to begin this endeavour.

The committee encouraged the lessor to set up more stores in developed areas, especially in Musakhel and Sherani district.

Omar Lodhi assured the committee that the USC seeks expansion and would open up a new store in Musakhel within four months. He also informed that the criteria followed for expansion was population and distance.

The committee recommended that the FBR and PPRA be summoned in the next meeting so that more details of that USC tax may be obtained.

The committee directed the corporation that contract employees be regularised and the recruitment process pending for the last 5-6 years be completed.

It also stressed the need for a computerised system across the country so that USC records for inventory, stocks, sales, purchase of products could be maintained and checks and balances could be ensured.

The meeting was attended by Senator Kulsoom Parveen, Senator Sardar Muhammad Shafiq Tareen, Senator Giachand and senior officers from the Ministry for Industries and Productions and Utility Stores Corporation.

PKR plunges to Rs164.06 against US dollar

BUSINESS DESK

Pakistani Rupee (PKR) continued with its declining trend on Thursday, as it depreciated by another Rs1.9 against the US Dollar (USD) in interbank session, a private media house reported. By the end of the day's trade, the value of PKR stood at Rs164.06 per USD, as against Wednesday's closing of Rs162.17. Within the open market, PKR was traded at Rs161/164 per USD. Meanwhile, the currency gained Rs2.5 against the Pound Sterling, which stood at Rs208.35 per GBP, as against the previous close of Rs205.55. On the other hand, PKR's value weakened by Rs2.3 against Euro, which closed at Rs186.51 in the interbank market. This round of depreciation further weighs down Pakistan's external debt burden by Rs199.86 billion, which in dollar terms accounts for a \$105.84 billion. Pakistan now owes external avenues a total of Rs17.36 trillion. Within the money market, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) conducted an Open Market Operation in which it mopped up Rs105 billion for one day at 12.2pc.

Avanceon awarded multimillion-dollar contract in GCC

BUSINESS DESK

Avanceon has been awarded a contract for the provision of a state-of-the-art SCADA and business intelligence-based Decision Support System (DSS) to a leading infrastructure & utility company in the GCC. For this crucial project, which aims to meet the growing demands of a water network, Avanceon will be partnering with the world's leading industrial software solution providing firms. According to a notification sent to the Pakistan Stock Exchange, Avanceon stated that the company will be integrating all business and operational systems into a single touch point DSS. The solution will include designing, engineering, supplying and commissioning of high-end real-time SCADA system and its integration with multiple support systems such as customer management system, asset management system, geographical information system, weather system, building management system, hydraulic modelling system, intelligent command & communications systems and CCTVs. A state-of-the-art cybersecurity solution will also be incorporated in overall network design. This project, once finished, will increase the handling capabilities of the water network. This will also help the customer in reducing operating cost, optimising asset investment, providing rapid incident and emergency response, improving asset reliability and increasing asset monitoring. The aim of this project is to improve efficiency, reduce unit cost for end users and provide uninterrupted delivery of services. The mega project is expected to conclude by the end of 2023.



MARKET DAILY

PSX closes fourth consecutive session in red

KARACHI
STAFF REPORT

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with its losing streak for the fourth consecutive session on Thursday, as the indices that opened positively soon gave into pressure to close in the red zone. On the economic front, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is scheduled to meet on Wednesday (July 03) to consider the three-year extended fund facility of \$6 billion for Pakistan. Meanwhile, the federal government approved to increase gas tariffs by up to 190pc and electricity prices by Rs1.50 per unit to recover an additional Rs334 billion from consumers, fulfilling the remaining two major conditions of the IMF. Moreover, the Pakistani Rupee continued with its downward journey and opened the session on Thursday at Rs164/164.5 in the interbank market. Depleting by 567.18 points, the KSE-100 Index touched its intraday low of 33,521.38, failing to find any positive triggers, it closed lower by 314.14 points at 33,774.42. The KMI-30 Index declined by 697.54 points to end at 53,907.03, while the KSE All Share Index fell behind by 212.48 points, closing at 24,876.55. The advances to decliners ratio stood at 129 to 156. The trading volumes contracted from 159.68 million in the last session to 135.02 million. K-Electric Limited (KEL - 0.48pc), Pak Elektron Limited (PAEL - 2.40pc) and Fauji Fertilizer Bin Qasim Limited (FFBL +0.50pc) led the volume chart. The scripts had exchanged 24.99 million shares, 7.53 million shares and 6.49 million shares respectively. The automobile parts and accessories sector lost -1.82pc from its cumulative market capitalization. General Tyre and Rubber Company of Pakistan Limited (GTYR -4.99pc) and Baluchistan Wheels Limited (BWLH -4.99pc) touched their lower lock, while Thal Limited (THAL -1.79pc) and Agriatus Industries Limited (AGIL -1.48pc) also ended the session in the red. The oil and gas explorations sector (-1.500pc), tobacco sector (-1.49pc), cement sector (-1.40pc), cable and electrical goods sector (-1.23pc) and investment banking sector (-1.21pc) all closed as losers.

Exports surge 22.9pc to Rs2.86tr in 11 months

ISLAMABAD
APP

Exports from Pakistan, in terms of rupees, increased by 22.92 per cent during July-May 2018-2019, compared with the corresponding period of last year. The exports from Pakistan during the period under review were recorded at Rs2.86 trillion as compared to the exports of Rs2.33 trillion during the first eleven months of the last fiscal year (2017-18), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). On a year-on-year basis, the exports from Pakistan during May 2019 increased by 24.06 per cent when compared to the exports of the same month of last fiscal year. The exports during May 2019 amounted to Rs306,303 million as against Rs246,907 million in May 2018. On a month-on-month basis, the exports during May 2019 increased by 3.64pc when compared to the exports of Rs295,541 million in April 2019. The main commodities of exports during the month under review were knitwear (Rs39,914 million), readymade garments (Rs36,862 million), bedwear (Rs27,440 million), cotton cloth (Rs24,376 million), rice (Rs20,495 million), cotton yarn (Rs15,552 million), basmati rice (Rs12,021 million), towels (Rs10,570 million), fish & fish preparations (Rs8,462 million) and made-up articles (Rs8,459 million).

FBR BARRED FROM KEEPING TAXPAYER'S AUDIT INFO SECRET

LAHORE
STAFF REPORT

PUTTING the Federal Board of Revenue in trouble, the Lahore High Court on Thursday declared unconstitutional the FBR powers under 1A of Section 214C of Income Tax Ordinance 2001, to keep confidential the parameters under which the taxpayers are selected for audit.

