

PAKISTAN TODAY

Monday, 1 July, 2019 | 27 Shawwal-ul-Mukarram, 1440 | Rs 19.00 | Vol X No 2 | 60 Pages | Islamabad Edition



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- HAMMAD SAYS AMNESTY SCHEME RECEIVED POSITIVE RESPONSE, GOVT WILL UPDATE DETAILS IN FEW DAYS

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

A day after Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Chairman Shabbir Zaidi rejected speculation in the media regarding an extension in the deadline for the government's Asset Declaration Scheme, Adviser to Prime Minister on Finance Dr Hafeez Shaikh on Sunday announced that the government is extending the Asset Declaration Scheme till July 3.

He said this while addressing a joint press conference with Minister of State for Revenue Hammad Azhar, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan and the FBR chairman himself.

"There's been a lot of interest in the Asset Declaration Scheme," he said, adding that the deadline had been extended to banking office hours on July 3.

"We decided to extend the deadline as there has been a lot of interest in the Asset Declaration Scheme. We are giving people a final opportunity in case as some of them



are still in the process or are facing difficulties wrapping it up," Shaikh said. "After that, the benami commission that we are currently establishing to pursue benami properties, will come into action," he added.

Addressing the media, Hammad said that thousands of people had availed the scheme so far. "We will put forth the details of this scheme in a few days," he added.

Shaikh, while discussing the government's budget

strategy, said that it was part of its agenda to "make all things transparent and to utter nothing but truth in front of the public which is precisely what is reflected in this budget".

"That's why we are announcing that we are going to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme. We're sending a message to everyone out there that we're serious and ready to take hard decisions so we can propel ourselves along a growth trajectory."

"Our focus is to generate confidence in markets and put the reforms in proper sequence. The idea is to do all this in phases, not abruptly," he explained.

He indicated five key elements of the budget that are part of the government's strategy to tackle the crisis: managing the external front, strict austerity, helping the poor/social welfare, helping industrialists and mobilising revenues.

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Trump steps into North Korea, in historic first



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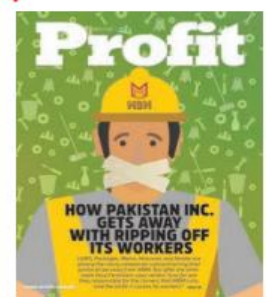
Eight dead as Afghan violence continues

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ISLAMABAD

LAWYERS TO TAKE TO STREETS ON JULY 2

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

AS the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) is all set to take the reference against two top judges — Supreme Court judge Qazi Faez Isa and Sindh High Court (SHC) KK Agha — the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) has announced a nationwide strike on July 2, Tuesday.

PBC Vice Chairman Syed Amjad Shah said lawyers across the country would hold protest meetings in their bar

rooms, while lawyers' representatives would assemble at the Supreme Court premises in Islamabad.

Shah said a meeting of the joint action committee would also be convened at the PBC office at the SC Islamabad building on the same day.

On June 14, lawyers from bar councils across the country staged a protest outside the SC and burned copies of the references filed against Justice Isa and Justice Agha over non-disclosure of foreign properties in their wealth statements. Wearing black bands in solidarity with the accused judges, the

Supreme Court Bar Council (SCBA) led the protest. The lawyers questioned 'tainted record' of the SJC as an authority to hear references against senior judges. Members of Quetta's legal fraternity had also staged a protest demonstration at the Balochistan High Court (BHC) against the reference on the same day. They had chanted slogans against what they described as the punishment of Justice Isa for his stance.

Balochistan Bar Council Executive Committee Chairman Advocate Rahib Buledi, BHC Bar Association (BHCBA) President Shah Muhammad

Jatoi, and other prominent lawyers had participated in the protest, demanding the government withdraw the reference against Justice Isa. They had claimed the reference was equivalent to pressuring judges with regards to delivery of justice. The presidential references were filed against two judges who are widely recognised and acknowledged as independent, upright and competent judges.

A former Supreme Court judge — who had taken oath under the 2007 Provisional Constitution Order (PCO) — was hired to file the reference by the Ministry of Law and Justice.

Pakistan demands probe into attack on cricket fans

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has demanded a probe into a scuffle outside the Leeds cricket stadium a day Pakistan and Afghanistan cricket fans clashed in Leeds followed by an attempted assault on Pakistan cricket team by an Afghan fan. A statement issued by Foreign Office on Sunday said Pakistan expressed concern over the attack of Afghan fans on Pakistani cricketers and supporters after the match. Pakistan has demanded sports and law enforcement authorities to conduct detail inquiry into the matter and made the people accountable involved in the incident. After Pakistan won the match against Afghanistan, an Afghan fan tried to attack Wahab Riaz. The picture shows him being tackled to the ground by an ICC official. The ugly scenes at Headingley were sparked by the flying of a banner over the ground reading: "Justice for Balochistan." Balochistan, Pakistan's largest and poorest province, which borders Afghanistan and Iran, is rife with Islamist, separatist and sectarian insurgencies. **STAFF REPORT**

PM establishes youth council

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has established first youth council of Pakistan comprising important icons of youth from sports, education, religion, economy and arts and culture have been made part of the council. The PM will be patron-in-chief of the council while Prime Minister Special Assistant (PMSP) on Youth Affairs Usman Dar will be the chairman of the council. A Pakistan Army Major Tanveer Shafi is the first member of the council. Besides, cricketer Hassan Ali, Sana Mir, actor Hamza Ali Abbasi and actress Mahira Khan, Muneeba Mazari are the part of the council. **INP**



Zardari becomes part of three NA standing committees

ISLAMABAD
INP

The former president and co-chairman PPP Asif Ali Zardari has made the member of more three National Assembly standing committees member that climbed his participation in six committees. According to sources, he became the member of NA committees on information, defense production and privatisation. Sources said it was PPP plan that Asif Ali Zardari will spend most of his time by attending the meeting of these committees and avoid to stay long in jail. It is pertinent to say that earlier Asif Zardari was made a member of NA committees on Industries and Production, Textile and Water Resources and he would be attending the meetings of the committees after issuing production orders.

Accused seeks earliest conclusion of trial in Imran Farooq case

ISLAMABAD
INP

The under-arrest suspects in the murder case of British-Pakistani politician Imran Farooq have approached Islamabad High Court (IHC) over consistent delay in their trials, pleading the court to conclude their trials at the earliest. The plea filed by the accused urges IHC Chief Justice to swiftly conclude the trial and subsequently fix date to announce the verdict.

"Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has been probing the case for last five year. The suspects are being exploited as FIA keeps on asking for more time in their investigation", the petition read. It is to be noted that an Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) had rejected FIA's plea seeking more time to collect evidence in the case. Other than that, ATC had summoned FIA's final argument in the case on June 20.

Indian troops martyr youth in Kashmir

SRINAGAR
INP

Indian troops in their fresh act of state terrorism in occupied Kashmir, martyred one Kashmiri youth in Budgam district on Sunday. The youth was killed during a violent cordon and search operation launched jointly by Indian Army's 53 Rashtriya Rifles, Central Reserve Police Force and Special Operation Group at Bugam in Chadoora area of the district. Soon after the killing, the authorities suspended the internet.

On June 23, Indian troops martyred at least two youngsters in Shopian district of occupied Kashmir. The youth were killed by Indian Army's 1 Rashtriya Rifles, Central Reserve Police Force and Special Operation Group during a violent cordon and search operation in Awneera area of the district. An Indian official claimed that two sus-

pected militants were killed in the gunfight and the identity of the slain is being ascertained, he said, adding searches are underway in the area.

Meanwhile, the occupation authorities suspended all Internet services in the district Indian troops on Saturday martyred youth in Islamabad district in occupied Kashmir during a cordon and search operation in Nowgam, Verinag. The occupation authorities have suspended mobile internet service in Islamabad district.

Earlier, thousands of people attended in the funeral prayers of the four martyred youth at their native areas in Shopian and Pulwama districts. On Friday, Indian troops martyred at least four Kashmiri youth in Indian-occupied Kashmir (IoK) in their fresh act of state terrorism in the troubled valley. According to details, the killings occurred in Pulwama district of the Kashmir. The Kashmiri youths were martyred during a cordon and search operation



at Punjran area of the district.

Meanwhile, an Indian army official was also killed in an attack at Sadura area of Islamabad district of the Indian Occupied Kashmir. In April, the occupying Indian army martyred 13 Kashmiris, including a young boy. According to data collected by the Research Section of Kashmir Media Service, 132 people were critically injured by pellets, bullets and teargas shells over the course of the month.

Govt extends amnesty scheme till July 3

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"At the heart of the budget are the people of Pakistan, because a government's success can only be assessed on the basis of how good it is for the people," Shaikh said. "And if harsher than harsh measures need to be taken, we shouldn't shy away from them," he said.

"When the PTI was elected into government, it inherited an economic crisis that it is still trying to get out of," Shaikh said, explaining that due to the current account deficit and foreign loans, the external front was a matter of great concern.

"We took immediate steps to curb the external threats. We tried bringing down the Current Account Deficit. We imposed tariffs on imports and that too on luxury products & finished products; to squeeze imports. And that has continued in this budget.

Due to foreign loans and the import-export gap, the rupee devalued in comparison to the dollar. The first step, Shaikh said, was to reduce the current account deficit.

This was achieved by levying tariffs on imports — particularly luxury goods and finished products — to reduce the purchase of such products. "The current account deficit was \$20 billion when this government came to power, but it has now gone down to \$13.5bn," he said. "The budget has suggested measures that will bring it

down further to \$7 billion."

The government also managed to acquire \$9.2 billion in loans with friendly countries, including deferred payment facilities with Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, while the government is in talks with Qatar over similar arrangements.

"Things are also on the right track with the IMF," Shaikh said. "If everything stays on course, they will give us a \$6 billion package, and taking a cue from them, the Asian Development Bank has also committed some money. This will be disbursed during the year. We have similar hopes from the World Bank." "These were the steps we took to generate dollars," he said.

In order to repay debts taken by previous governments and make payments to provinces, the government needs to save money, Shaikh said.

To do this, the government has begun to implement austerity measures starting from the top, with Grade 20+ civilian or military officers not receiving any increment in the budget, while Grades 17-20 received a 5 per cent increase, while Grades 1-16 received a 10pc increment in their salaries.

"For the first time in Pakistan's history, armed forces have not got a budget increments. This sends a message that everyone is on same page regarding taking Pakistan out of this challenge," Shaikh said.

The adviser on finance said that the government had decided that if any

money is spent this fiscal year, it would be focused on the neediest sections of society first. The government had, therefore, increased social safety net budget allocations to Rs191 billion from Rs100 billion.

Additionally, Rs200 billion was allocated to provide relief to low-energy consumers who utilise less than 300 units of electricity.

"Then we allocated money for the people of the tribal areas. We believe that is the third most deserving strata of the government's relief efforts," Shaikh said. "Social security nets that alleviate the poor, widows who run their households and the weakest segments of society get precedence in the government's priority list for relief."

Businessmen were also given some relief in the budget, Shaikh said, explaining that import tariffs on a number of raw materials had been slashed to 0pc so that the cost of doing business was manageable for businessmen.

Similarly, Shaikh said, the tax on exports has been exempted.

The prime minister's adviser on finance said the government had set itself a revenue collection target of Rs5.5bn for the coming fiscal year.

"The rich of Pakistan pay the lowest tax in our region. It cannot go on like this," he said, adding that the government was "all set to achieve" its tax collection target. He explained that the measures related to taxation and revenue collection were necessary be-

cause the government wants to spend on improved infrastructure, education, better healthcare and clean water, but needs funds in order to that.

"All the valid points we got as suggestions from Parliament and other stake holders, we tried to accommodate them to improve this budget," he said.

Minister of State for Revenue Hammad Azhar chimed in here to say that although previous governments had talked about merging FBR data with the National Database and Registration Authority for 10 years now, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government had managed to do it within 10 days.

"Basic steps for broadening our revenue that have not been taken in the past 10 years, we took in our first 10 months," he added.

FBR Chairman Shabbaz Zaidi said that people had previously "never had a good reason to think that the government has some sort of data on them regarding their taxes".

"Now we have integrated data that serves as a driving factor," he stated. Azhar, explaining taxes on cigarettes, denied the impression that taxes on the tobacco industry had been revoked to appease any lobby.

"The only revoked taxes are import taxes. Taxes on tier 1 and 2 have been increased per pack of cigarettes, upto Rs8 even. All this money will be directed towards healthcare," Azhar said.



NAPLES DEAL

ONE LARGE PIZZA WITH A DRINK AND ITALIAN BREAD
PKR 1000 • TAX

DOUBLE UP

ONE LARGE PIZZA, ONE PLATE PASTA, ONE PLATE OF SALAD
(FROM THE SALAD BAR) AND TWO DRINKS
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INDIA WARMS UP TO PAKISTAN, OFFERS TALKS ON KARTARPUR CORRIDOR

INDIA has proposed to hold talks with Pakistani officials on Kartarpur Corridor between July 11 and 14 on the Pakistani side of Wagah Border to take the project further, with the aim of completing it by November ahead of the birth anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak, according to reports.

According to the plan proposed by India, both sides will discuss a draft agreement pertaining to issues related to the project's infrastructure and alignment and the facilitating the movement of Sikh yatrees.

The development follows nearly three months of silence which was preceded by India's decision to postpone the talks scheduled for April 2 over the alleged inclusion of pro-Khalistan activists in the Pakistani committee.

While announcing its decision to postpone the meeting, New Delhi had said it had "sought clarifications from Pakistan on key pro-

posals put forward by India at the last meeting held in Attari to discuss the modalities of the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor".

Pakistan, in a statement, had regretted India's decision, saying: "Last minute postponement without seeking views from Pakistan and especially after the productive technical meeting on March 19 is incomprehensible."

The corridor is planned to be opened for Sikh pilgrims this year in commemoration of the 550th birth anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism.

The groundbreaking ceremony of the corridor in Pakistan was performed last year on November 28. In January, Pakistan had shared its draft of Kartarpur Corridor Accord with India and invited its delegation for a visit for negotiating the document, which would govern operations of the corridor meant to provide visa-free access to Indian Sikh pilgrims to the Gurdwara in

Kartarpur Sahib (Narowal district). In January, Pakistan shared its draft of Kartarpur Corridor Accord with India and invited its delegation for a visit for negotiating the document.

India, however, instead of accepting the proposal on that occasion, insisted on hosting the meeting and asked Pakistani officials to visit Delhi either on Feb 26 or March 7. Although the counter-proposals from Islamabad and Delhi had given the impression of a sort of standoff on the issue, Islamabad had, instead of reacting to the position taken by India in response to its original suggestion, vowed to "take the process forward". The announcement came a week after the Indian Air Force (IAF) violated Pakistani airspace following the Feb 14 attack targeting Indian security forces in Indian-occupied Kashmir's Pulwama area.

Two intruding IAF jets were later downed by Pakistan and a pilot was captured only to be re-

leased as a unilateral goodwill gesture. Amidst rhetoric by Indian officials in the aftermath of the attack, Pakistan had called back its high commissioner in India for consultations on Feb 18. The high commissioner returned to India last week as tensions began to defuse after intervention by influential world capitals. On March 14, officials from Pakistan and India agreed to expedite work to operationalise the Kartarpur Corridor after talks on the matter concluded on a cordial note in Attari, India.

Delegations of Pakistani and Indian technical experts met on March 19 at the proposed zero points to discuss and finalise the development of the Kartarpur Corridor. It was decided after this meeting that both sides will present surveys and maps for border fencing and developmental work on the Dera Baba Nanak-Kartarpur Sahib corridor to their respective governments. NEWS DESK

Shujaat calls Senate chief Sanjrani, assures support

LAHORE
STAFF REPORT



Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) President and former prime minister Chaudhary Shujaat Hussain on Sunday telephoned Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani and expressed his party's support to the besieged the Senate chief. Shujaat

said that there was no justification for moving a no-trust motion against the Senate chairman, and assured him PML full support on which the Chairman Senate has expressed gratitude to Ch Shujaat Hussain and Chaudhary Parvez Elahi for their support.

THE NUMBER GAME: The joint opposition is in a comfortable numerical position to turn the tables on the ruling coalition if it goes ahead with its decision to vote out Sanjrani.

A primary condition will be that all the opposition votes are cast in the favour of its consensus nominee in the secret ballot. As per the calculations, the opposition parties, in the 103-member House, enjoy the support of 61 senators while the governing alliance has the backing of 40 members. The chairman can be removed by the majority of the total membership. Thus the support of at least 52 senators will be required to carry the no-confidence motion. The opposition alliance comprises the PML-N with 29 senators, PPP with 20, National Party of Mir Hasid Bizenjo with five members, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUL-F) with four senators, Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) of Mehmood Achaikzai with two and Awami National Party (ANP) of Asfandiyar Wali with one member in the Upper House. The decision to remove Sanjrani was taken at an APC hosted by JUL-F chief Fazlur Rehman. The government alliance is in a weaker position, with PTI's 14 senators. Its ally Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) has five, Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) has two, and Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) and PML-Functional have one senator each in the House. 8 senators, who sit on the government benches, are from tribal districts. The two votes of the Jamaat-e-Islami can't be counted in the basket of the opposition or the government as this party has embarked upon an "independent" policy. It stayed away from the APC and doesn't stand with the government as well. Its Senate votes may go to either side or its MPs may even abstain. Sadiq Sanjrani doesn't belong to any of the political parties. He was elected a senator by an independent group. However, later the independent group, he belonged to, formed Balochistan Awami Party (BAP). The numerical assets of the two sides apart, the chairman's ouster, the first of its kind, will be a huge development that may stir the already charged political environment. It may further peak the confrontation. Already, the opposition's domination in the Senate has debilitated the government to get any bill passed from the Upper House.