The court also set aside all the notices issued under sub-section 1A of section 214c to various taxpayers selected for audit.

Justice Abid Aziz Sheikh partially allowed all the writ petitions moved by the taxpayers challenging the 1A of section 214C of Income Tax Ordinance 2001 by interpreting that the said law is a violation of Article 10-A and 19-A of the Constitution of Pakistan, which guarantees the right of a fair trial to every citizen, besides provision of all information.

Advocate Muhammad Ajmal Khan, the counsel of a taxpayer, argued that impugned provision of section 214C(1A) of the ordinance, which required the board to keep the parameters for selection of case for audit confidential, is ultra vires of the provision of articles 4, 8, 10-A, 19 and 19-A of the constitution.

He added that the decision of the board to keep the parameters for audit selection confidential

'HOW CAN A TAXPAYER DEFEND HIMSELF DURING THE AUDIT PROCESS WHEN PARAMETERS AND REASONS WILL NOT BE DISCLOSED TO HIM?'

tial is also against the law settled by the court.

Khan argued that all the laws, including Qanoon-e-Shahadat Ordinance, allowed the accused to know about the charges on them, but only the Income Tax Ordinance denied the information under which the taxpayers get trailed.

"How can a taxpayer defend himself during the audit process when parameters and reasons will not be disclosed to him?" Advocate Khan concluded.

Naveed A Andrabi, an advocate for another petitioner, submitted that the provision of section 214C(1A) is a violation of the petitioner's fundamental right of a fair trial and due process guaranteed under Article 10-A of the Constitution. "Even the petitioner's right of business, under Article 18 of the Constitution, has been infringed as petitioners have unnecessarily been forced into giving the details of their accounts

without any specific allegation."

The FBR counsels on the occasion opposed the petitions by arguing that mere selection for audit does not cause any actionable injury to taxpayers. "Submits that guidelines for selection of audit are administrative in nature and meant only for internal consumption of tax authorities, therefore, no fundamental right of petitioners has been infringed for not disclosing said guidelines."

The court, after hearing the detailed arguments, held that the impugned orders for not disclosing the specific parameter applied to petitioners for selection of their cases for audit under section 214C of the ordinance are "declared to be illegal and without lawful authority and therefore set aside".

The court held that the impugned provision is construed and read down to the effect that under subsection (1A) of section 214C of the ordinance, the board shall keep the parameters confidential. However, once persons or classes of persons are selected for audit under section 214C of the Ordinance, they shall be informed about the particular risk parameter applied to them for selection of audit.

The judgment directed the board to inform the petitioners forthwith if requested by them, the specific parameters on the basis of which their cases were selected for audit under section 214C of the ordinance.

Govt urged to give clear policy on dollar

LAHORE
STAFF REPORT

The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) has sought a clear policy statement from the government on the price of the dollar, as heavy single-day increases would ruin the trade and economic activities, besides jacking up inflation to unmanageable levels.

In a statement issued on Thursday, LCCI President Almas Hyder said that within just two days, the devaluation of Pakistani Rupee has been recorded to be over Rs7, which is a bad omen for the economy.

"Since the start of the ongoing month, the rupee has been devalued by Rs16.41 approximately which in turn has raised the country's external debt by more than Rs1,400 billion," he noted, lamenting that the recent surge in the value of the dollar has shown that "market powers" are playing freely.

The LCCI president said that



the surge in dollar price would badly affect the manufacturing sector, as the price of raw material and cost of doing business would go up. He feared that Pakistan's ranking in ease of doing business would sink further if remedial measures are not taken.

He said that devaluation of rupee would cause high inflation, besides halting the growth by hitting

all the important sectors of the economy. He said that dollar price would lead to an increase in the import costs as well as a hike in the prices of petroleum products.

The LCCI president said that the unchecked increase in the dollar rates is multiplying the cost of doing business and badly affecting the industrial, manufacturing and agriculture sectors, as Pakistan

has to import fertilizers, food items, oil, machinery and industrial raw material.

Almas Hyder urged the government, Ministry of Finance and State Bank of Pakistan to ascertain the factors weakening the value of rupee and check the possibilities of undue speculations and panic buying.

"The government should take immediate measures to arrest further devaluation of rupee to avoid more damages to the economy," the LCCI president said. "Although the weaker rupee benefits the exporters, this benefit is neutralised by the costly imported inputs of the manufacturing sector, including textiles."

LCCI Senior Vice President Khawaja Shahzad Nasir and Vice President Fahim-ur-Rehman Sehgal said if the greenback continues its upward flight, it would certainly inflate the import bill, besides lowering the competitiveness of Pakistan's business and industry.

Fitch revises down Pakistan's GDP growth forecast to 2.7pc for FY20

'HIGHER TAXES WILL ERODE THE PURCHASING POWER WHICH IN TURN WOULD SLOWDOWN CONSUMPTION GROWTH TO 5.3PC'

BUSINESS DESK

Fitch Solutions, a US-based global research house, has revised down Pakistan's economic growth to 2.7pc for the next fiscal year 2019-20 from a previously quoted estimate of 4pc.

Fitch Solutions, an arm of Fitch Rating Agency, expects that Pakistan will adopt a tight monetary and fiscal policy stance based on a condition that the country is entering into an International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme.

Consequently, this would curtail the economic growth, determined Fitch, thus leading the state to revise the GDP targets for the fiscal years 2018-19 and 2019-20 to 3.2pc and 2.7pc, respectively.

That being said, experts believe that investment into the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will continue to provide some support to the economy.

Fitch pointed out that following the agreement on a \$6 billion bailout package to address the country's balance of payment crisis, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) increased the policy rate by 150 basis points, adding that shortly afterwards, the Ministry of Finance of Pakistan also presented a budget with the aim of trimming Pakistan's primary deficit to 0.6pc of GDP in FY19/20, from 1.9pc of GDP in

FY18/19 as per IMF's estimates.

In this regard, the report said that higher taxes will erode the purchasing power which in turn would slowdown consumption growth to 5.3pc in FY20, down from 6.3pc in FY18.

The consumption currently stands at around 82pc of the GDP.

"Given our expectations for continued upside pressure on consumer prices over the coming months, we believe that the consumers' purchasing power will continue to fall over the coming months, thereby weighing on consumption," the report stated.