Govt notifies Adjudicating Authority under Benami act

ISLAMABAD: Federal government has established the Adjudicating Authority under Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act 2017, according to a press statement issued by the Federal Board of Revenue here. Jamil Ahmed, a retired Pakistan Administrative Officer has been appointed as chairperson of the Adjudicating Authority whereas Muhammad Tanvir Akhtar, a retired Inland Revenue Officer and Khagan Murtaza, an officer of Pakistan Administrative Officer were appointed as members Adjudicating Authority, according to the notification. The Adjudicating Authority will start functioning w.e.f. 1st July, 2019. In another notification issued by the FBR, Inland Revenue Officers have been posted in the Benami Zones established under Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act 2017. Benami Zones have already started to implement Benami Act 2017. Under the instructions of the chairman FBR has already swung into action against people having Benami properties. APP

Buzdar, Sarwar call on PM

Amid reports that some of the lawmakers belonging to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) from Punjab are ready to jump the ship, Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday met Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar and Governor Punjab Chaudhary Sarwar. During the meetings, the Punjab CM and the Governor Punjab briefed the prime minister on the current political situation in the province. South Punjab Province Executive Council Chairman Tahir Bashir Cheema was also present in the meeting. Matters pertaining to South Punjab province also came under discussion in the meeting. NEWS DESK

Saudi team in town for 'Road to Makkah' project

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

A 40-member Saudi team arrived Islamabad on Sunday for 60 days stay to initiate Road to Makkah project from Islamabad airport during Hajj Operation, 2019. Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-faith Harmony Noor ul Haq Qadri welcomed the Saudi delegation and presented a bouquet. The Saudi team will take over the responsibilities at Islamabad airport tomorrow, said a report.

Minister for Religious Affairs Noor ul Haq Qadri said that after the success of Road to Makkah project in Islamabad, the project will be expanded to include other

cities of the country. The Minister appreciated the role of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman who played a role in granting of this facility to Pakistani pilgrims. He said the project has started on an experimental basis at Islamabad Airport and later it will be expanded to include Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta, Faisalabad and other cities.

"Two and three new cities will be added into the project next year," he added. The Minister termed the granting of e-visa facility to Pakistani pilgrims by Saudi authorities a good step as it was a long-standing demand of Pakistan. The CAA had announced on June 27 the

schedule of pre-Hajj flight operations for Karachi's Jinnah International Airport.

According to the schedule, first pre-Hajj flight of a private airline will depart from Karachi on July 5. The flight, PA-1760 would leave for Saudi Arabia with over 180 intending pilgrims on board. From Karachi, the first PIA Hajj flight, PK-743, will depart at 7:00 pm with 225 passengers on board for Medina on July 5. Sources said that over 25,081 intending pilgrims would be transported to Saudi Arabia through 95 flights during the Hajj operation from Karachi and added that the operation would continue till August 6. NEWS DESK

PPP rejects increase in prices of power, gas: senator

ISLAMABAD: Senator Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, the spokesman to the Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, has said that PPP rejects the increase in the prices of gas and electricity. Senator Khokhar in a statement on Sunday said that the government wants to run the country by price hike, which is anti-people. The people are being crushed under the increasing prices

of goods ever since this government came into power, he added. He said that the government's incompetency is at its height as the people who created a havoc over price hike while standing on containers are nowhere to be seen. The government wants to reduce the deficit by robbing the people of this country, he added. The spokesman to Chairman PPP said that the people are sick and tired of the PTI government and if they decide to protest on the roads, then no one can stop them. He said that Chairman Bilawal is determined towards acquiring justice for the people. PPP has already begun its mass contact campaign, he concluded. INP

TRANSGENDER PERSON KILLED IN COLD BLOOD

NOWSHERA: A transgender person named Aftab aka Maya Khan was shot dead by "unknown assailants" in Noor Gul Bahar area, police said on Sunday. The body of the transgender person was shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital for postmortem. Doctors at the hospital said Aftab was shot at from a close range. According to Pakhtunkhwa Civil Society Coordinator Taimoor Kamal, the deceased was handed over to his family by Hashnaghri Police without his consent a month ago. She, however, fled from home and was again handed over to the family by the police on Saturday. And a few hours later, she was shot dead. According to a report in a local media outlet, police suspect her father, who was upset at her for choosing to live as a transgender person, was behind the crime. Meanwhile, the transgender community in Peshawar gathered outside the Hashnaghri Police Station and staged a demonstration. APP

PML-N members leaving due to Shehbaz, Maryam 'rift': Fawad

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

Federal Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry on Sunday said the "opposition was breaking" and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) lawmakers were jumping the rift amid an alleged rift between party President Shehbaz Sharif and Vice President Maryam Nawaz.

Addressing media talk, the minister said there was no role of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in breaking away the PML-N members because they were well aware of the future of the party with its leadership allegedly divided.

Fawad said that the PTI was not involved in any groupings, but it was the PML-N itself that set the things in motions. "There was a fight for leadership in



the PML-N and the Sharif family." Speaking about the role of Shehbaz in the party, he said PML-N leader Shehbaz Sharif had resigned from all the commit-

tees and just remained opposition leader in the National Assembly.

No one pays attention to Shehbaz Sharif in the PML-N, he claimed.

He said that Shehbaz Sharif is not a crisis leader and that leadership of the PML-N had been taken over by Maryam Nawaz. He added Shehbaz had become Fazal Elahi or Rafiq Tarar now as Shehbaz is nothing more than a figurehead.

He said that Shehbaz Sharif talked about the Charter of Economy on the floor of the National Assembly with Khawaja Asif next to him. When Maryam Nawaz rejected it, Asif Khawaja himself changed his stance to support Maryam.

He said that Maryam Nawaz had snatched the PML-N's narrative from her uncle Shehbaz Sharif. He said that Maryam Nawaz is the one who ousted her own father from power, made him go to

jail and took over the party leadership.

The minister termed the opposition attitude as immature and challenged to try to remove the Senate chairman, whom he declared government's candidate for the slot. "They should try to do so to know how many their senators support them."

PTI ON RIGHT TRACK OF PROSPERITY: The political footing, strong foreign policy and prudent economic plans of the government had put the country on the right track of prosperity, he said while talking about the performance of the PTI. The minister said that the government had paid Rs 9.8 billion in loans, which was more than the budget of Sindh province while the government was still striving to overcome the economic situation. He said that the government remained successful in passing the federal budget for the year 2019-20 and

started working to meet the challenges in tax collection target which was fixed at Rs 5.5 trillion. The minister assured that the government will be able to improve the financial condition of the country within six months while the government also remained successful in achieving foreign policy goals.

He termed Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's visit to Pakistan and Prime Minister Imran Khan's upcoming visit to the US as game changer. He said that Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi during his visit to Brussels signed various agreements, one whole chapter was on science and technology cooperation, he added. He said after British Airways, other European Union airlines had started modifying their advisories regarding Pakistan. Prince William and Kate Middleton are also coming to Pakistan in August, he added.



Protesters demand recovery of missing persons

LARKANA: The relatives of missing persons belonging to different districts held a protest here on Sunday at Jinnah Bagh to seek their early and safe recovery. The protesters, including women and children, were holding portraits of their missing relatives and banners and placards inscribed with their demands. They gathered in front of local press club and chanted slogans for acceptance of their demands. The protesters came here from different parts of the district and were demanding recovery of missing persons, including Prof. Ghulam Shabir Kalhoro, Murtaza Junejo, Kashif Ali Tagar, Aqib Chandio, Murtaza Solangi, Shahid Junejo, Rafique Umrani, Aysoob Kandhro and others. They appealed to Prime Minister Imran Khan, Chief Justice of Pakistan Asif Saeed Khosa and Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa to take personal interest in the safe recovery of the missing persons. **PTI**

2 dead bodies found in Orangi, Malir

KARACHI: Bodies of two persons brutally murdered were found on Sunday morning from two different spots of the Metropolis. As per police, one of the body which was found from Orangi Town area of Karachi had the head severed and hands and legs all tied up. Police claimed that the body was of a man named Sher Zaman. The other body was discovered from Bakra Perri Malir area. Police said that the victim was subjected to severe torture before being murdered. As per the latest reports, only one of the bodies got identified, however, police have launched investigation into the matter. **INP**

MURAD REJECTS POSSIBILITY OF ZARDARI TO BECOME SENATE CHAIRMAN

NEWS DESK

SINDH Chief Minister (CM) Syed Murad Ali Shah on Sunday rejected rumours regarding the former president and Pakistan People's Party co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari's chances of becoming Senate chairman.

While talking to journalists in Jamshoro, the Sindh chief minister claimed, "Asif Ali Zardari would definitely do it for what he says."

"I do not think that Zardari Sahib will become Senate chairman as the present head of the Upper House was able to get this position after being supported by Asif Ali Zardari," he added.

Shah reiterated that PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has condemned the role of the federal government and the Speaker National Assembly.

"The federal government has not heard suggestions of opposition despite a major surge in inflation. I condemn such moves of the federal government."

Shah refused to comment over the recent meeting between Prime Minister Imran Khan and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) legislators. He said, "Concerned political party should be asked for the meeting of N-League ministers with PM Imran Khan."

However, he said that it was a condemnable action for changing loyalties of legislators by harassing them.

It is pertinent to mention here that

Sadiq Sanjrani had met with the former president Asif Ali Zardari in Parliament House Islamabad following the opposition parties' threat to de-seat Senate chairman on June 23.

According to details, the meeting between Asif Zardari and Senate chairman lasted for more than half an hour.

When it was inquired from journalist to disclose either matter of no-confidence motion against him or not? The Senate chairman replied, "I just visited Asif Zardari to inquire his health."

Sadiq Khan Sanjrani also ruled out any possibility of a no-confidence motion against him, saying that the matter is not a big deal.

Earlier on June 26, the opposition's

All Parties Conference (APC) had saw disagreement and disarray among its ranks when the members reportedly discouraged demands of collective resignation from the National Assembly.

JUI-F Chief Maulana Fazal Ur Rehman was the one who came up with the idea of collective resignations.

The Major political players said that they were deliberating upon the option to resign but would only consider it as the last resort.

The APC also discussed plans to ask the current Chairman Senate and Deputy Chairman Senate to resign from their positions. A possibility of the Deputy Chairman Saleem Mandviwalla's resignation being presented was discussed as the first plan of action.



HYDERABAD: Pakistan People's Party activists protest against the arrest of Asif Ali Zardari and Farayal Talpur, and the federal budget. **ONLINE**

Schools across Sindh to re-open today

ISLAMABAD: Sindh School Education Department Sunday clarified that the provincial government has not made any extension in summer vacation and all govt and private educational institutions in the province will re-open from July 1, 2019. The new educational session would also begin in all private and government institutions from tomorrow, a private news channel reported. Secretary School Education Department Sindh advised parents to send their children to schools in accordance with the schedule released for the education sessions. **APP**

No trains even 10 days after collision

Railway traffic remained disrupted on Sunday after a passenger train collided with a freight train near Hyderabad on June 20, a local media outlet reported. At least three people, a train driver and two assistant drivers, were killed and several others injured after a passenger train collided with a freight train near Hyderabad. According to report, the Karakoram Express will depart from Karachi's Cantt Station for Lahore at 5:15 pm after a delay of 2 hours. Similarly, the Karachi Express will leave for Lahore from Karachi Cantt Station at 7:15 pm after a delay of three hours, said sources. Likewise, Pak-Business and Sukkur Express are also facing delays. The initial investigation report of train accident suspected that it occurred because of negligence on the part of the driver and assistant driver of a passenger train that rammed into a coal-laden goods train near Hyderabad. **NEWS DESK**

PTI gave nothing to masses except inflation: Wahab

KARACHI
INP

Adviser to Sindh Chief Minister on Information & Archives, Law and Anti-Corruption Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that the country is at the edge of devastation owing to incompetent rulers.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, Murtaza Wahab said that if it had led to the incumbent incompetent government they would even taxed the breathing.

The steep rise in gas and electricity tariff was unjustified, he added. He said that the steps taken by the PTI government had denied the foreign investment badly. It seemed as if the whole team of the Prime Minister Imran Khan had doctorate in incompetency, he added.

The Advisor to CM said that the rulers were behaving like step mother to the people of Sindh. The failed government had given nothing to the people of the country except inflation and unemployment, he stated. He said that a chaotic situation was prevailing in the country as people could not even arrange for their day's meal easily. He demanded that the decision to raise the gas price should immediately be taken back.

Barrister Murtaza Wahab while slamming Prime Minister Imran Khan said that he was a friend of stockholders while adversary of the poor. His dual standard was extremely destructive for the country, he concluded.

Mangoes quench Pakistan's summer brunt

KARACHI
AGENCIES

In Pakistan, where people are exploring ways to beat the searing summer heat, delicious mangoes keep them cool and fresh.

The rising summer temperatures coincide with the harvest of mango crop as well. Extolled as king of fruits, India and Pakistan recognise it as their national fruit. Both often unleash its power in diplomacy and political outreach. The fruit has also been used by writers and poets in the region, over centuries to represent unspoken thoughts and feelings.

Summer in both countries is defined by the sights and sounds of vendors hawking piles of soft, sweet-smelling mangoes or pureeing them to create refreshing drinks to cut through the scorching heat. "Summer in Pakistan is getting unbearable with every passing year, but mangoes only make it bearable," Tasneem Hussein, a lawyer said while bargaining with a mango-seller, at the entrance of Karachi's main fruit market.

Karachi was once known for its modest weather even in the hottest months of June and July. Global warming, associated with rising pollution levels, have upset weather clock, with the city getting warmer in recent years. "The cold and slushy (mango) shake or the frosty mango slices beat the fatigue, caused by the heat," said Hussein with a winsome smile on his bearded face. **PAKISTANI MANGOES ARE FAVOURITES**

Tariq Ali, a resident of southern Mirpur Khas district, where temperatures

touched 50 degrees Celsius earlier this month, says mangoes were the only thing he liked about summers. "It (summer) is stifling and disturbing, but I like the season because it brings with it mangoes, that make me tidy at the end," he said.

Mirpur Khas is one of the largely mango-producing regions and famous for its huge Sindhri variety of mangoes.

Pakistan produces 1.9 million tonnes of mangoes annually, thus ranking sixth in the world, followed by India, China, Thailand, Indonesia and Mexico. There are two dozens of mango varieties, notably, Anwar Ratul, Dasher, Langra, Saroli, Sindhri, Totapari, and others. But the taste of the country is prized Chaunsa.

Last year, Pakistan exported 82,000 metric tonnes of mangoes to the Middle East, Europe, the US, Japan, Australia and other countries. The juicy Chaunsa accounted for 60% of mango exports.

"Chaunsa is a favourite in the Middle East, Europe, America and other countries because of its special taste", said Waheed Ahmed, a Karachi-based mango exporter. In terms of sweetness, Pakistani mangoes edge out their Indian and Indonesian counterparts in the international market. Till 2011, when the US had put a ban on the entry of Pakistani mangoes, the fruit lovers would go all the way driving to Toronto, Canada, to taste Chaunsa mangoes.

NEED TO INTRODUCE NEW TECHNOLOGY

Despite its aroma and taste that makes Pakistani mangoes a hot favourite, little attention is being paid to adopt the latest harvest practices to improve their quality further. Ahmed stressed that adoption to the new technology was necessary to sustain and also to explore new markets. "Even China - the second largest mango producer - wants our mangoes, as their production does not match huge demand they have, because of a large population," he said.

Past four years, the country's mango production had slightly declined. "This year, production has shot up, because growers are getting better prices. But still, there is a 30% shortage compared to actual capacity and demand, mainly because of changing weather patterns," he said. The exporter added that the trend will definitely improve mango exports. But the impact will be seen on the ground, only by 2021-22. **Pakistan plans**

to export 100,000 metric tonnes of mangoes this year, according to Ahmed.

MANGO DIPLOMACY

Using mangoes to mend strained relations is an old tradition in the region. The competing tribes over centuries used the fruit, to defuse tensions.

In 2010, then US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton announced to open the US markets for Pakistani mangoes, in a bid to dampen anti-American sentiment, marking the latest chapter in the fruit's curious history of diplomacy.

"I have personally vouched for Pakistani mangoes, which are delicious, and I'm looking forward to seeing Americans be able to enjoy those in the coming months," Clinton said during her visit to Islamabad. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh gifted crates of mangoes to the visiting US President George Bush in 2006, when they were discussing the Indo-US nuclear deal. Whether President Bush gave India waivers due to mangoes is not known, but a favourable climate helped India to clinch the access to nuclear technology.

Local chiefs and political rivals have been using mangoes to mend relations. Pir of Pagaro, famous spiritual leader and head of his faction of Pakistan Muslim League - the second largest party in rural Sindh province - has continued the

tradition to gift mango crates to his friends and foes. Another politician from southern Punjab, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan had also earned fame for sending mangoes to his orchards, to his political opponents every year till his death in 2003.

Almost every year Pakistan's government sends a box of mangoes to the Indian prime minister and other top functionaries in the Indian capital New Delhi. The most famous Pakistani mango is known as Anwar Ratul, which has its roots in a village two hours from New Delhi, in the Baghpat district of western Uttar Pradesh province. Many years before Partition in 1947, a mango grower from Ratul had migrated to Pakistani part of Punjab and named a sprig he had transplanted there after his father, Anwar. **SOUR MEMORIES OF SWEET MANGOES**

The sweet mangoes have sour memories as well. Former military ruler General Ziaul Haq was killed along with several senior military officers and the then US ambassador in a plane crash in August 1988. Minutes before the plane took off, several boxes of Bahawalpur mangoes were loaded in the plane. The conspiracy theory is that mango crates had bombs. Noted Pakistani writer Mohammed Hanif has used this episode in his award-winning comic novel titled, "A Case of Exploding Mangoes", to expose cynical layers of corruption. Who killed Zia? The bomb in the mango box or a technical error. No one knows, despite several inquiries. The jury is still out on whether to hold mangoes guilty or not. Till then enjoy mangoes and stay fresh.





RT

MIKHAIL KHODARENOK

IRAN's downing of a US military surveillance drone last week precipitated led to another flare-up in tense relations between Tehran and Washington. What could be the implications of a potential conflict between the two nations?

Right after the Global Hawk UAV was shot down, the New York Times reported that US President Donald Trump approved military strikes against Iran, but then changed his mind.

Let's start by saying that the decision to launch a military operation against Iran (which is what this is really about), including the specific time and place, would have to be taken by a very small group of top US political and military of-

ficials. At such meetings, no leaks could possibly occur by definition.

Now, let's take a look at some of the details. The difference between a 'strike' and an 'operation' is quite significant, at the very least in terms of duration, and forces and equipment involved. It would be nice to know if the NYT actually meant a single airstrike or an entire air operation.

Amusingly enough, the publication reported that the strikes were scheduled for early morning to minimise the potential death toll among the Iranian military and civilians. It's worth pointing out that the US has never cared about the number of victims either among the military personnel or the civilian population of its adversaries.

Moreover, the purpose of any military conflict is to do as much damage to your enemy as possible in terms of personnel, military hardware and other equipment. This is how the goals of any armed conflict are achieved. Of course, it would be best if civilian losses are kept to a minimum, but for the US it's more of a secondary rather than a primary objective.

The US Navy and Air Force traditionally strike before dawn with one purpose alone – to avoid the anti-aircraft artillery (both small and medium-calibre), as well

as a number of air defence systems with optical tracking, firing at them. Besides, a strike in the dark hours of the day affects the morale of the enemy personnel.

Here we need to understand that Iran would instantly retaliate, and Tehran has no small capabilities for that. In other words, it would be a full-scale war. For the US, it wouldn't end with one surgical airstrike without consequences, like in Syria. And the US seems to have a very vague idea on what a military victory over Iran would look like. There is no doubt that a prolonged air campaign by the US will greatly undermine Iran's military and economic potential and reduce the country to the likes of Afghanistan, completely destroying its hydrocarbon production and exports industries.

To say how long such a campaign could last would be too much of a wild guess, but we have the examples of Operation Desert Storm in 1991 when airstrikes lasted for 38 days, and Yugoslavia in 1991 when the bombing continued for 78 days. So, theoretically, the US could bomb Iran, for say, 100 days, wrecking the country's economy and infrastructure step by step.

However, the price the US would have to pay for starting such a military

conflict may turn out to be too high.

For instance, Iran can respond to US aggression by launching intermediate and shorter-range ballistic missiles to target oil and gas fields and terminals in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE.

Should such a war really happen, the stakes would be very high, so there is every reason to assume that Iran's missiles would not only be equipped with conventional high explosive fragmentation warheads, but would also carry toxic agents and dirty bombs.

Firstly, it should be pointed out that even though the capabilities of US intelligence agencies are almost limitless, quite a few Iranian missile launching sites remain undiscovered. Secondly, US air defence systems in the Persian Gulf, no matter how effective, would not shoot down every last Iranian missile. And even a handful of Tehran's missiles reaching critical infrastructure in the Persian Gulf region would be enough to cause devastation.

On top of that, there are more questions than answers regarding the reliability of the antimissile and air defence systems that the Persian Gulf monarchies deployed to defend their hydrocarbon terminals and other oil and gas infrastructure.

If such a scenario came true, that would bring inconceivable chaos to the global economy and would immediately drive up oil prices to \$200-250 per barrel – and that's the lowest estimate. It is these implications that are most likely keeping the US from attacking Iran.

To solve the problem of Iran once and for all, the US would need to mount a large-scale ground operation, with the US Army invading the country. America would have to wipe out both regular Iranian forces and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, unseat the current leadership of Iran, and have a military presence in every major city for the next 10 to 15 years, keeping tight control over the entire country at the same time.

For the record, the US failed to do that even in Afghanistan, which is several times smaller than Iran in terms of both territory and population. And almost 18 years of fighting later, the US has achieved next to nothing.

Mikhail Khodarenok, military commentator for RT.com. He is a retired colonel. He served as an officer at the main operational directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces.

EU meeting on Iran ends with no agreement to prevent US war

WSWS.ORG
ALEX LANTIER

On Friday, diplomats from Germany, Britain, France, the European Union, China, Russia and Iran met in Vienna for talks on the 2015 Iranian nuclear treaty, a year after Washington unilaterally scrapped the agreement. No agreement emerged from the meeting on the central issue: the growing danger of a US war against Iran.

Last week, amid an ongoing US military build-up in the Persian Gulf, US President Donald Trump announced that he had pulled back from launching air strikes on Iran that would have caused hundreds of deaths only 10 minutes before they were to begin. On Friday, at the G20 summit in Osaka, he indicated that US war threats would escalate, declaring that "there's no rush" to ease tensions with Iran.

"There's absolutely no time pressure," he added. "I think that in the end, hopefully, it's going to work out. If it does, great. And if doesn't, you'll be hearing about it." It is clear that Washington's unilateral scrapping of the 2015 treaty and its imposition of sanctions targeting Iranian exports were a prelude to a new US war drive. Prior to the Vienna summit between representatives of the remaining signatories to the 2015 treaty, Iranian officials warned that it was the "last chance."

"I think this meeting can be the last chance for the remaining parties... to gather and see how they can meet their commitments towards Iran," Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi told the Fars news agency. He added that US sanctions against Iran "lack any legal basis" and are a "desperate" measure.

On Friday, during the G20 summit in Osaka, Chinese President Xi Jinping starkly warned that the Persian Gulf, the centre of the world's oil supply, is "standing at a crossroads of war and peace." According to China's Xinhua news agency, Xi said, "China always stands on the side of peace and opposes war. All parties must remain calm and exercise restraint, strengthen dialogue and consultations, and jointly safeguard regional peace and stability."

Xi's statement came after his June 5 summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, where China and Russia vowed to "protect" their ties to Iran and "firmly oppose the imposition of unilateral sanctions" by anyone.

Nonetheless, despite the danger of all-out war across the Middle East, and potentially the entire world, under conditions where Iran and Russia are already engaged in a bloody eight-year proxy

war against US-backed militias fighting for regime-change in Syria and Iraq, the Vienna summit failed to reach any deal.

"It was a step forward, but it is still not enough and not meeting Iran's expectations," Iran's representative in Vienna, Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, said of the talks. Araqchi said the sticking point was the EU's refusal to defy crippling US sanctions on Iran's oil exports that are strangling its economy. Araqchi criticised the Instex (Instrument to Support Trade Exchanges) institution set up in Paris by Germany, Britain and France to finance EU-Iran trade without using the US dollar. Up to now, the EU powers and European companies have refused to trade with Iran through Instex, citing fears of US retaliation.

"For Instex to be useful for Iran, Europeans need to buy oil or consider credit lines for this mechanism. Otherwise, Instex is not like they or we expect," Araqchi said. Even as it faces US trade war threats, China is defying US sanctions on Iranian oil and greeting Iranian oil tankers in its major ports. It is expected to import 200,000 barrels per day from Iran, according to industry estimates cited by the Financial Times.

Asked in Vienna whether China would obey Trump's order to cut Iranian oil exports to "zero," Chinese Foreign Ministry official Fu Cong said, "We reject the unilateral imposition of sanctions, and for us energy security is important... We do not accept this zero policy of the United States." The EU, Berlin, London and Paris are pursuing a different policy—capitulating to US threats and demanding that Iran take no action, even as Washington sends thousands of troops and an armada of warships to the Persian Gulf to threaten it.

In Vienna, EU diplomat Helga Schmid merely confirmed that Instex is "operational" before demanding Iran's "full and effective implementation" of the 2015 treaty. She thus echoed demands this week from EU Council President Donald Tusk, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron that Tehran abide by the treaty, even after Washington has discarded it and threatened to bomb Iran.

Araqchi rebuffed these calls, warning that Iran could act on its threat to restart uranium enrichment and make more than the 300kg limit on uranium specified by the 2015 treaty. "I don't think the progress made today will be enough to stop our process, but the decision will be made in Tehran," he said.

This statement reflects growing anger with the EU in Iranian ruling circles. After German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas visited Tehran earlier this

month to demand that Tehran observe the 2015 treaty, while warning that Europe "cannot work miracles" in foreign policy, the Iranian press mocked him.

The Vienna talks underscore the failure of whatever hopes remained, after nearly 30 years of bloodletting after the first US war against Iran in 1990-1991, that rival capitalist governments' diplomatic manoeuvres can avert a new imperialist war in the Middle East. Instead, even broader disasters are being prepared. Amid its continuing economic decline compared to powers like China and Germany, Washington is resorting more aggressively to its military to try to restore its former global hegemony. Yet a US war with Iran, a country with three times the population and four times the size of Iraq, would dwarf even the horrific 2003-2011 US occupation of Iraq, which left a million dead. After a decade of bloody proxy wars in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen, such a war would even more rapidly move toward a global war between the world's major nuclear-armed powers, threatening the survival of humanity.

The EU powers' attempts to whip Iran into line with US demands do not reflect agreement with Washington's Iran policy. Behind the scenes, US-EU tensions are surging. At a NATO defence ministers' meeting Thursday in Brussels, when newly installed acting US Defence Secretary Mark Esper said he would tolerate no further actions from Iran, his French counterpart, Florence Parly, reportedly replied by demanding that Washington not involve NATO in military action in the Persian Gulf.

The EU powers plan to spend hundreds of billions of euros on a future independent European army, and Washington has sent repeated diplomatic communications in recent weeks threatening to cut off military cooperation with the European Union. Plans for an EU army are more and more clearly bound up with the rivalry between the United States and Europe over the trillions of dollars in oil money, critical positions on world markets and control of military bases at stake in the new round of imperialist wars of plunder that are being prepared.

Macron declared Thursday that he shares the US "strategic objective" in Iran, namely, preventing "Iran from getting a nuclear weapon." He decried any Iranian moves to abandon the nuclear treaty. Macron also contested Russian reports, backed by radar data, that the US drone shot down by Iran over the Persian Gulf was hit over Iranian territorial waters. He said the information available to French authorities indicated it was "in the international zone," as alleged by Washington.

London has already announced the dispatch of a hundred British commandos to the Persian Gulf to join the military build-up against Iran.

Air conditioning is the world's next big threat



SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

CHRIS BRYANT

The vast majority of Americans and many Australians have air conditioning, but in Germany almost nobody does. At least not yet.

So when temperatures in Berlin rose to an uncomfortable 37 Celsius this week – a record for the month of June – I was uncommonly delighted to go to the Bloomberg office, where it's artificially and blissfully cool.

Air-conditioning units account for more than 40 per cent of the peak summer energy load in major Indian cities. About half of Chinese households have this modern tool, but of the 1.6 billion people living in India and Indonesia, only 88 million have access to air conditioning at home, Bloomberg New Energy Finance noted in a recent report.

For many, relief is in sight. Because of the combination of population growth, rising incomes, falling equipment prices and urbanisation, the number of air-conditioning units installed globally is set to jump from about 1.6 billion today to 5.6 billion by the middle of the century, according to the International Energy Agency. And because much of this growth will happen in Asia, Chinese companies such as Gree Electric Appliances, Qingdao Haier, Midea Group and Japan's Daikin Industries Ltd should be big beneficiaries.

There's just one glaring problem: What will all this extra demand for electricity do to the climate?

Carbon dioxide emissions rose another 2 per cent in 2018, the fastest pace in seven years. That increase was alarming in its own right, given what we know about the unfolding climate emergency. But the proximate cause was especially troubling: Extreme weather led to more demand for air conditioning and heating in 2018, BP explained in its annual review of energy sector.

It's not too hard to imagine a vicious cycle in which more hot weather begets ever more demand for air conditioning and thus

even more need for power. That in turn means more emissions and even hotter temperatures. That negative feedback loop exists at a local level too. Air-conditioning units funnel heat outside, exacerbating the so-called "urban heat island" effect, which makes cities warmer than the countryside.

BNEF expects electricity demand from residential and commercial air conditioning to increase by more than 140 per cent by 2050 – an increase that's comparable to adding the European Union's entire electricity consumption. Air conditioning will represent 12.7 per cent of electricity demand by the middle of the century, compared to almost 9 per cent now, it thinks.

Thankfully, much of that extra demand will be met by solar power (the need for cooling is highest during daylight hours). But because temperatures don't always return to comfortable levels when the sun goes down, there's a danger some will be supplied by fossil power. Buildings have long been a blind spot in climate discussions even though they account for about one-fifth of global energy consumption.

At least Germany's "passivhaus" movement, a way of building homes that require very little heating or cooling, voluntary standard for energy efficiency in buildings, shows some people are starting to recognise the danger. There are lessons to be learned from the world of lighting too. The LED revolution was spurred by innovation but also by better energy efficiency labelling on products and the phasing out of out-of-date technology. Something similar needs to happen with air conditioning.

There was a big step forward in January when the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol came into force. Though not well known, its aim is to phase out the use of potent greenhouse gases called hydrofluorocarbons, which are used widely in air conditioning systems. Unless substituted, these alone could cause 0.4C of additional warming by the end of the century.

Yet true to form, President Donald Trump's administration hasn't yet submitted Kigali to the Senate for ratification, even though American manufacturers would benefit from demand for the new technologies that it would spawn.

Trump knows all about the importance of good air con. He spends much of his time at his Palm Beach country club, a place that couldn't exist without it.

So he'd do well to remember this: You can air condition the clubhouse but not the golf course. And it's starting to get awfully hot outside.

Chris Bryant is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering industrial companies.

PUTIN SAYS LIBERALISM 'EATING ITSELF,' MIGRANT INFLUX WRONG

OSAKA
AGENCIES

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin fired a new broadside against Western liberalism at the Group of 20 summit in Japan, saying that policies such as welcoming migrants have hurt people's interests.

Speaking after the summit in Osaka concluded on Saturday, Putin charged that Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and a drop of popularity of traditional parties in Europe have been rooted in growing public dismay with mainstream liberal policies. He said Trump's election victory was driven by growing disenchantment with liberal policies.

"The liberal idea has started eating itself," Putin said at a news conference. "Millions of people live their lives, and those who propagate those ideas are separate from them."

He also charged that the influx of migrants to Europe has infringed on people's rights. "People live in their own country, according to their own traditions, why should it happen to them?" Putin said. The Russian leader added that while "liberal ideas remain attractive as a whole," election results show that people want change.

Putin hailed his meeting with Trump on Friday on the sidelines of the G-20 summit as "business-like and pragmatic." "We addressed almost the entire list of issues of mutual concern,"



he said. "Of course, we talked about the situation in various parts of the world. Overall, these consultations were useful." He said the claims of Russian meddling in the U.S. election were part of the agenda of his talk with Trump.

At the start of Friday's meeting, the Russian leader laughed when a reporter shouted about Trump warning Putin "not to meddle" in the 2020 presidential election. Asked Saturday whether the issue was discussed during the meeting, Putin said that "we talked about it," but didn't elaborate.

He said he believes it's necessary to "turn the page" in relations with the U.S., which have plunged to the lowest level since the Cold War era.

In November, Trump abruptly canceled a scheduled round of talks with Putin on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in Argentina over Russia's seizure of Ukrainian navy ships and their crews. Russia has kept the seamen in

custody pending trial. Putin said that Trump raised the issue during Friday's meeting and made it a priority.

The Russian leader said the naval incident was a provocation staged by the former Ukrainian president, and signaled that the Ukrainian seamen could be released after their trial is over.

"We should wait until it's over and then could deal with it," he said. "They were only fulfilling an order, but they violated the Russian law."

Putin said he and Trump agreed that the nations' top diplomats should continue discussions on a possible extension of the New Start nuclear arms reduction treaty that expires in 2021.