Inflation has been on the rise in Pakistan, increasing by 9.1pc on a yearly basis in May, as compared to 4.2pc in the previous year.

"However, they haven't overlooked the possibility that some of the effect of price hikes will be partially offset by the government's populist measures, such as providing electricity subsidies to consumers who use less than 300 units of electricity per month."

Following this, Fitch Solutions has also forecasted a government spending (around 12pc of GDP) to slow in growth to 6.4pc in FY19/20, down from 14.2pc in FY17/18, as the country embarks on an austerity drive.

"IMF bailout packages typically require countries

'BUSINESS SENTIMENT WILL LIKELY REMAIN SUBDUED IN PAKISTAN, LEADING TO SLOWER INVESTMENT GROWTH'

to undergo fiscal consolidation, which usually include the IMF have agreed on focusing on tax-based measures to manage the fiscal deficit, according to media reports, we believe that the Pakistani government will fall short of its ambitious revenue targets and will likely have to cut spending to meet the primary deficit target of 0.6pc of GDP," the report added.

Moreover, the report sees little improvement in Pakistan's net exports, which recorded a deficit of around 11 percent of GDP in FY17/18.

Analysts at Fitch Solutions believe that despite the government's efforts to increase export competitiveness, such as subsidising electricity and gas to the industrial and export sectors, a global slowdown will likely weigh on exports over the coming months.

"Our view is for global growth to slow from 3.2pc in 2018 to 2.9pc by 2020, with growth in two of the largest main export destinations, the US and China, slowing to 2.0pc and 6.1pc respectively by 2020, from 2.9pc and 6.6pc in 2018. Moreover, we believe that imports could increase over the coming months acting as a slight drag on growth."

Given that Pakistan's main imports are petroleum and its products (around 28pc of total imports), rising oil prices will likely weigh on net exports. Fitch's Oil and Gas team forecasts Brent Crude oil

prices to average \$70/barrel (bbl) in 2019 and \$76/bbl in 2020, from a year-to-date average of \$66.15/bbl.

In addition to this, it has been forecasted that the impact of rising oil prices on imports will be exacerbated by a weakening currency.

Following the agreement with the IMF, the Pakistani rupee has been devalued by more than 10pc to around Rs157/USD, at the time of writing, from around Rs142/USD before the agreement took place in May.

"We believe that investment, which accounts for approximately 17pc of GDP, will slow in growth to 5.1pc in FY19/20, from 5.7pc in FY17/18, as tighter monetary policy implemented by the SBP will likely weigh on investment," the report stated.

Moreover, the government has committed to borrow less from the SBP as part of the IMF deal, which will improve the monetary policy transmission in the country, believed Fitch. In addition, business sentiment will likely remain subdued in Pakistan, leading to slower investment growth.

"With a slowdown of manufacturing activity, we expect to see a fall in investment appetite related to LSM industries, such as investment in capital goods," concluded Fitch Solutions.

DARR KHUDA SE - EPISODE 2

Will Afreen's Siblings Make Her Life More Difficult?



BY MEHAK ZAHRA

ONCE again, Abdullah Kadwani and Asad Qureshi brings forward a drama highlighting social issue with a great story and stellar cast. Although Darr Khuda Se is just 2 episodes old, it has already been successful to make its mark. The cast includes the Khaani-famed Sana Javed, Imran Abbas, Qavi Khan, Ali Ansari and Kiran Haq. While Imran Abbas plays a womanizer, Sana Javed emerges as another strong character who holds her ground.

In this week's episode, Azhar makes a scene in front of his parents after seeing Afreen come home with her colleague. His point being that girls shouldn't take lift from their male colleague. After this scenario, Afreen quits her job, although her parents support her. On the other hand, Shahwaiz is a philanderer and has an eye even for her maid. Although his wife supports

him completely, he does not love her and stays with her because of her money. Meanwhile, Afreen is having a hard time dealing with her siblings and maintaining a civilised relationship with them.

For a long time, Imran Abbas has been playing the good guy and doing it perfectly. However, he has nailed the evil nature of

Shahwaiz and done full justice to his character. Similarly, Sana Javed has, once again, given an exceptional performance as a humble but strong headed Afreen. As the story develops, the characters' transformation will also progress. It will be interesting to see how Afreen and Shahwaiz's lives collide.



GRAPHIC EYELINER: HOW TO PULL OFF THIS SEASON'S COOLEST BEAUTY TREND

While we love a winged eyeliner makeup look, the latest makeup trend has us swapping our go-to eyeliner techniques for something that's a little more out-of-the-box. We're talking about graphic eyeliner. This trend involves getting creative with your eyeliner—think geometric shapes and striking colors. Want to try the graphic eyeliner trend out for yourself? Keep reading to find out how to pull off this season's coolest beauty trend and which products can be useful for it.

NOT SO PLAIN AND SIMPLE

Whether you're a beauty beginner or just so set in your simple-cat-eye ways that you're not sure where to start, this one's for you. As with all makeup looks, it's super important to start with a solid base. (Think of it as your beauty canvas.) Once your foundation is applied, blended, and set, start lining each lower lash-line at the inner corner and working your way out, following the natural curve of your eye and extending up towards your temple. Next, give the line one more pass, only this time, taper down below your tear duct. To finish it off, apply a neutral-toned lipstick to really let your new graphic goddess look shine, baby, shine.



WITH FLYING COLOURS

So now that we've covered the entry-level version, let's kick it up a notch for those of you who aren't afraid of a little colour. Experimenting with colour and shape is a fun way to play up your eyes without going too out-of-the-box. Plus, the negative-space look is a major trend right now, so it's a win-win. Starting at the outer crease of each eye, roll the liner out and up towards the edge of your brow—stopping right above your crease to arch the line in towards your nose. Next, leave about a 1/2-inch gap, and continue on the same path, curving down towards your inner eye. Once you've reached the level of your tear duct, connect the curved line to your waterline. Finish the look with a pink-hued lipstick, and skip the mascara this one time.



EXTRA, EXTRA!

All bets are off for this next look that marries two of this season's most coveted trends: coloured highlighter (yes, it's still going strong) and graphic, cutout liner. It might seem over-the-top if you're not used to going all-out with your daily routine, but who says you can't give it a shot anyway? You do you, girl. First, as if you were creating a standard cat-eye, roll a mauve-coloured liner along each upper lashline, extending out towards your brow and stopping right after your crease. Next, arch the line in towards your nose until you reach the inner corner of your eye. Then, using a flat synthetic brush or small domed brush, lightly buff in a loose holographic shadow to fill in the shape on your upper lid. Drape the same highlighter formula along your upper cheekbones, the bridge of your nose, and your Cupid's bow. Keep scrolling to see tips and eyelinerers to create your next graphic look!