They also talked about the need to encourage the development of bilateral economic ties, Putin said. He also responded to criticism from singer Elton John, who accused Putin of duplicity after he offered a critical view of the Western emphasis on LGBT rights.

"I deeply respect him, he is a musical genius and we all love his performance, but I believe he's mistaken," Putin said. John and the filmmakers of his biopic "Rocketman" have sharply criticized a Russian distributor's decision to censor scenes from the new movie featuring gay sex and drug use.

Putin argued that Russia's ban on "propaganda" of LGBT culture among children is aimed at protecting them from aggressive proselytizing by the LGBT community.

"Let a person grow up first before making a choice," Putin said. "Let the children in peace."

He said that "our attitude to the LGBT community is absolutely calm and unbiased," but added that "this part of community aggressively enforces its point of view on others."

International human rights groups have said that Russia's "gay propaganda" law has exacerbated hostility toward LGBT people in the country and stifled access to LGBT-inclusive education and support services.

They also strongly protested a 2017 crackdown on gays in the mostly Muslim republic of Chechnya, where more than 100 gay men were arrested and subjected to torture, with some of them killed, according to activists.

Earlier this year, rights activists in Russia reported a new crackdown on gays in Chechnya in which at least two people have died and about 40 people have been detained. Authorities in Chechnya have denied the claims.



Experts think Trump policy on China counterproductive

BEIJING/WASHINGTON
AGENCIES

Scores of Asia specialists, including former U.S. diplomats and military officers, want President Donald Trump to rethink policies that "treat China as an enemy," warning the approach could hurt U.S. interests and the global economy, according to a draft open letter reviewed by Reuters on Saturday. The draft letter comes as tensions rise between the world's two largest economies over a raft of issues. They include a trade war in which the sides have slapped tariffs on billions of dollars on each others' imports, U.S. charges of massive Chinese espionage, and a Chinese military modernization program that threatens the U.S. edge in the Western Pacific. The United States and China, meeting on Saturday on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Japan, agreed to restart talks on ending the trade battle. "Although we are very deeply troubled by Beijing's recent behavior, we also believe that many U.S. actions are contributing to the downward spiral in relations," said the draft of the open letter to Trump and Congress signed by some 80 experts. "U.S. efforts to treat China as an enemy and decouple it from the global economy will damage America's international role and reputation and undermine the economic interests of all nations," it said. "The U.S. fear that Beijing will replace the U.S. as the global leader is exaggerated." Trump's 2018 U.S. National Security Strategy calls China a strategic competitor that seeks to replace the United States as the pre-eminent global power. It was not clear when a final version of the letter would be released. A cover note accompanying the draft said more signatures were being solicited, and the final version would be submitted to a major newspaper. The draft of the open letter lists "Seven Propositions" that the signatories said represented their collective views "on China, the problems of the U.S. approach to China, and the basic elements of a more effective U.S. policy." The Chinese government's increase in domestic repression and control over private companies, "its failure to live up to its trade commitments, greater efforts to control foreign opinion and more aggressive foreign policy" are "serious challenges for the rest of the world," the draft said.

Saudi Arabia intercepts two Yemen rebel drones

AGENCIES

Two Yemeni rebel drones targeting southern Saudi Arabia were intercepted on Saturday, a Riyadh-led military coalition said, the latest in a series of assaults on the kingdom.

The first drone targeted the province of Jizan and the second was aimed at a residential area in Asir province, the coalition said in a statement released by the official Saudi Press Agency. The coalition did not report any damage or casualties.

The rebels earlier claimed drone attacks on the airports in Jizan and Abha, the capital of Asir, according to the group's Al-Masirah TV.

The Iran-aligned Houthi rebels, who have faced persistent coalition bombing since March 2015 which has exacted a heavy civilian death toll, have stepped up missile and drone attacks across the border in recent weeks. On June 12, a rebel missile attack on Abha airport wounded 26 civilians, drawing promises of



"stern action" from the coalition.

On June 23, another rebel attack on Abha airport killed a Syrian national and wounded 21 other civilians, according to the coalition.

The raids come amid heightened regional tensions after Washington — a key ally of Riyadh — accused

Iran of shooting down a US drone over international waters and of carrying out attacks on oil tankers in the strategic Gulf of Oman.

Saudi Arabia has repeatedly accused Iran of supplying sophisticated weapons to Houthi rebels, a charge Tehran denies.

Following recent attacks, Saudi state media have reported an intensification of coalition air raids on rebel positions in the northern Yemeni province of Hajjah and the Houthi-held capital Sanaa.

The coalition intervened in support of the Yemeni government in 2015 when President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi fled into Saudi exile as the rebels closed in on his last remaining territory in and around the second city Aden. Since then, the conflict has killed tens of thousands of people, many of them civilians, relief agencies say. The fighting has triggered what the United Nations describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with millions of people displaced and in need of aid.

Hotter than Death Valley: Europe burns, sweats in record heat

PARIS/MADRID
AGENCIES

Wildfires burned tracts of land in France and Spain at the weekend as Europe sweltered in record-breaking temperatures that pushed the mercury toward all-time highs on Sunday in Germany, killing at least seven people.

Temperatures in France's southern Gard region hit an all-time high of 45.9 degrees Celsius (114.62°F) on Friday — hotter than in California's Death Valley — sparking scores of fires that burned 550 hectares of land and destroyed several homes and vehicles.

One man died while competing on Saturday in a cycling race in the southwestern Ariège region, in the foothills of the Pyrenees. The 53-year-old crashed after feeling unwell, local public prosecutor Laurent Dumaine said on Sunday, adding police were investigating the precise cause of death. The race was called off after several participants were taken sick due to the heat, organizers said. Another cyclist died in the southern region of Vaucluse, with authorities attributing the man's collapse to the heatwave.

Meteorologists say a weakening of the high-level jet stream is increasingly causing weather systems to stall and leading summer temperatures to soar. Five of

Europe's hottest summers in the last 500 years have happened in this century.

Some 25 out of around 90 administrative departments in France have adopted limits on water use including for agriculture, which could affect harvest yields for summer crops like maize that are often irrigated.

"The heatwave has also hit the vineyards of Hérault, widespread damage observed," Jerome Despey, a wine producer in France's southwestern Hérault region and head of the local chamber of agriculture said on Twitter, posting photos of shriveled grapes.

EXTREME RISK: In Spain, 40 out of 50 regions have been put under weather alert with seven of them considered to be an extreme risk, the national weather agency said.

Temperatures in Girona, in northeastern Spain, reached 43.9 degrees on Friday — the highest ever recorded in the Catalan city. Most of the wildfires that hit Spain in recent days were stabilized over the weekend, but firefighters were struggling to control a blaze in the central provinces of Toledo and Madrid, that has burned more than 20 sq km (7.7 sq miles) since Friday.

Temperatures eased slightly on Sunday although the Spanish national meteorological agency predicted the mercury could stay over 40 degrees Celsius in some parts



of the country, in particular in the northeast. At least seven heat-related deaths have been reported in recent days: In addition to the two French cyclists, two people have died in Spain and three in Italy.

RACE AGAINST GLOBAL WARMING: Germany's weather service warned of "extreme" heat on Sunday, forecasting peak temperatures of up to 39 degrees Celsius from Saxony in the east to the upper Rhine in the west. That's just below an all-time high of 40.3 Celsius.

In Frankfurt, 3,000 athletes took part in an IronMan endurance race despite the heat. Female race leader Sarah True of the United States collapsed within a kilometer of the finish line of the closing marathon stage. True, who had already completed a 3.8 km swim and 185 km bike ride, was carried off the course and had to be restrained by first-aid workers concerned for her wellbeing, live footage broadcast by Germany's ARD public television showed. "It felt like a race against

global warming — you could have fried an egg on my head," said Sebastian Kienle, who finished second in the men's race. The World Meteorological Organization said this week that 2019 was on track to be among the world's hottest years on record, which would make 2015-2019 the hottest five-year period. The European heatwave was "absolutely consistent" with extremes linked to the impact of greenhouse gas emissions, according to the WMO.

Opposition woes

The passage of the Budget shows the state of play

THE speech made by the Prime Minister in the National Assembly on the occasion of its passage of the Finance Bill showed the state of play, as he answered the speech of the Leader of the Opposition Mian Shehbaz Sharif's criticism of the economic situation and said that opposition efforts to topple his government had failed, and also indicate that his relationship with the powers that be remained strong. Mian Shehbaz also later said that he was resigning as Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, a position which is not only traditional for the Leader of the Opposition, but which let him put the government on the rack, as it was extremely reluctant to let him hold the post.

Another development which could hamper the Opposition's efforts is the going of a group of about 15 PML-N MNAs and MPAs from Punjab to Bani Gala to meet Mr Khan, with a view to forming a forward bloc in the coming days, both in the National and the Punjab Assemblies. It should not be forgotten that any move by the opposition to topple the government would require the PML-N to play a leading role. If the party is unable to mobilise in large swathes of Punjab because its MNAs and MPAs have deserted it, that would be a serious handicap. Then there is the conundrum of Mian Shehbaz. He is already a substitute, and himself insists that Mian Nawaz Sharif is the real leader of the party. If he was to become inactive, as his resignation seems to indicate, then the opposition's chances of launching a movement at all, let alone it succeeding, would be correspondingly reduced.

However, though there are cracks appearing in the opposition's anti-government wall, the PTI is still not absolved of its responsibility, being the government, of finding some way of carrying the opposition along with it. The triumphalism of the Prime Minister, in promising to launch a crackdown on money launderers, will not help. While no one would object to this, for an opposition that feels itself under pressure, this is not the message that will make the opposition give the sort of cooperation that it needs to run the government properly, by carrying out the necessary legislation that has been missing so far.

PIA problems

Second incident in a month shows something is not right

IT was more or less a replay, and showed that PIA is not doing as well as it should. The main change was the place. In the first incident, at Manchester at the beginning of the month, a passenger had activated the emergency door slide, resulting in the offloading of three dozen passengers and a delay of seven hours in the flight. In the next, the plane was parked at Beijing Airport, in the middle of a Tokyo-Beijing-Islamabad flight, about to head home, when the inflight meal was being loaded, when the incident occurred, causing 50 passengers to be offloaded and a delay of three hours. On both occasions, a Boeing 777 was involved.

The root cause of both incidents was the cabin crews' lack of familiarity with the new plane. That in turn indicates that the poor quality of the training. However, no matter how good the training, it will have little or no effect if the person trained is not receptive. Normally, airline employees are receptive to training because they fear for their jobs. But PIA employees know that their unions will protect them. If not, they would have a fallback in their original patrons who had them recruited. The tragedy of PIA has been that, it has been regarded as a source of jobs for each consecutive generation of friends and family of those who have been employed for decades. The result is not just that the airline has failed to attract the best possible recruits, but also that those who have joined have powerful patrons. It is because of this, incidentally, that the unions so strongly and successfully resisted privatisation. One of the consequences of privatisation would have been that the new management would have cut back on the overstaffing that afflicts the airline.

The airline, under the new CEO, Air Marshal Arshad Malik, had reached break-even operationally by the third quarter of the current fiscal year, but profitability was three or four years in the future. While the bottom line is important, the safety of an airline is also. But both depend on the quality of manpower. That is an aspect that the CEO should be working on, unless he wishes to live with more incidents like those at Manchester and Beijing.

PAKISTAN TODAY

Dedicated to the legacy of the late Hameed Nizami

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Slogans masquerading as philosophy



HASAN AFTAB SAEED

THESE are gems that are presented to demonstrate unparalleled sagacity on the part of the utterer. They are often employed as weapons to hit the supposedly less enlightened souls over the head with. Sometimes they are pressed into service to get out of discussions that are not advancing in the desired direction. Chances are that you would have encountered them too: somebody saying patronisingly, or as an excuse to quit a debate on a 'victorious' note, something like: 'Well, one can never be sure of anything!'

Especially in the post-truth age, this is a particularly fashionable sentiment to have and express. And a politically correct one too: you have your truth and I have mine; let's live and let live, and all that sort of thing. It sounds very wise all right. Until, as the peerless Gary Miller suggests, one asks the person who has made the claim, 'Are you sure of this?' Sometimes it becomes outright hilarious if he happens to reply (as many are known to have responded): 'I'm positive.'

Also, in addition to it buckling under its own weight, this philosophy is impossible to practise in real life. Having epistemological doubt regarding the certainty of something is one thing. However, life is much more than epistemological games played sitting in an armchair with a cup of tea in hand. It moves on, continually forcing decisions on every human being regardless of any cute slogans that he may like to repeat to others and even to himself. And everybody must take those decisions based on his best beliefs at any given moment.

MARYAM INAM

DESPITE being one of the smallest contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan remains one of the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. As a result, the country continues to suffer both socially and economically. The situation is further exacerbated by the lack of financial resources and technical capacity, causing Pakistan to incur human and economic losses worth billions of dollars due to climate change.

The international community realised the dynamics where the developed countries' emissions were adversely affecting the world. Therefore, in order to stabilise the emissions, the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, an international environmental treaty, was established. Under it, countries meet twice a year in climate change conferences to advance the global climate policy and agenda. In the annual meeting of 2015, however, all the nations agreed to transform their development trajectories so that the average global rise in temperature can be limited to between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level. This is now commonly known as the Paris Agreement.

One of the major components of the Agreement was the flow of climate finance from the Global North to the Global South. This was largely based on the idea of climate justice; since the developing countries continue to experience the adverse impacts of climate change because of emissions caused by the most developed parts of the world.

'Deep' thoughts that undo themselves

There are other such slogans that sound nice and deep but end up demolishing themselves. For instance, many theists who are of the opinion that reason has nothing to do with their faith are accus-

tomed to saying that reason can lead one astray. (Some, although not all, of them are positively scared of any evidence that may threaten their beliefs.) The problem with this position too is that it collapses when applied to itself. For how else is one going to convince anybody of the truth of it? For when one has expended considerable time and effort justifying the proposition using all tools of reason at one's disposal, all that the other party needs to do is smile and remind one that reason can lead one astray (the original statement). Indeed, reason can lead one astray if one makes an error in one's reasoning—and this happens all the time. But how is one to know if one has been led astray? By reason itself, of course. Also, if unreason (as opposed to reason) is the key to the truth, how is one to know which brand of unreason to adopt (if neither one makes sense, and both disagree with one another)? Of course, one needs reason to separate the wheat from the chaff. Truth has just the one version; falsehood and confusion come in many varieties. Sense is like light, while nonsense has innumerable shades.

Many atheists and self-proclaimed science enthusiasts err on the opposite extreme. The slogan at play here being something like: 'One should never believe anything without proof.'

(I'd be extremely rich today if I had a hundred rupees every time somebody told me this.) And yet, if one demands proof of the statement itself, they are at a loss for words after they have

exhausted their repertoire of insults on you for asking for a proof of something so fundamental. The point is that it's they who want everything to have a proof, not you. At best (which they finally must accept if pushed), it's a maxim or truism, which is a far cry from proof, which was so strongly emphasised in the original rule. So, in effect, something is being demanded from others that isn't being lived up to (can't possibly be lived up to) by the man himself.

Slogans masquerading as deep thought are probably as old as humanity itself. And one would be justified, especially considering the social media and technology in general, in expecting that we are not going to be hearing the last of them any time soon. Only the other day I encountered this pearl of wisdom on a philosophy page: 'All philosophy is mental onanism'. Since this was a philosophical statement itself, and if accepted as true, then this was just another instance of self-pleasure

on the part of the sage propounding it. The sage himself appeared to be blissfully unaware of the quite delicious irony.

Hasan Aftab Saeed is a connoisseur of music, literature, and food (but not drinks). He can be reached at www.facebook.com/hasanafbtsaeed

Will the world keep its promise to fight climate change?

Pakistan is doing its bit

Another important feature of the Paris Agreement consists of the climate action plans, which are also called the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), in which countries highlight their plans and efforts to reduce national greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation measures to counter the negative impacts of climate change. However, the least developed and developing countries lack financial resources, and based on the concept of climate justice, rely on the developed countries to fund their mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Pakistan abided by the Paris Agreement and the Ministry of Climate Change submitted its first intended NDC in 2016, where it committed to reduce the projected emissions till the year 2030 by 20 per cent, subject to receiving \$40 billion from the international community. Pakistan also agreed to enhance its adaptation efforts if it received \$7-14 billion a year. The government has also aligned NDCs with the country's strategic plan, the 'Vision 2025', and has streamlined it into plans, policies, and sectoral growth targets, which are set by various ministries and government entities. Moreover, Pakistan is also revising its NDCs according to higher ambition in terms of greenhouse gas reductions and will be submitting its revised draft by 2020.

While Pakistan is making efforts to fight climate change and keeping all its promises under the Paris Agreement, it is perhaps not being supported as much by the international community, particularly in terms of climate finance. Before the Agreement is implemented in 2020, the developed countries had to disburse \$100 billion a year to the developing countries to support their NDCs and climate actions. Unfortunately, that has not been the case and as a result, many developing countries, including Pakistan, lack the financial resources to fully implement their planned climate actions.

Although Pakistan has started receiving support from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), it is far less than anticipated. Two projects have been accepted, one for mitigation and one for adaptation for which collectively GCF has approved \$86 million, although the total value of these projects is \$621 million. This is perhaps because the developed countries have not been pitching the required amount and as a result, less is available for disbursement to the developing countries.

Climate finance has been a much-debated topic in the international climate change discussions. Even in the ongoing UN climate change conference in Bonn, Germany, developing countries have

been pushing developed countries for more finance for their climate actions. In one of the side events of the conference, Eddy Perez, International Policy Analyst, Climate Action Network, Canada said, "There will not be implementation of NDCs if there is no support, because developing countries need that support to prepare and implement climate plans domestically." Mandy Barnett, from South African National Biodiversity Institute, in one of the sessions also talked about the need for steady flow of climate finance and said, "We need to bring climate finance as close to the ground as possible for lasting and transformative results."

The government of Pakistan is committed towards addressing the grave issue of climate change. Despite having financial constraints, it allocates over five per cent of its annual budget to climate-related expenditures compared to approximately two per cent for education and less than two per cent for health. However, given its vulnerability, internal resources are not enough and significant financial and technical support is required from the developed countries for it to fully realise its climate action plans.

Maryam Inam is a freelance columnist.



Doers achieve what dreamers conceive

► Dreams must not be confused with desires



Money Matters

SIRAJUDDIN AZIZ

THE mantra of anyone who claims for himself the role of leader, ought to be "I have a dream". The followers have to be assured that there is sun behind the clouds and that each cloud has a silver lining. No wonder that Martin Luther King Jr had masses rallying around him, when he proclaimed, "I have a dream". All leaders must dream, while being awake and when in full possession of all their faculties.

I have always looked at the role of the CEO or manager in a corporate entity and even at the role of the politician who holds the principal office of responsibility of the country as of a "seller of dreams" and no more. Some deliver on their dreams, some fail to do so. Dreams have to be realistic, practically possible and measurable. Dreams of Utopia lead to nightmares.

Dreaming is another name for planning by the leader or manager that permits the opening of new vistas of possibilities. The ability to see what is beyond the current obscurity, a possibility of a new dawn, is the hallmark of a good leader. Inaction is another word that describes the conversion of dreams into desires.

The need for obstinate pursuance of your dreams, as a leader, is best described by Friedrich Nietzsche as: "Nobody can build the bridge for you to walk across the river of life, no one but you yourself. There are to be sure, countless paths and bridges and demigods, which would carry you across this river, but only at the cost of yourself; you would pawn yourself and lose. There is in the world only one way, on which nobody can go, except you, where does it lead? Do not ask, go along with it".

From this, I deduce that it is important for the leader to pursue his dreams with a singular mindset and he/she should be wary not to be beguiled by impediments on the pathway or by negatively obscured detractors, whose slogan is: "it is not possible". All strategies and every single organisational input must be driven towards the focused objective of real-

ising the dream.

Some of us confuse "dreams" and "desires". They are not synonymous, but mutually exclusive in meaning and impact. There must exist in the mind of the leader a clear and fine distinction between dreams and desires. A dream has more sublimity to its use, while desire suggests a bit of selfishness or lust. Dreams are all about future goals in life, while desire, in acclaimed author Neil Gaiman's words, "is a creature of the moment". Dreams have larger canvas and desire is limited by its immediate objectives; of being satiated, now and here.

Desire's realisation is largely dependent on external stimuli and circumstances; dreams on the contrary are internally generated. Desire is a craving, a longing, a yearning, while dreams are more about aspirations, ambitions, and hope.

Dreaming is an absolute necessity for leaders/managers. For sure, indulging in it helps discovery of the self and it also helps as the best route to know yourself, while examining your dreams. Good leaders develop skills to know how others see them. The dark areas are known to the outside world, while we as individuals remain oblivious of it. Self-indulgent deception to make obscure our weakness is a great human ability. We tend to remain in denial, while the process of dreaming unveils to us what we really are. There is never a fraudulent representation of talent to one's own self, because dreams do not take the route of falsehood.

No leader can afford to be a hermit or an Alaskan Eskimo. They must have requisite capability to derive from their "dreams" the basic steps to find their practical realisation. As Confucius puts it, "By three methods we may learn wisdom; first by reflection, which is the noblest; second by imitation, which is the easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest". It therefore follows that dreams must pass the test of "reflection", "imitation" and "experience", before they can find their way to be translated into practical achievement.

Leaders, most of them, dream and act too. If there is no dream to pursue then what is left in life to accomplish? Managers, who have no dreams to sell, are invariably lost in the maze of time and history. Those managers who dare to dream, while being awake at the job, get to be more cognisant of the market potential. Amongst, the first seven Mughal emperors, Shahjahan is the most remembered and recalled, because he dreamt of the "Taj Mahal", which his labourers delivered to him. His faith of how it will be a marvellous human endeavour for centuries, was shared by those who built it. A manager can be the dreamer! While his team chases the dreams to their fruition.

Dream merchants rely heavily on intuition and instinctive habits, rather than logic and rationale. Faith in your dreams is the first step towards its realisation. The slogan of "Naya Pakistan" is also a dream of a better Pakistan. It remains to be seen, whether it is an elusive dream or it will pan out as a successful cliché;

it all depends upon how resolutely the machinery is employed towards its accomplishment. If Iqbal dreamt of a "Muslim homeland", it was the political and statesmanly craftsmanship of Jinnah, that delivered the dream of Pakistan. The result of this analogy is that dreamers need a team of executors; without it dreams will remain a mere desire!

The killer gases and clouds, that enshroud the dream, must be cleared off quickly. A clear sight of the goal, will help to kick the ball through the goalposts; a leader must therefore remain wary of all those who will work overtime to create more haze around the leaders' dream.

As managers, learn about yourself, what already others know about you. This exercise will give credence to the dreams that you would share with your teammates. Those who supervise must temper their dreams with heavy doses of reality. The non-acceptance of ground conditions leads towards arrogance. Nothing hurts a manager more than a bloated sense of overconfidence. Dreams must not either be emerging out of cocksureness or even be ever anchored in the seas of overconfidence. We have as a nation, recently witnessed what has become of those who proudly and arrogantly had remarked, "uski majal, ke woh..." (how dare, he thinks, he can...!)

Our thoughts, habits, aptitudes, skills, talents and capabilities are the bedrock from where stem our dreams. If they lack quality, the emerging dreams, will be dented too and will only border at best on their frivolity to be pursued.

Leaders dream and feel the responsibility that emerges out of this process. Leaders are what their dreams are! And such leaders must be feared too, for they will most likely unleash all their powers to achieve, what is considered as truth and correct. Leaders in posterity and by history are judged by the enormity of their dreams. Abraham Lincoln dreamt of abolishing slavery. He did. He is remembered. Dreaming leaders, including our own Imran Khan, are mostly possessed. They pursue their objectives with clenched teeth; nothing deters them. They are persistent and consistent. They are notably obstinate.

Concluding, I would like to quote possibly the best description of what dreams are to leaders, from a past leader, who was no less than the President of USA, Woodrow Wilson, who had said, "We grow great by dreams. All big men are dreamers. They see things in the soft haze of spring day or in the red fire of a long winter's evening. Some of us let these great dreams die, but others nourish and perfect them, nurse them through bad days till they bring them to sunshine and light which comes always to those who sincerely hope that their dreams will come true".

As a compatriot of the Prime Minister, Imran Khan, I hope his dreams come true!

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EDITOR'S MAIL

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Say no to mental harassment!

ICC Cricket World Cup 2019, an international cricket tournament, is being hosted by England and Wales. People have expectations with their respective teams, but in the end it's just a game. One team has to win, while the other has to lose. If your team loses that doesn't mean you should start mocking and harassing the players, especially when they are with their family. An incident took place in England at a mall with Sarfaraz when a boy abused him and made offensive comments over his physique. Despite the verbal harassment, Sarfaraz acted calm and serene, something which needs to be appreciated, for otherwise that boy could be reported according to the harassment laws. The boy apologised and said in his video that he did not know that Sarfaraz is a Hafiz-e-Quran. No one has the right to insult and pass ugly comments on anyone whether he is a Hafiz-e-Quran or not, whether he is with his family or not. Why don't we fans understand that public figures and celebrities are humans like us, that they have emotions and feelings too? If they are public figures that does not mean you have the right to mock, tease or be physical with them anywhere. We all are excited and have great hopes with our teams but this does not mean we can publicly abuse and ridicule them if their performance was not up to the mark. We need to motivate our players. This mental harassment causes stress and pressure to the players, as stated by Sarfaraz in an interview. We should accept our defeats and hope for the players to play better next time instead of harassing them and making them the subject of memes on social media. Sitting under air-conditioners and mocking them is very easy, but playing in the field on the international level, representing your home country is a tough job.

WARDA GHIAIS
Karachi

The mobile phone addiction

WITH due respect, I would like to draw the attention of the concerned authority to the issue of rising addiction of mobile phones. Latest research indicates that the use of the internet and mobile phones becomes an obsession with the students. It may be considered one of the biggest non-drug addictions of the century. The youth are most affected by this. Although mobile phones have become a necessity today, young people must be aware of how to effectively use them. Workshops can be conducted to raise awareness among the people about the issue. I expect that through your newspaper this issue would be looked upon as soon as possible.

HAMMAD LODHI
Karachi

Child labour in Pakistan

CHILD labour is the employment of children for work. According to the ILO, Child Labour is defined as work that has the potential to deprive children of their childhood, their dignity and is also harmful for their physical, moral and mental development. It also interferes with their education (either by not allowing them to attend school, leaving school prematurely, or forcing them to juggle school attendance with heavy work). It is a great problem in Pakistan. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan estimated that in the 1990s, 11 million children were working in the country, half of whom were under age ten.

A large section of these children is employed through an informal economy in streets, in private structures or in their homes. This also deprives them of any form of safety and recognition. Denying children their fundamental right to be educated between the ages of five to sixteen exposes them to health hazards, hampers their development and puts them at risk to other forms of violence, which may be physical, psychological and sexual. Moreover, children in the labour environment are highly vulnerable to exploitation, including commercial and sexual, as well as trafficking.

The new government must take note of this problem and should take some steps to help these children.

AREEBA MUNEEB
Karachi

Research in Pakistan

RESEARCH in Pakistan's educational sector has always been a hard nut to crack. Most of the universities lack research facilities. Students are provided with some PPT files and notes to get them through the exam. Consequently, graduates possess no critical thinking and innovation. Furthermore, the majority of engineering graduates are only able to solve the problems included in their notes. The highest-ranked Pakistani university in the list published by QS World University Rankings 2019 occupies the 397th spot. There endures the vacuum between industry and university's research facility, as in the case of any equipment design dilemma where foreign graduates are called in for help. In the present phase of socio-economic turmoil in Pakistan, the performance of industries is quite crucial. Industries can provide the intellectual capacity to expand the economy and transfer technologies. The present government and the Higher Education Commission (along with the consensus of all stakeholders) must come up with a coherent and clear strategy to increase research possibilities.

ENGR SYED FAIZAN SHAH
Lahore

RUSSIA, SAUDI ARABIA AGREE TO EXTEND OPEC DEAL

OSAKA
AGENCIES

RUSSIA has agreed with Saudi Arabia to extend by six to nine months a deal with OPEC on reducing oil output, Russian President Vladimir Putin said, as oil prices come under renewed pressure from rising US supplies and a slowing global economy.

Putin, speaking after talks with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, told a news conference the deal — which is currently due to expire on Sunday — would be extended in its current form and with the same volumes.

The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, Russia and other pro-

ducers, an alliance known as Opec+, meet on July 1-2 to discuss the deal that involves curbing oil output by 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd). The United States is not participating in the pact.

"We will support the extension, both Russia and Saudi Arabia. As far as the length of the extension is concerned, we have yet to decide whether it will be six or nine months. Maybe it will be nine months," said Putin, who met the crown prince on the sidelines of a G20 summit in Japan. A nine-month extension would mean the deal runs out in March 2020. Russia's consent means the Opec+ group may have a smooth meeting if Opec's third-largest producer Iran also endorses the arrangement.

New US sanctions on Iran have re-

duced its exports to a trickle as Washington seeks to change what it calls a "corrupt" regime in Tehran. Iran has denounced the sanctions as illegal and says the White House is run by "mentally retarded" people.

Kirill Dmitriev, the chief executive of Russian Direct Investment Fund who helped design the Opec-Russia deal, said the pact in place since 2017 has already lifted Russian budget revenues by more than 7 trillion roubles (\$110 billion).

"The strategic partnership within Opec+ has led to the stabilisation of oil markets and allows both to reduce and increase production depending on the market demand conditions, which contributes to the predictability and growth of investments in the industry," Dmitriev said.



Hong Kong prepares for pro-democracy march amid extradition bill anger

HONG KONG
AGENCIES

Hong Kong authorities called for calm ahead of Monday's annual pro-democracy march, with widespread anger over an extradition bill expected to lead to large crowds after high-profile protests this month against the proposal.

More than a million people have taken to the streets at times over the past three weeks to vent their anger and frustration at Hong Kong's Beijing-backed leader Carrie Lam, posing the greatest popular challenge to Chinese leader Xi Jinping since he came to power in 2012.

China is also grappling with a trade war with Washington, a faltering economy and South China Sea tensions.

Monday's anniversary of the handover of the former British colony to Beijing in 1997 has been marked in recent years by deepening despondency about what many Hong Kong residents see as a relentless march toward mainland control. This came to a head on June 12 when protests against a proposal that would allow people to be sent to mainland China for trial led to police firing rubber bullets and tear gas near the heart of Hong Kong's financial center, sending plumes of smoke billowing



among some of the world's tallest skyscrapers. Hong Kong's Chief Secretary Matthew Cheung appealed for calm ahead of Monday's rally and said in his blog on Sunday that the government has learned from its mistakes.

"It is imperative to restore social order and tranquility as soon as possible, stabilize the business environment and bring Hong Kong back on track," Cheung said. Lam, who has apologized for the upheaval, has not been seen in

public since June 18, suspended the extradition bill after some of Hong Kong's biggest and most violent protests in decades, but stopped short of demands to scrap it. Activists are also demanding the government drop all charges against those arrested during the protests, charge police with excessive use of force and stop referring to the demonstrations as a riot, which can bring a heavier jail sentence.

But in a show of support for the po-

lice, thousands gathered in heavy rain and sweltering heat, some waving the Chinese flag, and observed a moment of silence. The police estimated 53,000 attended Sunday's rally.

Former police chief Tang King-shing said he felt hurt when protesters besieged police headquarters during the week, while pro-Beijing heavyweight Maria Tam praised what she described as Hong Kong people's civilized ways of expressing their opinions.

"We can't tolerate those who ... attack the rule of law, attack LegCo, attack the government," Tam, who is a member of China's National People's Congress, said. "Some have been taking directions from foreign countries."

Organizers of Monday's anniversary march say they are confident that anger over the city government's failure to withdraw the extradition bill will fuel numbers. The bill has reignited a protest movement that had lost steam after pro-democracy demonstrations in 2014 failed to wrestle concessions from Beijing and led to hundreds of arrests.

Local media reported that a 21-year-old Hong Kong student who fell to her death from an apartment building on Saturday had left behind a note opposing the extradition law.

In Taiwan, Hong Kong immigrants despair over future back home

TAINAN
AGENCIES

Kitty Wong and Adolf Lim are tightening the screws on their future in Taiwan as they make the final touches to a hostel in the southern city of Tainan, that they hope will open its doors to holiday-makers next month. The couple from Hong Kong came to Taiwan in search of a stress-free life after being disappointed with the fragmentation of society back in Hong Kong, along with the daily negativity that they found hard to escape. This is the third hostel they are opening after arriving in 2016. "The level of evil that you are dealing with is too high, I just see no way out," Yim says, talking about how the Chinese Communist Party is clamping down on freedom in his home town. It is not only the pressure from the mainland that made him pack his bags, but also daily acts of frustration that drive a wedge in society. "As they are unable to attack Uncle Xi, they go ahead and attack tourists," he said, referring to the attitude of fellow Hong Kong citizens to visitors from the mainland, who are often resented for their perceived poor manners. "I feel incapable to change the regime, but I am also unable to accept this sort of behavior."

"Recently, we've been getting a lot of inquiries," says Kitty Wong, referring to their status as something of a point of contact for Hong Kong citizens wanting to make the jump. Many of the Hong Kong people ask about the possibility of gaining citizenship in Taiwan as investors. The number of people granted Taiwan residency from Hong Kong and neighboring Macau, a former Portuguese enclave also given special autonomy under Chinese rule, has more than doubled to 1,267 in 2018 from a decade ago, official data shows. The trend spiked in the two years following big protests calling for full democracy in 2014 that paralyzed parts of Hong Kong for months. And it shows no signs of abating. There were about 400 such immigrants to Taiwan in the first four months of 2019, a 40% jump from a year ago. Cafe owner Ricky Chang first came to Taiwan as a student and decided to settle down in Tainan in 2013 after several stints in other countries. He too is an often approached for advice by hopeful immigrants who are eager to gain citizenship in Taiwan in case things get too difficult in Hong Kong. Although he didn't move to Taiwan for political reasons, a proposed extradition law in Hong Kong has changed his thinking. "I'm worried that I have been engaging in some behaviors that, although they are legal in Taiwan and don't go against the law, might be seen as violations of the law in mainland China and that there might come a day when I travel on a plane with a layover in Hong Kong or go back to Hong Kong to see my parents, that I might be arrested at the airport," he said. The extradition bill is the latest in a string of issues that have troubled ties between Hong Kong and Beijing, and sparked big protests in the financial hub. Hong Kong people have in recent years been increasingly upset by mainland immigrants and sky-high property prices partly pushed up by mainland investors. The influx of mainlanders into Hong Kong was the main reason that drove Joe Ching, an entrepreneur in the logistics sector who still has operations in Hong Kong, across the Taiwan Strait to find a future for his family of three.