TRY USING A FELT-TIPPED PEN

Invest in a good felt-tipped liquid liner. Bodyography's nontoxic formula from On Point Liquid Liner gives the most precise line every single time. And it stays put as well.

Bodyography On Point Liquid Liner Pen \$17

APPLY WHITE EYELINER FIRST

A terrific way to get a smooth and perfectly placed line is to map out the shape with a white eyeliner pencil beforehand. Once it looks good, go over it with a gel or liquid liner.

Cargo TexasLiner Liquid Eyeliner \$20

CHANGE YOUR VIEWPOINT

Most women apply eyeliner looking straight into the mirror; this leads to crooked lines, gaps between liner and lash line, and an overall sloppy look. Try looking down into a mirror instead; this way, you will make sure your liner is as close to the lashes as possible.

Estée Lauder Double Wear Zero-Smudge Liquid Eyeliner \$26

HOLLYWOOD
BOLLYWOOD



Kabir Singh Box Office: Shahid Kapoor & Team Earn 100% Returns Before Week 1

Shahid Kapoor & Kiara Advani's Kabir Singh is smashing records at the box office and how! The movie which released last Friday has already crossed the 100 crore mark and looks like there's no stopping to it anytime soon. The result of it all is that the Sandeep Reddy Vanga directorial has already gained 100% returns of investments and here's all you need to know about it.

Till Thursday, i.e., Day 6 of the Kabir Singh, it has raked in collections in massive numbers of 120.81 crores. Made on a budget of 60 crores, this means that the movie has already made 101.35% ROI (Returns Of Investments). Going by our traditional formula, the amount of ROI here will be 60.81 crores.

Shahid and team are indeed entering the list of Profitable Films Of 2019 like a boss! The movie has already gained the 'hit' verdict for itself. So far two movies have made it to the profit zone. Take a look!



On Completing 27 'Awesome' Years In Bollywood, Shah Rukh Khan Thanks Fans In A Special Way

Shah Rukh Khan completed 27 years in Bollywood and on his special day, the 53-year-old actor shared a special video on his Twitter profile. In the video, SRK not only thanked his fans for their love, he also came riding a motorcycle, just the way he did in his debut film Deewana. The Raj Kanwar-directed film, which clocked 27 years on Tuesday also marked SRK's debut in the Hindi film industry. SRK captioned the video: "Thank you for the awesome 27 years everybody and Thank you Sharad for the bikes." The video begins with a visual of SRK riding a bike and in the later section of the video, he addresses his fans. The actor can be seen dressed in a white sweatshirt and a pair of black trousers. In the video, Shah Rukh Khan addresses his fans and says, "I want to say a big thank you for completing 27 years in the Hindi film cinema, which is exactly half my lifetime on Earth. I've been trying to entertain you for that many years and sometimes I have succeeded and many times I have failed."



Billy Drago Dies: Hollywood 'Bad Guy' Character Actor Was 73

Billy Drago, a character actor whose best-known roles were as Hollywood villains, has died. He passed on Monday, June 24 in Los Angeles, according to his publicity firm. No cause of death was given.

Born William Eugene Burrows Jr., Drago appeared in more than 100 film and television roles. His most well-known roles were as hitman Frank Nitti in Brian De Palma's 1987 film The Untouchables and as the Demon of Fear Barbas in TV's Charmed.

A versatile character actor whose career spanned four decades, Drago worked with Clint Eastwood, Michael Jackson, Chuck Norris and Takashi Miike, among others. His diverse roles spanned action, comedy and horror films, television series, and music videos.

Drago was born July 18, 1946 in Hugoton, Kansas. He began his career in Kansas radio, first as an Associated Press journalist, then as host of his own highly-rated program. A stint with a touring theater group, along with acclaimed performances in New York City, paved the way for his arrival in Hollywood.

PRESSURE OFF AS OSAKA HOPES FOR BETTER WIMBLEDON FORTUNE

WIMBLEDON
AGENCIES

WITH the burden of being world number one lifted, Naomi Osaka will set her sights on Wimbledon, buoyed by the support of Roger Federer and praying for a decent draw this year.

The 21-year-old Japanese star saw her hopes of a third consecutive Grand Slam title end in a dispiriting third round exit at Roland Garros.

She admitted that loss to Katerina Siniakova, ranked 42 at the time, was "the best thing that could have happened" for a player so uncomfortable in the spotlight.

Since then, she has lost her top ranking and will head into Wimbledon next week seeded at number two.

Osaka could not be more thrilled. "During my entire clay season, it kind of mattered and it showed because I was kind of stressed out the entire

time," she said when asked about the intense scrutiny which came with being the world's top player who was hunting a Paris title to add to her US and Australian Open crowns.

"Now, I'm just kind of having fun. I'm kind of chilling."

At the French Open, Osaka complained that the pressures she faced were causing her to suffer constant headaches, stress and fatigue.

However, when the Wimbledon draw is made on Friday, more headaches could be on the way.

Her last two trips to the All England Club have ended in back-to-back third round losses against players at ease on grass courts.

In 2017, she was defeated by five-time champion Venus Williams who went on to reach the final.

Last year, she fell to eventual champion Angelique Kerber with Osaka collecting just six games against the German on Centre Court.

Osaka has just one win on grass this



summer although she did make the semi-finals in Nottingham last year, losing to Ashleigh Barty, the Australian who has since taken her world top ranking.

"You know, grass, I'm not really that comfortable with it," admitted Osaka, who said the challenges left her "screaming inside" during her win in Birm-

ham against Maria Sakkari last week.

"It's just really different to everything I have played on. As a little kid, I never played on grass."

It has been a roller-coaster first half of 2019 for Osaka.

Since winning the Australian Open, she split with coach Sascha Bajin and has yet to make another final.

However, she has powerful support in the shape of 20-time major winner Federer who faced similar bouts of fluctuating form and self-doubt in his early years, especially after winning a first Slam at Wimbledon in 2003.

"After that I also didn't win everything. From having nothing to lose it suddenly changes, everyone now feels like it's an amazing win to beat you," said the eight-time Wimbledon champion.