Syrians dig, cook, fill sandbags in war with Assad

ATARIIB
AGENCIES

Away from the frontlines, volunteers are helping in the war against President Bashar al-Assad by cooking, filling sandbags, collecting old tyres and digging trenches, aiming to help ward off his assault on north-western Syria.

It is part of the civilian effort to help defend the last major rebel stronghold from Assad and his Russian allies who have been pounding it for weeks.

Abu Abdo, 51, says he is playing his part by collecting old tyres to be burned by fighters to create a smoke screen from hostile warplanes.

"We go to places where tyres are repaired, collect them and take them to the fighters," said Abu Abdo, 51, as he piled tyres into the back of a truck with the help of his sons in the town of Salqin.

"These tyres have no value but protect (the fighters) and keep the enemy busy," said Abu Abdo, as two of sons sat atop the pile of tyres in the back of the truck. In recent years, Assad's opponents have poured into northwestern Syria from other parts of Syria that have been taken from rebels. The region, which includes Idlib province and parts of neighboring provinces, has an estimated 3 million inhabitants, about half of whom had already fled fighting elsewhere according to the United Nations.

With nowhere else for these people to flee, many have a stake in fending off the attack on the northwest. To this end, activists and religious leaders launched a campaign in May called "fire an arrow with them". Volunteers at work in a kitchen in the town of Atariib are preparing 2,000 meals a day for fighters as part of the campaign. Yellow rice is spooned from large vats into polystyrene trays and lentil soup is poured into bags ready for delivery to fighters.

"The car leaves from here to the frontlines under air strikes and surveillance sometimes," said a 40-year-old man at work in the kitchen who gave his name as Abu Wael. "God willing we continue so these meals reach the fighters."



FILLING SAND BAGS, DIGGING TRENCHES: At a nearby quarry, sacks that once contained rice were being filled with grit for use as sandbag defenses. "We are filling according to the demand of the frontline. The command center, for example, requests 200 bags or 1,000 bags for one position," said Khaled al-Jamal, 26, at work with a group of other volunteers. He finished his high school education but was unable to register at university once the war began in 2011. He hopes his effort will help fighters so "all their effort is directed at repelling the regime".

In Salqin, men use shovels, pick axes and pneumatic drills to dig a trench in an olive grove as part of another civilian campaign, this one called "the Popular Resistance Battalions". A long way from the frontline, Yehya al-Sheikh, 38, says the trench he is digging with others will provide protection from air strikes for

a family living nearby.

"We came to dig trenches to defend ourselves and our people and to support our Mujahideen brothers against Bashar al-Assad."

Some 300,000 people in the northwest have been uprooted since late April and local sources have reported that hundreds of civilians including women and children have been killed, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs says.

The territory is largely controlled by Tahrir al-Sham, a jihadist group representing the latest incarnation of the Nusra Front, formerly al Qaeda's Syrian wing, though groups fighting under the banner of the Free Syrian Army also have a presence.

The Syrian government, which has vowed to recover "every inch" of Syria, says it is responding to attacks by al Qaeda-linked jihadists.

Japan to tighten export rules for high-tech materials to South Korea

TOKYO: Japan plans to tighten restrictions on the export of high-tech material used in smartphones and chips to South Korea from July 4 in connection with a dispute over a South Korean ruling on war-time forced labor, the Sankei newspaper reported on Sunday. The row between Japan and South Korea flared last October when South Korea's Supreme Court ruled that Japan's Nippon Steel must compensate South Koreans for forced labor during World War Two. Japan maintains that the issue of forced labor was fully settled in 1965 when the two countries restored diplomatic ties, and has denounced the ruling as "unthinkable." The materials to be restricted are fluorinated polyimide which is used in smartphone displays, and resist and high-purity hydrogen fluoride (HF), which is used as an etching gas in the making of semiconductors, the paper said. Resist is a thin layer used to transfer a circuit pattern to the semiconductor substrate. High-purity HF is used in etching silicon materials. Japan will stop preferential treatment for these three materials for South Korea, meaning Japanese exporters will need to apply for export permission for each time they want to ship to South Korea, which takes about 90 days, the paper said. A government announcement on the restriction is expected on Monday, it said. Japan produces about 90 per cent of fluorinated polyimide and resist worldwide as well as about 70 per cent of etching gas, making it difficult for chipmakers to find alternative supplies, the paper said, pointing to potential impact on South Korea's Samsung Electronics and LG Electronics. Japan's industry ministry and finance ministry were not available for comment on Sunday. In January, Japan demanded talks with South Korea over the forced labor issue but South Korea has not responded, the newspaper said. **AGENCIES**

France nudges up 2020 deficit forecast to 2.1pc

PARIS: France expects its public sector deficit to reach 2.1 per cent of economic output next year, up from the 2.0 per cent forecast prior to tax cuts promised in response to the "yellow vest" protest movement, a government budget projection showed on Sunday. President Emmanuel Macron announced plans at the end of April to reduce income tax by 5 billion euros (\$5.7 billion) as part of measures to defuse months of protests over issues such as fuel levies, weak purchasing power and perceptions that Macron's administration was arrogant. Budget Minister Gerard Darmanin said last week the government was still aiming for a deficit of about 2 per cent next year and had identified savings to offset the upcoming tax cuts. But France's public audit office has said the government is in danger of missing its fiscal targets unless it makes spending cuts. Macron's pledge to reduce the income tax burden by 5 billion euros came on top of a 10 billion-euro package of social measures unveiled in December at the height of the "yellow vest" unrest. The updated public finance forecasts, posted on a government website, also slightly increased the deficit projections for 2021, to 1.7 per cent from 1.6 per cent, and for 2022, to 1.3 per cent from 1.2 per cent. The government maintained its previous forecast of 3.4 per cent for the 2019 deficit, a temporary spike linked to a change in corporate taxation. **AGENCIES**

GAS PRICES TO INCREASE FROM JULY 1: OGRA

ISLAMABAD
APP

Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) on Sunday issued a notification intimating increase in gas sale prices which would be effective from July 1. As per the notification, the authority has determined Rs121 per Million British Thermal Unit (MMBTU) for domestic consumers using up to 0.5 hm³ (in cubic hectometers) gas per month, Rs300 per MMBTU for users of up to 1 hm³, Rs553 per MMBTU for up to 2 hm³, Rs1,107 and Rs1,460 per MMBTU for consuming up to 4 hm³ and above 4 hm³ respectively.

"The billing mechanism will be revised so that the benefit of one preceding slab is available to domestic consumer (residential use)," the notification read determining minimum charges at Rs172.58 per month.

For government and semi-government offices, hospitals, clinics, maternity homes, government guest houses, messes of the armed forces, universities, colleges, schools and private educational institutions, orphanages, and other charitable institutions along with hostels and residential colonies to whom gas is supplied through bulk meters including captive power, OGRA has fixed all off-takes at flat

rate of Rs780 per MMBTU, with minimum charges of Rs4,680 per month.

In commercial sector, the authority has determined all off-takes at flat rate of Rs1,283 per MMBTU for all establishments registered as commercial units with local authorities or dealing in consumer items for direct commercial sale like cafes, bakeries, milk-shops, tea stalls, canteens, barber shops, laundries, hotels, malls places of entertainment like cinema, clubs, theaters, private offices and corporate firms. Minimum charges for these are Rs5,880.10 per month.

In category of special commercial, the gas sale price has been determined at Rs121 per MMBTU for using up to 0.5 hm³ gas per month, Rs300 per MMBTU for using up to 1 hm³, Rs553 per MMBTU for using up to 2 hm³, Rs738 per MMBTU for using up to 3 hm³ and Rs1,283 per MMBTU for using above 3 hm³. Minimum charges for this category are Rs172.58 per month.

For ice factories, all off-takes have been fixed at flat rate of Rs1,283 per MMBTU with minimum charges of Rs5,880.10 per month.

In general industrial sector, all off-takes have been determined at flat rate of Rs1,021 per MMBTU for all consumers engaged in the processing of industrial raw material into value added finished products irrespective of the volume of gas consumed but

excluding such industries for which a separate rate has been prescribed. Minimum charges for this sector are Rs26,301.60 per month. For registered manufacturers or exporters of five zero-rated sectors and their captive power namely textile (including jute), carpets, leather, sports and surgical tools, the authority has determined all off-takes at flat rate of Rs786 per MMBTU, with minimum charges of Rs20,232 per month.

In Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), all off-takes have been fixed at flat rate of Rs1,283 per MMBTU with minimum monthly charges of Rs33,045.60. For cement factories, a flat rate of Rs1,277 per MMBTU would be charged for all off-takes. Its minimum charges will be Rs32,877 per month. For fertilizer companies, almost all off-takes have been fixed at flat rate of Rs300 per MMBTU for gas used as feed-stock and Rs1,021 per MMBTU for gas used as fuel for generation of electricity, steam and for usage of housing colonies. However, Engro Fertilizer Company Limited will pay \$0.70 per MMBTU for all off-takes at flat rate for gas used as feed stock, and Rs1,021 per MMBTU for gas used as fuel for generation of electricity, steam and for



usage of housing colonies.

In power sector, all off-takes have been determined at flat rate of Rs824 per MMBTU for WAPDA, KESC's power stations and other electricity utility companies, with minimum charges of Rs21,209.88 per month. For WAPDA's Gas Turbine Power Station, Nishatabad, Faisalabad, all off-takes would be at flat rate of Rs824 per MMBTU, while its fixed charges per month are Rs975. For Liberty Power Limited's Gas Turbine Power Plant (Phase-I) at Daharki, all off-takes have been determined at Rs1,283.47 per MMBTU with minimum charges of Rs43,278.61 per month.

For Independent Power Producers, all off-takes would be available at flat rate of Rs824 per MMBTU with minimum charges of Rs21,209.88 per month. For Captive Power Plants, all off-takes have been fixed at flat rate of Rs1,021 per MMBTU with minimum charges of Rs26,301.60 per month.

China warns of long road ahead for deal with US after ice-breaking talks

AGENCIES
BEIJING

China and the United States will face a long road before they can reach a deal to end their bitter trade war, with more fights ahead likely, Chinese state media said after the two countries' presidents held ice-breaking talks in Japan.

The world's two largest economies are in the midst of a bitter trade war, which has seen them level increasingly severe tariffs on each other's imports. In a sign of significant progress in relations on Saturday, Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump, on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Osaka, agreed to a ceasefire and a return to talks. However, the official China Daily, an English-language daily often used by Beijing to put its message out to the rest of the world, warned while there was now a greater likelihood of reaching an agreement, there's no guarantee there would be one. "Even though Washington agreed to postpone levying additional tariffs on Chinese goods to make way for negotiations, and Trump even hinted at putting off decisions on Huawei until the end of negotiations, things are still very much up in the air," it said in an editorial late Saturday.

"Agreement on 90 per cent of the issues has proved not to be enough, and with the remaining 10 per cent where their fundamental differences reside, it is not going to be easy to reach a 100-per cent consensus, since at this point, they remain widely apart even on the conceptual level." Trump also offered an olive branch to Xi on Huawei Technologies Co, the world's biggest telecom network equipment maker. The Trump administration has said the Chinese firm poses a national security risk given its close ties to China's government, and has lobbied US allies to keep Huawei out of next-generation 5G telecommunications infrastructure. The Chinese government's top diplomat, State Councillor Wang Yi, in a lengthy statement about G20 released by the Foreign Ministry following the delegation's return to Beijing, said the Xi-Trump meeting had sent a "positive signal" to the world.

Though problems between the two countries remain, China is confident as long as they both follow the consensus reached by their leaders they can resolve their problems on the basis of mutual respect, Wang said in the statement released late Saturday. Trump's comments on Huawei, made at a more than hour-long news conference in Osaka following his sit-down with Xi, generated only a cautious welcome from China. The word "Huawei" was not

mentioned at all in the top diplomat's appraisal of G20. Wang Xiaolong, the Foreign Ministry's special envoy of G20 affairs and head of the ministry's Department of International Economic Affairs, said if the United States does what it says on Huawei then China would of course welcome it. "To put restrictions in areas that go beyond technology and economic factors will definitely lead to a lose-lose situation. So if the U.S. side can do what it says then we will certainly welcome that," Wang told reporters. The pause in tensions is likely to be welcomed by the business community, and markets, which have swooned on both sides of the Pacific due to the trade war. Jacob Parker, vice-president of China operations at the US-China Business Council, said returning to talks was good news for the business community and added much needed certainty to "a slowly deteriorating relationship".

"Now comes the hard work of finding consensus on the most difficult issues in the relationship, but with a commitment from the top we're hopeful this will put the two sides on a sustained path to resolution." China's position as the trade war has progressed has become increasingly strident, saying it would not be bullied, would not give in to pressure, and that it would "fight to the end".

Qatar buys Lebanese bonds as part of \$500 million investment in economy

AGENCIES
BEIRUT

Qatar has bought some Lebanese government bonds as part of a planned \$500 million investment to support Lebanon's struggling economy, a Qatari government official told Reuters on Sunday.

Such an investment would be a boost for heavily indebted Lebanon as it works on long-delayed reforms to put its public finances on a sustainable path and stave off financial crisis.

Lebanese Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil said Qatar's position was serious and showed its commitment to Lebanon's financial stability.

"It will have a positive effect on the markets and we are following up contacts with Qatari officials for this purpose," he told Reuters.

Two sources familiar with the sec-

ondary market for Lebanese dollar-denominated debt said there had been no sign of a major bond purchase in recent days.

"Gauging from the market alone, you wouldn't have guessed anything happened," a fund manager in Dubai said. Another source familiar with the market said "no volumes were seen" in the last week.

Tiny but wealthy Qatar said earlier this year it would invest \$500 million in dollar bonds issued by the Lebanese government to help support the economy, which has one of the world's highest public debt burdens and stagnant growth.

Qatar has not disclosed the timing or size of the bond purchases made so far, but any purchase large enough to push down yields would be a boon as Beirut grapples with debt equivalent to 150 per cent of gross domestic product.

"Qatar has always been committed to strengthening its ties with the brotherly Lebanese Republic. Hence it decided to invest \$500 million in the Lebanese economy, including purchasing Lebanese government bonds," a government official said.

"Some of the bonds have been purchased. The rest of investments are due as planned with the Lebanese government."

Moody's said last week that Lebanon is at risk of a debt rescheduling or steps that may constitute a default on the back of slowing capital inflows and weak deposit growth despite austerity measures in its 2019 draft budget.

The \$500 million Qatari investment pledge, made last January, prompted its regional rival Saudi Arabia to make a similar commitment just days later to support Lebanon "all the way" to safeguard its stability, though the kingdom has not

yet announced any bond purchases.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut diplomatic,

trade and transport ties with Qatar in June 2017. They accuse Qatar of supporting terrorism, which it denies.

QATAR SHOWS COMMITMENT TO LEBANON FINANCIAL STABILITY: LEBANESE FINANCE MINISTER

BEIRUT: The Lebanese finance minister said on Sunday that Qatar's position on purchasing Lebanese government bonds was serious and showed a commitment to the country's financial stability. A Qatari government official said earlier that Qatar had bought some Lebanese government bonds as part of a \$500 investment in the Lebanese economy. "The Qatari talk is serious and expresses a commitment to the promise that was previously made to support financial stability in Lebanon," Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil told Reuters. "It will have a positive effect on the markets and we are following up contacts with Qatari officials for this purpose." **AGENCIES**

CHINA'S FACTORY ACTIVITY SHRINKS AS US TARIFFS, SLOWDOWN HIT ORDERS

AGENCIES
BEIJING

CHINA'S factory activity shrank more than expected in June, an official manufacturing survey showed, highlighting the need for more economic stimulus as US tariffs and weaker domestic demand ramped up pressure on new orders for goods.

The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) stood at 49.4 in June, China's National Bureau of Statistics said on Sunday, unchanged from the previous month and below the 50-point mark that separates growth from contraction on a monthly basis. Analysts polled by Reuters predicted a reading of 49.5. The weak manufacturing readings are likely to cast a shadow over the apparent progress US and Chinese leaders made at the G20 summit in Japan over the weekend in restarting their troubled talks over tariffs amid a costly trade war. They will also spark concerns about stalling growth in China and the risk of a global recession, despite slightly better-than-expected export and industrial profits data in May.