"She has a head start with her two Grand Slams. Now she's done it, she knows she can do it again. I think she's doing pretty well. You can't win every week, nobody does that."

Rooney smashes winning goal from inside his own half

LONDON
AGENCIES

Wayne Rooney scored a sensational goal with a blast from his own half for his US club DC United that triggered social media storm of applause across the globe on Thursday.

His 'goal of the season' lifted United to a 1-0 victory over Orlando City on Wednesday and saw the veteran former England striker dance an excited little jig.

The ex-Manchester United star hammered a 68-yard strike over the head of Orlando goalkeeper Brian Rowe and into the back of the net in the 10th minute.

"I thought it was nice and it was special to score the goal this evening," Rooney told the DC United web site.

Rooney was the most advanced DC United player as his team defended in depth. When the ball was hoofed clear, two City men converged but only deflected it into Rooney's path.

Facing the Orlando goal and with the ball bouncing in front of him, Rooney saw Rowe was out of his 18 yard box and smashed a first-time shot.

As the ball swerved and dipped over the despairing goalkeeper, Rooney broke into a brief dance. He spread his arms wide in celebration as the ball curled inside the near post for one of Major League Soccer's goals of the year.

"It's something that I've practised so many times," Rooney said. "Different managers and teammates are, like, you are practising this, you won't score from this position, but for nights like tonight that's why I do practise it. The training had paid off in the past. In 2017, Rooney rifled a shot past Joe Hart from his own half for Everton against West Ham. In 2014, Rooney lobbed a goal from just inside the opposition half for Manchester United, also against West Ham.

The DC United star's goal sparked a Tweet-storm of applause across the world and drew attention back in Britain where Rooney's former Manchester United team mate Rio Ferdinand woke up, saw the video and retweeted it along with the comment "Morning Wazza..." and a string of emoticons.

Rooney, along with former Manchester United players Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Bastian Schweinsteiger and Nani, is part of the July MLS All-Star exhibition squad to face Atletico Madrid in Orlando on July 31.

Salah sends Egypt into Cup of Nations last 16

CAIRO
AGENCIES

Mohamed Salah scored his first goal of the Africa Cup of Nations as hosts Egypt secured a place in the last 16 on Wednesday with a 2-0 win over the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Ahmed Elmohamady prodded Egypt ahead on 25 minutes after a wicked Salah cross and the Liverpool star slammed in a second shortly before half-time to spark frenzied celebrations at a packed Cairo International Stadium.

Record seven-time champions Egypt rode their luck at times as DR Congo twice struck the crossbar in the first half but the Group A leaders held firm to join Nigeria as the first teams through to the knockout phase.

Egypt overcame the distraction of Amr Warda being banished from the squad earlier in the day over mounting sexual harassment allegations. The claims surfaced earlier this week on social media platforms. Multiple women posted screenshots and testimonies of Warda's alleged lewd com-



ments. "I think the team is strong and the squad is strong but we are not happy to lose a member of our family," said coach Javier Aguirre. "The team focused more on our match and played the 90 minutes in a serious manner. I don't think the Egyptian team will be affected by the absence of anyone."

Mexican Aguirre fielded the same side that defeated Zimbabwe 1-0, with centre-back Ahmed Hegazy sporting a mask after breaking his nose in the opening game of the tournament.

Salah was guilty of missing a hat-trick of chances in the curtain-raiser and this season's Premier League joint top scorer again threatened inside five minutes here when an interception broke his way only for the Egyptian to skew wide under pressure.

After four days of small crowds, another capacity 75,000 crowd turned out to cheer on the hosts in the capital, but they were nearly silenced when Marcel Tisserand slammed against the bar at a corner.

'We need four more players', says Bayern coach Kovac

MUNICH
AGENCIES

Bayern Munich coach Niko Kovac has demanded that the club sign four new players as they rejuvenate their squad ahead of next season, Kicker magazine reported Thursday.

The 28-time Bundesliga winners are undergoing a major squad overhaul, and several senior players have left this year. Veterans Arjen Robben, Franck Ribery and Rafinha went at the end of last season, and defender Mats Hummels is set to make a 38 million euro return to Borussia Dortmund. Real Madrid loanee James Rodriguez will also quit Munich after the club decided not to sign the Colombian on a permanent deal. The departures have left Bayern with a squad of just 17 players. "We can't do much with 17 players. We need 19 really," Kovac told Kicker. With defender Jerome Boateng and midfielder Renato Sanches also expected to leave ahead of next season, Bayern need to sign several players if they are to reach that mark.

Federer was 'great draw' on 1999 Wimbledon debut, says legend's first ever opponent

AGENCIES

The 17-year-old youth on the other side of the Wimbledon net looked like an easy match-up for Jiri Novak, but the five-setter made the grizzled Czech rethink the man who would become "exceptional and an icon".

Novak could breathe a sigh of relief as the scoreboard said he had beaten a certain Roger Federer of Switzerland 6-3, 3-6, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 after two hours and 18 minutes in the first round in 1999.

Federer made his Wimbledon debut that day 20 years ago but few imagined that the youngster would eventually go on to be widely regarded as the greatest player of all time.

"I was in the top 100, I had no problem qualifying for Wimbledon and I played against Roger who was a junior and a wild card," Novak told AFP.

"I was thinking -- what a great draw, I wasn't too good on grass so I thought this was a good chance to win a match," added Novak, who was 24 at the time.

He bowed out of that edition of Wimbledon in the second round, seen off by American Todd Martin in straight sets,



and was never to make it past the third round at the All England Club.

Federer, the world junior number one in 1999 but 103 in the ATP rankings during Wimbledon, crashed out in round one in three of his first four appearances at the

tournament. However, he made people sit up and take notice when he famously knocked out Pete Sampras on his way to the 2001 quarter-finals.

Federer then won five Wimbledon titles in a row, and eight overall, his last

coming in 2017.

"I thought he wasn't bad but during the match I never thought he could achieve what he has," said Novak of a player who has gone on to win 20 majors and 102 titles in total.

"It was a tough moment, the grass used to be much faster so we didn't play much and I didn't like that, I kept struggling for rhythm."

"Then I met him at other tournaments, on concrete and clay, and I could see he's good," added Novak, who won seven ATP singles titles -- four on clay and three on hardcourt -- and climbed to fifth in the world in 2002.

"In total I played against him nine times, including finals at Gstaad and Vienna when he was already the world number one." Novak had a special relationship with Federer -- not because of that Wimbledon match, but through Federer's wife Mirka, born in Slovakia which formed a single country with the Czech Republic until 1993.

"We had trainings together, we were a bit closer than normal because of Mirka and his Czech physiotherapist Pavel Kovac," said Novak.



SHAMI-BUMRAH, KOHLI PUT INDIA ONE STEP CLOSER TO SEMI-FINALS

MANCHESTER
AGENCIES

India's bowlers nullified yet another mid-dling batting performance, pounding West Indies into the ground long before they could think about any reasonable come-backs. Having elected to bat, India were kept in check by some disciplined seam bowling from West Indies, whose wickets through the middle overs gave India their second consecutive bout of existential dread surrounding their middle order. But a solid 72 from Virat Kohli, who became the fastest to 20,000 international runs in the process, and timely, staggered attacks from Hardik Pandya and MS Dhoni gave India 268. Mohammed Shami then took four, Jasprit Bumrah was practically unplayable, and the others chipped in as West Indies became the latest team to crash out of semi-final contention.

Shami, the bat-trick hero from India's last game, was at his attacking best once again. He had Chris Gayle swiping to mid-on, and followed it up by nipping a length ball past Shai Hope's defences to hit off stump. At 16 for 2 in seven overs, West Indies had seemingly already gone off the rails. A laboured 55-run stand for the third wicket between Sunil Ambris and Nicholas Pooran took up 12 overs and had



the required rate breach run-a-ball territory early in the innings. To this context were thrown India's middle-overs bowlers, with all their variations. Hardik, Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal, and West Indies were simply outdone. Ambris was trapped in front, Pooran holed out at long-on, Jason Holder was expertly done in by Chahal, driving to a strategically placed extra-cover fielder, and Carlos Brathwaite was taken by Dhoni, diving one-handed to his right, on what was a below-par wicket-keeping day for him.

For the most part, Dhoni seemed to be having a below-average batting day as well. Coming in at No. 6, after the promoted Kedar Jadhav had fallen cheaply, Dhoni had time to play in his preferred patient style. At 140 for 4, Kohli was at the other end - a power pair. But with the prospect of Shami at No. 8 and more than 20 overs to play, India were forced, once again, to play within themselves. Dhoni, however, strayed out of his crease and looked to hoick Fabian Allen over mid-wicket in the 34th over, only to miss and

give up on getting back. But Hope spilled the ball, missed the stumping chance, and in his funk from that moment, failed to gather the ball and run Dhoni out as well. It would come back to haunt his team.

But the effects of Shikhar Dhawan's injury were clearly still in play for India. When India bat well, it is usually on the back of a big partnership for at least one of their first two wickets. With Rohit Sharma having fallen early, KL Rahul and Kohli were on their way to setting up such a stand. But for the fourth time in five innings, Rahul was undone by his shot selection. Having punched, driven straight, and pulled with control, he went across the line to a length ball slanting into him and was bowled for 48.

To their credit, West Indies did have good control at that point. All short bowling had been punished early on, but Holder quickly put a stop to the hitting with a simple plan - bowl an off-stump line. He began with two maidens, and barely bowled a single ball in line with the stumps during his first few overs. Kohli, especially, could do little against him, and would eventually fall to his opposite number trying to drag one into the leg side from wide outside off. In the middle, though, it was Kemar Roach who reaped the rewards.



WORLD CUP
ENGLAND & WALES - 2019

MATCH SCHEDULE

Sri Lanka VS South Africa

2:30PM



Babar surpasses idol Virat to become second fastest to 3000

NEWS DESK

He came, he saw, he conquered. In a must-win fixture for Pakistan on Wednesday, Babar Azam walked in, displayed nerves of steel and stayed till the end of the chase to send his side over the line with a six-wicket triumph over the unbeaten side of the tournament, New Zealand. Green shirts, who were 110 for three at the halfway point of 25 overs, achieved the target in final over at the loss of four wickets, all credits to Babar Azam's undefeated and marvelous 101-run knock. "This is my best innings, the wicket was difficult and turned a lot in the second half. The plan was to go through to the end and give my 100%," man-of-the-match, Babar, said at the presentation ceremony. "When we started, the plan was to see out Ferguson. But when Santner came on, the plan became not to give wickets to him and cover up later when the fast bowlers come on. The fans support us here in Birmingham, it's great." As Pakistan kept their hopes to reach the semis alive, Twitterati took to the social media platform to express their happiness and, obviously, to compare the young great Babar with his Indian idol, Virat Kohli. Following the high-staked fixture, the growing legend took to Twitter to dedicate his ton to "Sonidharti (motherland)". Prime Minister Imran Khan, a cricket legend himself, lauded the cricket team, especially the man of the moment, Babar, for "a great comeback".

Uncle Lasith flames the haters to fire up Sri Lanka

LONDON
AGENCIES

In Sri Lanka's most-recent match, against England, Lasith Malinga swung the ball an average of 1.1 degrees in his opening spell. According to Cricviz, this was the most swing any bowler had generated that day by at least 30%.

At first sight, Malinga's is an action that seems more suited to stirring a cauldron than moving a ball through the air. It is pretty much offensive to any purist swing-bowling coach. Yet, when Sri Lanka's batsmen had put up a modest score and needed bailing out, Malinga not only outswung his own team-mates, but also, Mark Wood, Chris Woakes and Ben Stokes, who have bowled in English conditions all their lives. Outswinging them by so much, it was practically an affront.

Creating offense, however, is just what Malinga does. What he has long been doing. A quick tour through history: at age 23, his new blonde-tipped curls had antagonised board bigwig Arjuna Ranatunga. Soon after, when the world was still side-eyeing the IPL, in its early years, Malinga was an ungrateful, cash-chasing charlatan, as any number of talk shows or newspaper columns had it. Be-



hind closed doors, he clashed with former bowling coach and patron saint of Sri Lanka's seam bowling, Chaminda Vaas. Out in the real world, fans complained that he was the only Sri Lanka player refusing to pose for photos or dish out an autograph. Sports ministers, selectors, administrators, senior players, junior players, probably his own reflection in the dressing room mirror - Malinga has angered, and has been angered by, all. Neither side has been shy about expressing their feelings.

Where other players mellowed with age - Kumar Sangakkara less mouthy in

later years, Ricky Ponting becoming almost cuddly by the end of his career - Malinga has instead felt himself evermore wronged by life, the universe, and everything.