Many economists still expect the economy to face strong headwinds in coming months as domestic demand falters and external risks rise. "Although the outcome of the G20 summit (in



Osaka) might boost confidence for some entities, organic growth in the economy is still insufficient, and counter-cyclical stimulus policies need to be maintained," researchers at Huatai Securities wrote in a research note on Sunday. "The PMI index continued to fall across the board this month, and only the raw material inventory sub-index was up due to weak demand," the research note read.

In June, China's factory output growth slowed, with the subindex falling to 51.3 from 51.7 in May while the contraction in total new orders accelerated to 49.6 from 49.8. Export orders extended their decline with the sub-index falling to 46.3 from May's 46.5, suggesting a further weakening in global demand. Import orders also worsened, reflecting softening demand at home despite a flurry of growth-supporting

measures rolled out earlier this year. Southwest Securities said weak new export orders reflected a fading of the front-loading effect, which had temporarily boosted exports as Chinese companies rushed to place orders before more tariffs took effect.

Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping held ice-breaking talks at the G20 summit on Saturday. However, Chinese state media warned on Sunday Beijing and Washington will likely face a long road before the two countries could reach a deal. Analysts at Nomura expect any gains achieved on a temporary trade deal between China and the United States would prove fleeting with a renewed escalation likely further down the road. Trump has already imposed tariffs on \$250 billion of Chinese goods and is threatening to extend those to another

\$300 billion, which would effectively cover all of China's exports to the United States. China has retaliated with tariffs on U.S. imports. To deal with the economic challenges, policymakers have released a range of measures and are expected to launch more. Premier Li Keqiang last week pledged to cut real interest rates on financing for small and micro firms.

Goldman Sachs said the lack of any substantive progress in Sino-US trade talks at the G20 over the weekend suggested stimulus, including cuts to banks' reserve requirements, was likely to be needed. "We expect more policy easing (two more reserve requirement ratio cuts in 2H this year, more fiscal measures to support infrastructure investment) to come in the next few months," Goldman Sachs said in a note. Manufacturers continued to cut jobs in June, with the employment sub-index falling to 46.9, compared with 47.0 in May, when it hit the lowest level seen since March 2009. An official business survey showed activity in China's services sector held firm in June despite growing pressure on the broader economy from U.S. trade measures, with the official reading at 54.2 in June from 54.3 in May. Beijing has been counting on a strong services sector to pick up the slack as it tries to shift the economy away from a dependence on heavy industry and manufacturing exports.

Oil production cuts weigh on Saudi growth in first quarter

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's economic growth more than halved on a quarterly basis to 1.66 per cent in the first quarter of this year, in line with expectations of only a modest pick up as oil production cuts weigh on the world's top crude exporter. The Saudi oil sector grew 1 per cent in the first quarter, government data showed on Sunday. This was almost twice the rate reached in the same period a year ago but a massive slowdown from the previous quarter, when the oil sector grew by almost 6 per cent year-on-year. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its Russia-led allies agreed in December to slash oil production by more than the market had expected. On Sunday, Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih said the cuts would most likely be extended by nine months. This is expected to weigh on oil sector growth this year, while non-oil sector growth is likely to pick up slightly, on the back of a boost in government spending. "We estimate that the oil sector will contract on an annual basis in the second quarter 2Q and for the subsequent quarters in 2019," Monica Malik, chief economist at Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank, said in a research note. Non-oil sector growth in the first quarter was 2.13 per cent, largely in line with the same period last year, but up from a 1.8 per cent growth in last year's fourth quarter. Non-oil activity picked up particularly in the private sector, which saw a growth of 2.3 per cent. But "the underlying drivers of non-oil activity remain relatively subdued, with the more favorable fiscal backdrop being a key factor supporting private sector activity in 1Q," Malik said. AGENCIES

SNGPL, SSGCL to lay 13,599km long gas pipelines in 2019-20

ISLAMABAD: SNGPL and Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGCL), under a strategy to reinforce and expand their transmission network would lay an additional 13,599 kilometers of gas pipelines during the fiscal year 2019-20. The capacity of SNGPL and SSGCL would be enhanced by laying additional 12,100 km and 1,499 km pipelines in their respective areas by June 2020, an official at the Petroleum Division told APP. The two utility companies would invest Rs7,161 million on transmission projects, Rs48,288 million on distribution projects and Rs18,556 million on other schemes bringing the total investment to around Rs74 billion. According to official sources, the companies are expecting to provide gas supply to approximately 430,695 new consumers during the fiscal year 2019-20. Answering a question an official said that the companies had laid 69 km transmission, 3,232 km distribution and 1,366 km services lines and connected 165 villages and towns with their network during July 2018 to February 2019. During eight months of the current financial year, the two utility companies provided 428,305 additional gas connections including 425,404 domestic, 2,770 commercial and 131 industrial connections across the country. APP

Rs147mn to be spent on up-gradation of HDIP labs

ISLAMABAD
APP

Hydrocarbon Development Institute of Pakistan (HDIP) would execute two projects worth Rs147.960 million for up-gradation of its testing laboratories in different cities during the next fiscal year to ensure provision of quality petroleum products to consumers. "An amount of Rs70 million will be utilised for expansion and up-gradation of Pakistan Petroleum Corehouse for its sustainable operations to facilitate oil and gas exploration research in the country, and Rs77.960 million will be utilised for up-gradation of HDIP's Petroleum testing facilities at Islamabad, Lahore, Multan, Peshawar, Quetta and the ISO Certification of Petroleum Testing Laboratory at Islamabad in the Public Sector Development Programme 2019-20," according to official data available with APP. The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA), being a watchdog, pursues an effective policy regarding sampling and testing of the imported petroleum products for onward distribution in the country. Under the policy, imported petroleum products, conforming to the approved specifications notified by the Petroleum Division, are allowed to be used in the country. According to the official document, the quality of the product for all importers is tested by HDIP laboratories prior to unloading from oil carrying vessels. Sampling of each imported product is carried out by the HDIP in the presence of importers' surveyors. In case of any quality dispute, if the sample testing by the HDIP fails, re-sampling is done by a third party surveyor in the presence of authorized representatives of concerned stakeholders including HDIP. The fresh sample is tested in the presence of nominated representatives of the importer and HDIP by another independent laboratory, pre-approved by OGRA, which is considered "final and binding." OGRA also independently carries out random sampling from vessels carrying imported petroleum products for testing through any of the approved laboratories for effective monitoring, quality assurance and greater transparency in the process. As per the policy, the HDIP is advised to coordinate with Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) to initiate sampling of imported petroleum products along with subsequent testing in the presence of importers' surveyor and report to the authority within seven days.

Cement exports down by 18pc in May

LAHORE
INP

The exports of cement, after showing a positive growth for the last several months, declined 18 per cent Year on Year (YoY) to \$17.05 million in May 2019 compared to exports of \$20.78 million in May 2018.

According to the latest data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), on a monthly basis, the export of cement also witnessed negative growth of about 22 per cent during May 2019 compared to the export of \$21.86 million during April 2019. Data shows that the exports witnessed an increase of around 26 per cent during the first eleven months of ongoing fiscal year against the exports of the corresponding period of last year. Cement exports from the country were recorded at \$260.17 million during July-May (2018-19) against the exports of \$206.53 million during July-May (2017-18), showing positive growth of 25.97 per cent.

In terms of quantity, the exports of cement witnessed an increase of 46.18 per cent going up from 6,127,835 metric tons to 4,192,060 metric tons, leading to an overall drop in country's merchandise trade deficit, which plunged by 13.62 per cent during this period of the current fiscal



year compared to the corresponding period of last year. Data shows that during April 2019 cement exports had witnessed an increase of 14.19 per cent annually when compared to the same month of last year. Cement exports in April 2019 were recorded at \$21.861 million against the exports of \$19.144 million in April 2018. On month-on-month basis, the export of cement increased by 42.03 per cent during April 2019, when compared to the export of \$15.392 million during March 2019, according to the data.

During 10 months of the current fiscal year, the exports of cement from the country witnessed an increase of 30.89 per cent against the exports of the corresponding period of last year.

Cement exports from the country were recorded at \$243.118 million during July-April (2018-19) against the exports of \$185.741 million during July-April (2017-18), showing a positive growth of 30.89 per cent. According to the industry experts, the cement sector has been under pressure in this fiscal year as development expenditure has been slashed. Moreover, in 2019 Pakistan's cement industry continued to show poor performance. Cement consumption is usually at a high in the third quarter as construction activities peak with the pleasant weather and urgency in completing government development works within the financial year. However, total dispatches in this period continued to decline.

Vietnam, EU sign landmark free trade deal

AGENCIES
HANOI

The European Union signed a landmark free trade deal with Vietnam on Sunday, the first of its kind with a developing country in Asia, paving the way for tariff reductions on 99 per cent of goods between the trading bloc and Southeast Asian country. It still needs the approval of the European Parliament, which is not a given as some lawmakers are concerned about Vietnam's human rights record.

The European Union has described the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) as "the most ambitious free trade deal ever concluded with a developing country". The two sides an-

nounced the deal in a statement. It was signed in Hanoi between European Union Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom and Vietnam's Minister of Industry and Trade Tran Tuan Anh, three-and-a-half years after negotiations ended in December 2015. It will eliminate 99 per cent of tariffs, although some will be cut over a 10-year period and other goods, notably agricultural products, will be limited by quotas.

Vietnam, which has one of the region's fastest-growing economies, backed by robust exports and foreign investment, has already signed about a dozen free trade pacts, including an 11-country deal that will slash tariffs across much of the Asia-Pacific, known

as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). The agreement with the EU is also expected to open up public procurement and services markets, such as for the postal, banking and maritime sectors. The EU is Vietnam's second-largest export market after the United States, with main exports including garment and footwear products.

In 2018, Vietnam exported \$42.5 billion worth of goods and services to the EU, while the value of imports from the region reached \$13.8 billion, official data shows.

The Vietnamese government said on Sunday that EVFTA would boost EU exports to Vietnam by 15.28 per

cent and those from Vietnam to the EU by 20.0 per cent by 2020.

The agreement will boost Vietnam's gross domestic product by 2.13 per cent-3.25 per cent annually by 2018 and by 4.57 per cent-5.30 per cent annually between 2024-2028, the government said.

On Friday, the EU and South American bloc Mercosur agreed a free-trade treaty following two decades of talks.

In Asia, the EU has trade agreements with South Korea, Japan and Singapore, and it has launched negotiations with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.

The EU-Singapore deal is set to come into force later this year.

A movie that makes you cry?
Lamhe & Masoom

In your playlist is...
Mix from Rap to Qawwali

First childhood celeb crush
Julia Roberts

Guilty pleasure
Naseebo Lal Songs

Favorite thing in your closet right now
Jeans by True Religion

Three words that describe you
Wild, wild & wild.

Your biggest fear
Would like to keep it to myself

Your biggest weakness
Children

Your biggest strength
My Wife

Name someone dead or alive you'd like you host for dinner
Oprah & Ellen any day

Cersei or Sansa?
What's that?

If you were running for office what would your campaign slogan be?
Freedom for all!

A book that changed your life
Readers Digest

What superpower would you like to have
To fly

Chocolate or candy?
Cheese Spread

Weapon of choice?
Smile.

Greatest invention of the modern age?
Trakker

What era would you time travel to?
90's

Favorite cartoon character?
Tom

Biggest turn off?
Pretense

Favorite holiday destination?
Amsterdam

What motivates you?
Success.

Which friends' character are you?
So, how you doing?

What is your favorite Halloween costume?
That's mood dependent.

RAPID FIRE CHALLENGE WITH AZFAR REHMAN





SHARMEEN OBAID-CHINOY LAUNCHES SEVENTH ANIMATED SHORT FILM FROM THE CANNES LIONS NOMINATED SERIES AAGAH

The seventh episode is titled 'Forced Marriage – Zabardasti Ki Shaadi'



KARACHI: SOC Films has released the seventh animated short film from the series "AAGAH" titled "Forced Marriage [Zabardasti Ki Shaadi]". Indeed, AAGAH is a public service campaign with an aim to educate women about their legal rights in Pakistan. The series was earlier nominated at The 66th Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity for the Sustainable Development Goals Lions in the Gender Equality category. According to Pakistani law, every girl is free to choose who to marry. In this episode of the series, "Forced Marriage [Zabardasti Ki Shaadi]", the film describes what can be considered as a forced marriage and highlights existing laws that currently exist to protect women and children from this practice. AAGAH is a series of 14 short animated films in Urdu conceptualized, produced and directed by SOC Films, helmed by Two-Time Academy Award Winner Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, explaining and clarifying the legislations which affect women; and giving an overview of how the legal provisions granted to them may be applied, such as; how to file an FIR, what does the law state on instances of domestic violence, divorce, cyber-crimes and inheritance and what is the procedure for reporting issues like these and who should be approached for help. Each short-film was designed and produced by SOC Films and covered the law, its interpretation and the safety that it provides to the victim. This also included the legislation, as stated in the Pakistan Penal Code, and the various case laws, which have been passed or revised in the recent years. One of Pakistan's leading actresses, Aamina Sheikh lent her voice for the series. AAGAH has been produced in collaboration with Women Action Forum Karachi.



ACROSS

- 1) English dade
- 5) Instrument with some heft
- 9) Not a heavyweight
- 14) Freud's partner
- 15) Got dirty going home?
- 16) Bloato
- 17) Jason's ship
- 18) Title character with the King of Siam
- 19) Battery terminal
- 20) Dilly-dallies' activities
- 23) "Come in!"
- 24) "... and you know the rest"
- 25) Spigot
- 28) Perform incorrectly
- 32) Force out of office
- 34) Word with "phone" or "black"
- 37) Extremely long films
- 39) Voice in the choir
- 40) The art of putting things off for tomorrow
- 44) Member of the Jackson 5
- 45) Gliterati member, briefly
- 46) Bawl
- 47) Acted badly
- 50) Like illegally parked cars, often
- 52) Don'ts partners
- 53) "Much ... About Nothing"
- 55) Come to mind

DOWN

- 1) Make sore by rubbing
- 2) "Great white" bird
- 3) Slangage
- 4) For the time being
- 5) The last one was Nicholas II
- 6) Arm bone
- 7) Type of cherry
- 8) "Love is blind," e.g.
- 9) Baiting position
- 10) Type of valuable vase
- 11) Relating to the Pope
- 12) Hallucinogenic drug
- 13) Caustic drain opener
- 21) Less humid
- 22) "... be an honor"
- 26) Mary of "The Maltese Falcon"
- 27) India's state flower
- 29) Where to get a muddy face
- 30) LP or CD, e.g.
- 31) Santa's reindeer, collectively
- 33) Butter unit
- 34) Made a choice
- 35) First-rate, slangy
- 36) In a way
- 38) Fodder holder on a farm
- 41) Bunk
- 42) Not yet unwrapped
- 43) Cronowise, on deck
- 48) Reurrection Day
- 49) Banned bag killer
- 51) Enters REM sleep

HOROSCOPE



Aries: The direct approach goes over unusually well in your communications today.



Taurus: Your imagination runs wild when you feel left in the dark. Staying actively in the information loop demands.



Gemini: Your willingness to adapt to the needs of others could run into an annoying obstacle today.



Cancer: Wisdom arrives in an unexpected form today, perhaps in the words of a dear child or the loyalty of a favorite pet.



Leo: Putting the toothpaste bar in the tube is an exercise in futility. And even if you somehow succeed, the gel just wouldn't be the same.



Virgo: You're aiming for a meaningful, big-picture game-changer today. Someone could offer you a short-term fix, but you might choose to politely pass if it diverts resources away from your main goal.



Libra: Your optimism is authentic and straight from the heart today. Your positivity acts as a healing balm for your soul.



Scorpio: You can find what you're searching for only if you are very specific about defining it.



Sagittarius: Leaving your ego at the door serves you well today. A willingness to do the work involved to achieve a pleasing outcome puts you in good.



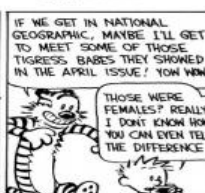
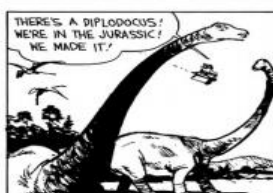
Capricorn: You possess all the necessary tools on hand to make cutting through red tape look as casual as a walk in the park.



Aquarius: An altruistic gesture brings joy to many today and might inspire a radical departure from your typical routine.



Pisces: You can pick up a thread and successfully carry it forward today. Whether it's been on hold for hours, days.



DJOKOVIC, FEDERER, NADAL PRIMED TO TIGHTEN WIMBLEDON GRIP

LONDON
AGENCIES

NOVAK Djokovic, Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal are set to tighten their private stranglehold on Wimbledon as rivals struggle to keep afloat as they bid to dethrone the sport's A-list stars.

World number one Djokovic is the defending champion and chasing a fifth title at the All England Club.

Federer, promoted to second seed, can win a ninth crown while two-time champion Nadal is seeking to complete a rare back-to-back Roland Garros-Wimbledon double. Twelve months ago, Djokovic arrived at Wimbledon with his career threatening to spiral into decline.