Since being dropped for seven months last year, he has unapologetically become a living, breathing, slinging f*** you to haters. You think you can't have a paunch and bowl fast? Check yourself. He is a force in the biggest T20 franchise tournament on the planet - his over to win the IPL containing five deliveries at 140kph or higher, before he slipped that killer slower ball in. But then he must be

prioritising IPL over commitments to his home board, right? Wrong. He's flying back-and-forth between Mumbai and Sri Lanka, winning matches at the Wankhede and breaking List A records at Pallekele in the space of 20 hours. His injuries, then - surely those brittle knees and screwy ankles won't withstand an ODI workload? Thing is, fellow hasn't sat out a single Sri Lanka match on account of injury since his recall last October.

Unfriendly selection panels? He's outlasted them. Doubting coaches? He's still here - they're not. Critics? Well, haven't they been been mighty quiet in the last few weeks?

At this World Cup so far, he's been driven so completely, so unadulteratedly by nothing but grievance, his ire is impossible to miss. There once was a glorious joy to his bowling. His four-in-four in Guyana in 2007, was a jubilant eruption. His dismissal of Sachin Tendulkar at the 2011 World Cup prompted a crazy, arms-spreading, exuberant run from the bowling crease to square leg, in a Wankhede stadium that was silenced, rather than enlivened, by a Malinga wicket. In the past 30 days, though, Malinga has been the World Cup's grumpiest uncle: unsimiling, aggressive, distant, aggressive again.

1992 all over again as Pakistan take identical World Cup route

LONDON
AGENCIES

Twenty-seven years and a generation apart, Pakistan's World Cup bears striking similarities with their 1992 campaign - when they started slowly but ended up lifting the trophy in Melbourne.

An identical sequence of wins and losses and other eerie parallels have struck a chord with millions of fans who believe that Pakistan could be set to come out on top once again.

In both World Cups, Pakistan started with a one-sided defeat to the West Indies, before recovering to win their second game - against Zimbabwe in 1992, and England this time around. At both tournaments, their third game was rained off and they then went on to lose their next two games and win the following two.

Not only that, but the final win in both sequences was against New Zealand, who were unbeaten in both 1992 and 2019 until they ran into Pakistan.

"It was same, the same sequence of results, points and then we wanted Australia to

beat the West Indies for us to qualify," said legendary fast bowler Wasim Akram, who played for Pakistan in 1992.

"Then also we beat New Zealand - who was unbeaten then too. A lot of similarities, I hope the end result is also similar now and we win the World Cup," said Wasim, now a TV commentator.

In another similarity, Wasim was the leading wicket-taker in 1992 with 18 and another Pakistan left-arm pacer, Mohammad Amir, is second on the bowler's chart with 16 so far.

"I am not sure if players are following all these [discussions] but this should motivate them," said Wasim.

But Pakistan skipper Sarfaraz Ahmed played down any parallels with 1992.

"That's history but after we won against New Zealand someone told me that even in 1992 we chased down New Zealand's target with five balls to spare," said Sarfaraz, whose team reached their 238-run target in 49.1 overs on Wednesday.

Fans are now hoping that the similarities don't end there, and even that they continue beyond the World Cup.



NA UNANIMOUSLY PASSES DEFENCE BUDGET

DEMAND OF GRANTS APPROVED
FOR POWER DIVISION AND
PETROLEUM DIVISION

RUCKUS MARS BUDGET
SESSION AS SHEHBAZ CALLS
IMRAN 'SELECTED' PREMIER

OMAR AYUB CRITICISES
PREVIOUS GOVTS FOR
CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

THE National Assembly (NA) on Thursday rejected 323 opposition motions presented by the opposition while passing the Rs1.163 trillion defence budget without any objections.

Minister of State for Revenue Hamid Azhar presented Demands of Grants worth Rs227.15 billion and Rs25.62 billion for the Power Division and Petroleum Division respectively, which were accepted by the House.

Meanwhile, ruckus marred the session when Leader of the Opposition Shehbaz Sharif called Imran Khan a "selected" premier despite the usage of the word being barred in the House. Speaker Asad Qaiser subsequently expunged the word from Shehbaz's speech but the opposition leader continued using the word while criticising the premier for the hike in inflation and recent devaluation of the rupee.

The speaker directed the media to avoid reporting the expunged words from the proceedings. Objecting to Federal Minister for Power Omar Ayub Khan's statement about the previous Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government abandoning renewable energy projects to accommodate expensive Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plants, the opposition leader challenged the factuality of his statement.



While criticising the previous regimes on the floor of the House, Omar had said that the incumbent government paid Rs100 in electricity dues of Prime Minister Office which had been accumulated over the last five years. He said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government is paying the price for the "wrong policies" of the previous governments and blamed them for the worsening economic situation.

He said that the government has decided against renewing agreements with independent power producers as there is an extra burden of Rs200 billion on the national exchequer.

Rejecting the allegations against his

independent power producers as there is an extra burden of Rs200 billion on the national exchequer.

The minister said that the previous PML-N government had only focused on winning elections which is why it did not take action against power thieves during its last year. "We registered 30,000 First Information Reports (FIR) against power thieves and took action against 500 officials who were actively supporting it," he said, adding that the incumbent government is "clearing the landmines laid by previous governments". He said that the PTI government had revived 250 renewable energy projects which were blocked by the previous governments.

Rejecting the allegations against his

government, former premier Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said that the PML-N government did not increase gas prices and today the country was facing an unprecedented increase in gas prices. "There was surplus electricity and gas in the country during the PML-N tenure," he claimed, adding that the main issue facing the power sector is power losses. "The word is that the incumbent government wants to shift the head office of the department to Islamabad but these measures will not resolve the problems," he added.

Similar sentiments were echoed by Pakistan People's Party (PPP) MNA Abdul Qadir Patel who said that Ministry of Energy should be renamed to Ministry of Price Hikes, adding that the budget proposed by the government will only add to the miseries of the people.

PML-N leader Khawaja Asif opposed the capacity payment clause in the renewable agreements with the independent power producers. He said that most of these contracts are nearing their expiration date and this clause should be excluded during the renewal process. "We are paying them a huge amount on account of this without getting electricity," he said.

PPP MNA Syed Naveed Qamar criticised the government for the gas price hike and added that former finance minister Asad Umar had facilitated the export sector by giving them concessions but the current finance regime has withdrawn that support. He questioned whether the government wants to shut down the industries of the country.

He also asked the NA speaker to issue the production orders of Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) MNAs Ali Wazir and Mohsin Dawar, saying that the budget would not have legitimacy until they are present in the House. The demand was backed by PML-N's Barjees Tahir, who said that the speaker should immediately issue the production orders of the detained MNAs.



PM directs govt depts to implement price controls

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday said that a special campaign will be launched to ensure that government departments improve their efficiency in controlling prices.

The announcement came via a statement released by the Prime Minister's Office, which also outlined a strategy to implement price controls. The nine-point strategy stated that a mechanism shall be devised by all concerned stakeholders to implement price control laws effectively from the wholesale markets to retail shops; prime and market control committees shall be made more effective and should take stern actions against the perpetrators under law; field officers shall frequently visit the wholesale markets and be present at the time of auctions to determine realistic rates; all the provincial secretaries shall frequently have a surprise check in the districts; Special Branch shall report daily the implementation of directives to the chief secretary and the chief minister concerned; mechanism be developed to check unscrupulous elements which charge disproportionate prices without sufficient cause; strict action shall be taken against hoarding; price control committees shall notify the rates of essential commodities regularly and the same shall be implemented effectively; a performance evaluation mechanism, with reward and punishment be developed to ensure success of this campaign. The prime minister has directed that progress on the above directions be reported to him within seven days. "Lack of coordination among various stakeholders, poor understanding/implementation and indifferent attitude has established redundancy of these laws, thus increasing suffering of the general public," the PM Office statement observed.

"Effective implementation of local and special laws concerning efficient service delivery and relief to the general public is one of the prime responsibilities of field administration," it added. The PTI government has been under increasing public and political pressure to rein in the sweeping price hike of utilities as well as commodities such as gas, medicines, and essential food items. The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Wednesday approved an increase in gas price and a withdrawal in the subsidy on electricity. Resultantly, the average increase in gas and electricity tariff will be around 25pc and 12pc, respectively.

FIVE MORE POLIO CASES DETECTED IN KP

ISLAMABAD
APP

The National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) for Polio Eradication on Thursday confirmed that five more polio cases had been detected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Two cases had been found in Bannu, two from Torkham and one from North Waziristan, Prime Minister's Focal Person on Polio Babar Bin Atta said in a statement. He said that a fake drama was created against polio vaccine in Peshawar and advised the parents to avoid considering any such propaganda against polio vaccine and vaccinate their children to protect them from polio virus. He said that due to this fake drama, some parents of far-flung areas were reluctant to vaccinate their children. He urged polio workers and provincial health officials to pay special focus on far-flung areas of KP and asked the province to utilize all resources to eradicate polio. He said despite the significant achievements of the programme, the cunning polio-virus was still surviving and find a way for its survival, therefore special immunization campaign was planned in all core reservoirs to kill the wild polio virus forever.

PM Imran denies violating ECP code of conduct during Ghotki visit

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday told the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) that he had not violated any provisions of the commission's code of conduct by visiting Ghotki ahead of the NA-205 by-election next month.

According to Para 17(b) of the ECP code of conduct, no member of parliament can visit a constituency where by-elections are scheduled after the dates for the election have been notified.

The response to the ECP's show cause notice submitted through his counsel, Babar Awan, stated that it was a "matter of public record" that a member of the federal cabinet, minister for narcotics control Ali Mohammad Mahar, had passed away and the prime minister had visited his family in Ghotki on June 19 to condole the minister's demise. It was Mahar's death which had necessitated the by-election for the NA-205 seat. By-elections on the seat are

scheduled to take place on July 18.

"Our client (the prime minister) has not participated in any political programme or a meeting/rally nor he made any political statement [or] press talk which is a proof of the fact that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has deep respect for the electoral laws and code of conduct," the reply said.

It noted that Para 17(b) of the ECP code of conduct forbids parliamentarians and public office holders from participating in the election campaign in any manner after the announcement of the schedule but that it "does not bar religious visit for condolence" and the prime minister "has not participated in the election campaign in any manner, whatsoever".

The reply termed as "malicious, scandalous and baseless" the complaint filed by a candidate against the prime minister's visit, alleging that the candidate was attempting to "illegally influence the election campaign in his favour by bringing the name of prime minister of Pakistan in the local dirty politics of his party".

The premier's counsel requested

the ECP to withdraw the show-cause notice issued to his client for being "misconceived and without any legal justification and reason".

According to the reply, Prime Minister Imran reserves the right to file a complaint for the initiation of proceedings against the complainant "for making a false and dishonest statement" before the ECP. It sought a copy of the complaint and the accompanying affidavit for appropriate legal action. While in Ghotki, the prime minister had assured the Mahar brothers that the PPP would not be allowed to rig the by-election and that he would issue directives to the authorities concerned to ensure that.

According to the letter issued by the election commission, a complaint against the visit was registered by Abdul Bari Pitafi, a candidate from the constituency.

The candidate had pointed out that Prime Minister Imran's visit to Ghotki was in violation of the ECP code of conduct as the schedule for the by-election had already been notified.

Trump hits out at 'unacceptable' Indian tariffs ahead of G20 Summit

WASHINGTON
AGENCIES

Donald Trump on Thursday lashed out at what he called "unacceptable" tariffs imposed by India as the US president headed towards a high-stakes G20 summit likely to be dominated by trade tensions.

"I look forward to speaking with Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi about the fact that India, for years having put very high Tariffs against the United States, just recently increased the Tariffs even further. This is unacceptable and the Tariffs must be withdrawn!" tweeted the president. India slapped higher tariffs on 28 US products following Washington's withdrawal this month of key trade privileges for New Delhi.

India's trade ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters email seeking comment.

Trump's remarks could further worsen a trade row that has led to tit-for-tat tariffs from India and the United

States and created an unease over the depth of their security alliance.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who was in New Delhi on Wednesday, sought to reduce heightened trade tension with India, promising a renewed focus on negotiating better ties but giving few specifics of how they would overcome disputes over trade and investment.

Trump scrapped trade privileges for India under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), under which New Delhi was the biggest beneficiary that allowed duty-free exports of up to \$5.6 billion.

India initially issued an order in June last year to raise import taxes as high as 120 percent on a slew of US items, incensed by Washington's refusal to exempt it from higher steel and aluminum tariffs.

But New Delhi repeatedly delayed raising tariffs as the two nations engaged in trade talks. Trade between them stood at about \$142.1 billion in 2018.