Unable to shake off the effects of right elbow surgery, the Serb was



ranked at 21, his lowest position for over a decade. But two weeks later, Djokovic had captured the 2018 title to add to his 2011, 2014 and 2015

wins, becoming the lowest-seeded player to take the Wimbledon trophy since Andre Agassi in 1992.

Since then, he has been rejuvenated, going on to claim a third US

Open and seventh Australian Open title. The only blip was a rain-hit semi-final exit to Dominic Thiem at Roland Garros, a loss which ended his attempt to become just the second man to hold all four Slams at the same time twice.

"Coming off from the surgery, being unable to have consistency with results, this was a huge springboard for me, the win at Wimbledon last year," said Djokovic, who will take a 10-2 career record over Philipp Kohlschreiber into their first-round clash on Monday.

Federer, chasing a 21st major, first played Wimbledon in 1999.

Pushing 38, he would be the oldest ever Grand Slam champion if he were to lift a ninth title. The Swiss star is also just five wins from becoming the first man to register 100 victories at the same Slam.



Renard expects 'tough game' against struggling South Africa

CAIRO
AGENCIES

Morocco coach Herve Renard is anticipating a "tough game" against South Africa Monday at the Africa Cup of Nations in Egypt despite the contrasting fortunes of the teams. While Morocco were deserved 1-0 winners over the Ivory Coast in Group D — considered the hardest of the six — South Africa were lucky to lose only 1-0 to the west Africans. "South Africa have a lot of very good players," said Renard, the only coach to win the African title with two countries. "They also have a good coach in Stuart Baxter so it will be a tough game." Here, AFP Sport previews the final Group C and Group D matches in Cairo with Morocco and Algeria already assured of last-16 places.

MOROCCO V SOUTH AFRICA: Although Morocco won by only one-goal margins against Namibia and the Ivory Coast, they have exhibited class and appear to be keeping plenty in reserve for the knockout phase. The goal that sunk the Ivorians demonstrated why the Atlas Lions are considered one of the biggest threats to hosts and bookmakers' favourites Egypt. Nordin Amrabat displayed dribbling skills rarely seen in this tournament and his clever pass freed scorer Youssef En-Nesyri, who had timed his dart forward perfectly. South Africa have been poor both when losing to the Ivory Coast and scraping a win over Namibia with Baxter lamenting the "slowness of transitions from defence to attack".

IVORY COAST V NAMIBIA: After outplaying South Africa, the Ivorians came off second best against Morocco, but should recover to defeat spirited but limited Namibia and secure a last-16 place. It will concern coach Ibrahim Kamara, though, that with so many talented forwards like Nicolas Pepe at his disposal the Elephants have managed just one goal in 180 minutes. Against South Africa, Kamara could afford the luxury of keeping Crystal Palace flier Wilfried Zaha on the bench until late in the second half. Namibia are craving a first Cup of Nations win after eight failed attempts, including a 4-3 loss to the Ivory Coast in Burkina Faso 21 years ago.

ALGERIA V TANZANIA: Happy Algeria face depressed Tanzania in a Group C match the north Africans will expect to win and maintain a perfect record at the tournament. Coach Djamel Belmadi has been hailed after victories over Kenya and Senegal, whose line-up included Liverpool star Sadio Mane and Napoli centre-back Kalidou Koulibaly. "Our preparations included time in Qatar getting used to intense heat," said veteran midfielder Sofiane Feghouli, referring to temperatures that have reached 38 celsius (100 fahrenheit) in Egypt. Tanzania were the first country to be eliminated after losses to Senegal and Kenya and coach Emmanuel Amunike admitted that "we lack experience and there is no character in the team".

Barty seeks to end long Aussie drought with women's Wimbledon crown

LONDON
AGENCIES

Asleigh Barty goes into Wimbledon buoyed, unlike her predecessor Naomi Osaka, by being world number one and with several of her major rivals struggling. The engaging 23-year-old Australian — who emulated compatriot Evonne Goolagong Cawley by becoming number one last weekend — has yet to get beyond the third round at Wimbledon.

However, by winning the Birmingham tournament last weekend Barty showed she has the strengths to add the grass court Grand Slam to the French Open she won on clay and become the first Australian women's champion since Goolagong Cawley's second success in 1980.

With 37-year-old seven-time champion Serena Williams finally showing signs of age, Osaka looking exposed through poor form and two-time Wimbledon singles champion Petra Kvitová still easing back to top form after an arm injury, defending champion Angelique Kerber may be the biggest threat to Barty.

Barty, who took an unconventional route to becoming world number one by taking a time off to play cricket, insists she feels no pressure.

"The only pressure is that that I put on myself," she said. "To make sure that I do everything correctly and prepare as best that I can to try and play a good tennis match, try and play well, to enjoy myself."

Barty, who says the arm problem that forced her withdrawal from the Eastbourne tournament has cleared

up, admits Wimbledon is unique among the Grand Slam events in having so few lead-up events on the surface. "Wimbledon isn't a normal event," she said.

"It's a little bit bizarre coming into Wimbledon having only played one grass court tournament."

"We feel like we've been striking the ball really well, we're comfortable with the grass under our feet."

Whilst Barty says she did not know what else the draw held for her, Williams claimed not to even know the Australian was number one.

The American legend could perhaps be forgiven her ignorance given how often the top spot has changed since her era of dominance ended.

Nevertheless Williams — who claims she is over the knee woes that saw her pull out of her match with sister Venus at the Italian Open and then make an early French Open exit — believes Barty could be in for a long run as number one. "I think so," said Williams. "I think she has a great game. I think she's really even-tempered. She's just really chill. She's had a really good year."

- 'TAKE THE POSITIVE' - Williams is still chasing the elusive 24th Grand Slam title that would put her alongside Australian Margaret Court, but she was not talking up her chances. "I just haven't had enough match play, quite frankly," she said.

"I finally feel like I found some good results in Paris."

"I'm just going to do the best that I can now that I'm here," she said, adding with a smile: "I know how to play tennis." Osaka, for her part, says



she is much more in the frame of mind she was when she won the Australian Open earlier this year than the stressed-out player who exited the French Open in the third round.

The 21-year-old says the number one spot she held earlier this year had been a millstone round her neck: "Mentally it was way more stress and pressure than I could have imagined."

Despite a second-round defeat at the Birmingham tournament she insists she is in good shape going into Wimbledon, where she has yet to get past the third round. "Actually in Australia I felt like normal," she said. "I

felt like how I am now. I feel like it (grass) should be good for me because it's very heavily reliant on the first serves, being the first person to be aggressive." Kerber may have lost in the Eastbourne final to Karolina Pliskova but the German will be delighted if like last year that is the launching pad to winning at the All England club. Last year she lost in the Eastbourne semi-final only to go on and win Wimbledon. "I will try to take the positive things from the whole week, from the last two weeks before going to Wimbledon now," said the 31-year-old German.

Argentina waiting for Messi magic to make an appearance

LONDON
AGENCIES

For the last dozen years, Argentina has been waiting for global superstar Lionel Messi to lead their football team to a major international trophy. But when the country needed the five-time Ballon d'Or winner most, Messi failed to emulate the feats of Diego Maradona in 1986 — when for some he almost single-handedly won the World Cup. Four times Messi has lined up with Argentina in a major final — the 2014 World Cup and Copa America in 2007, 2015 and 2016 — but every time they have lost.

He has often come under criticism for failing to reproduce his Barcelona form when wearing the sky blue and white jersey of the national team. Now, ahead of a

mouth-watering Copa semi-final against hosts Brazil in Belo Horizonte, Argentines are simply waiting for Messi to turn up. "This is the match for Messi to appear," screamed Ole newspaper's online edition after Argentina beat Venezuela 2-0 to secure the Brazil semi-final. Ironically, at this tournament, while Argentina's performances have been improving steadily, Messi has, if anything, become less influential. Argentina were all at sea in their opening 2-0 defeat to Colombia and needed a Messi penalty to salvage a 1-1 draw with Paraguay.

But in the 2-0 win over Qatar that qualified Argentina for the knock-out rounds, and the quarter-final victory over Venezuela by the same score, Messi became an increasingly peripheral figure.

NOT AT MY BEST: He admitted as

much after the Venezuela match, saying: "I'm not at my best level, I'm not playing how I hoped I would. I'm not having my best Copa America." Brazil center-back Thiago Silva is not so convinced, though. "For me, Messi is the best player in history, the best I've ever seen play. It's a privilege to play against him," said a player who hails from the country that produced Pele, Garincha, Socrates, Ronaldo and Ronaldinho. Messi turned 32 during the tournament and while he doesn't appear close to retirement, it cannot be too many years away.

His game has changed over the years and he no longer produces the same kind of, or quantity of, darting runs at the heart of opposition defences. He plays deeper than he used to, passes more and is more

selective with his runs. He also rests more than he used to and took an eight-month break from the national team following the World Cup in Russia, only returning in March in a 3-1 friendly defeat to Venezuela. But he is more than just the star of the team these days, he is the leader and captains both club and country.

During the club season, Messi took the lead in defending Philippe Coutinho, whom he will line up opposite on Tuesday, from criticism levelled at the Brazilian playmaker in the Catalan press.

Messi also defended Barcelona boss Ernesto Valverde against the brickbats.

And here, while his and Argentina's attacking performances have been nothing to enthuse about, Messi took the time to praise the team's defensive efforts.





TON-UP BAIRSTOW PUTS ENGLAND IN CHARGE OF CRUNCH INDIA MATCH

LONDON
AGENCIES

JONNY Bairstow put his spat with Michael Vaughan behind him to score a hundred that left England well-placed in their key World Cup match against India at Edgbaston on Sunday. The dynamic opener made 111, his eighth one-day international century, in a match England had to win to keep semi-final qualification in their own hands. Earlier, Bairstow and Jason Roy, back from a torn hamstring, put on 160 -- the highest first-wicket partnership of the tournament -- after England captain Eoin Morgan won the toss in sunny conditions on a good batting pitch.

England came into this match with their hopes of emerging out of the 10-team round-robin phase in the balance after back-to-back defeats by Sri Lanka and champions Australia that followed an earlier loss to Pakistan. The tournament hosts, looking to win the World Cup for the first time, had badly missed Roy in their last two matches.

Roy, however, was quickly into his stride, with the Surrey star chopping his second ball from Mohammed Shami for four, then



drilling wide of mid off for another boundary. Bairstow, involved in a pre-match war of words with former England captain Vaughan after suggesting pundits wanted England to lose, had two lucky breaks when big inside edges missed the stumps.

India captain Virat Kohli brought on leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal in the sixth over but Bairstow soon hit him down the ground. Jasprit Bumrah, the world's top-

ranked ODI bowler, was proving tough to get away. Roy could have been out on 21 when India all-rounder Hardik Pandya appealed for a caught behind down the legside off his fourth delivery. But Pakistani umpire Aleem Dar signalled a wide instead and Kohli opted against a review, although replays suggested the ball had touched Roy's glove.

Roy's response was to hit Pandya's next ball for six. Bairstow

completed a 56-ball fifty when he launched Chahal for a six that just cleared the back-peddalling KL Rahul at long-on, the fielder landing awkwardly as he made a desperate attempt at a catch. Roy then followed his opening partner to the landmark in just 41 balls before, on 66, Ravindra Jadeja, the substitute for Rahul, ran in from long-on to hold a low diving catch.

Bairstow twice more clubbed Chahal over long-on for six and handed out similar treatment to Kuldeep Yadav before deftly reverse-sweeping the left-arm wrist-spinner for four. A single off Pandya saw Bairstow to a 90 ball-hundred, including eight fours and six sixes. The batsman celebrated by removing his helmet and slowly punching the air. But Bairstow's innings ended on 111 when the Yorkshireman carved Shami to Rishabh Pant at deep cover to leave his side 205-2 in the 32nd over. As well as recalling Roy, England brought back paceman Liam Plunkett in place of off-spinner Moeen Ali.

Meanwhile India -- needing just one win from their three remaining group games to secure a semi-final place -- preferred batsman Pant to all-rounder Vijay Shankar.

WORLD CUP
ENGLAND & WALES - 2019

MATCH SCHEDULE
SRI LANKA VS WEST INDIES
2:30PM

ICC to take action after fans clash at Pak-Afghan match

LONDON
AGENCIES

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has said it will take action against any fans involved in "scuffles" before the Cricket World Cup match between Pakistan and Afghanistan at Headingley on Saturday.

Videos shared on social media showed supporters of both countries fighting outside the venue and security personnel being forced to intervene, while ESPNcricinfo reported that at least two fans had been evicted from the ground.

"We are aware of some scuffles among a minority of fans and are currently working with the venue security team and the local police force, West Yorkshire Police, to ensure there are no further incidents," an ICC spokesperson said.

"We do not condone this type of behaviour, and will take appropriate action against any anti-social behaviour that spoils the enjoyment for the majority of fans." "We work with local police forces around the country to prevent this type of incident occurring and were assured that given Headingley is under the flight path for the Leeds Bradford Airport it would not be an issue," the spokesperson added.

ICC chief happy with 'sporting' World Cup pitches

LONDON
AGENCIES

International Cricket Council chief executive David Richardson on Sunday said he is happy with the World Cup's "sporting pitches", insisting they have provided good balance between bat and ball. Hosts England posted a tournament high of 397 for six against Afghanistan on June 18, but teams have struggled to get past 250 in the second innings of matches. The 10-team competition has seen sublime hundreds by the world's top batsmen including Australia's David Warner, New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson and Joe Root of England.

But the bowlers have made their presence felt with Australia paceman Mitchell Starc leading the wicket-takers chart with 24 scalps in eight matches. Richardson said the ICC's only direction to the pitch curators was to prepare sporting tracks. "During our playing days a score of between 220 and 260 was a good score but not now. So our only direction to the curators was to prepare sporting tracks," the former South African

wicketkeeper-batsman told reporters in Edgbaston. "And what's heartening to see in this tournament is how the bowlers have had a say and we have seen some exciting cricket."

"Of course in ODIs you will not see as many close games as in Twenty20 cricket but the matches have gone deep and that's important." Defending champions Australia were the first team to book their semi-finals berth and now have seven wins from their eight league

matches. The semi-final race opened up after England's shock loss to Sri Lanka last week, with six of the 10 teams fighting for the remaining three spots.

"Even during the South Africa-India game, I believed for a while the Proteas will get a few more wickets but it didn't happen," he said. "So that's what I mean when I say that the tournament has lived up to expectations and only improved over the years." Fan violence in Leeds on

Saturday marred a World Cup match between Pakistan and Afghanistan as police were forced to intervene after fighting broke out between supporters of the two teams.

Richardson said that incidents like these only make the ICC more "aware" and "prepared". Meanwhile, Richardson lauded the ICC's work in spreading the game to different parts of the world and also contributing to society as they partnered with UNICEF to raise money for children.



Vettori urges New Zealand not to panic after World Cup blow

LONDON
AGENCIES

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson urged his side to move on after an 86-run defeat by champions Australia at Lord's on Saturday condemned the Black Caps to their second straight loss of the World Cup. Williamson's side will guarantee their place alongside Australia -- the team that beat them in 2015 final -- in the last four if they defeat tournament hosts England in their concluding group match at Chester-le-Street on July 3.

And they will be into the semi-finals before then if England loses to

India in Birmingham on Sunday. "It's about moving on and going to Durham," said Williamson after a heavy loss just days after a six-wicket defeat by Pakistan. New Zealand, who lost the toss on a used pitch that made conditions tough for batsmen, were right in the game when they reduced Australia to 92-5. But a century stands between Usman Khawaja (88) and player of the match Alex Carey, whose fluent 71 included 11 fours, took Australia to 243-9.

That proved more than enough, despite a last over hat-trick from New Zealand's Trent Boult. The Black Caps could only manage 157 in reply, with left-arm fast bowler Mitchell

Starc taking a tournament-best 5-26. "We were one wicket away if you look at the positives in our bowling, it wasn't to be today," said Williamson. "Rather than digging too deep, you're analysing the past when the challenge coming up can be quite different. There are so many variables in this sport and World Cup. It's about moving on to the next game," added the star batsman, who for once at this tournament was unable to bail his side out of trouble after match-winning hundreds against both South Africa and the West Indies.

Williamson, who fell to Starc for 40 on Saturday, acknowledged that the defeats could lead to "a dent

in momentum".

"But then at the end of the day, it is coming back to the cricket that we want to play. Playing with those smarts, I think cricket smarts throughout this tournament has been perhaps the most important thing. On these surfaces that have varied a bit...you do need to be smart and adapt really quickly on them to give yourselves the best chance of success." Williamson was encouraged by the form of fast bowler Lockie Ferguson (2-49) as well as experienced left-arm spearhead Boult, saying Ferguson has "got the ability to pick up wickets at any stage of the innings."

TRUMP STEPS INTO NORTH KOREA, IN HISTORIC FIRST

PYONGYANG
AGENCIES

DONALD Trump stepped onto North Korean soil on Sunday as he met Pyongyang's leader Kim Jong Un in the Demilitarized Zone dividing the peninsula, in a symbolic diplomatic spectacle and a first for any American president.

After shaking hands with Kim over the line that marks where their two countries and their allies fought each other to a standstill in the 1950-53 Korean War, Trump walked for several steps into North Korean territory, before another handshake. The two men then walked into Seoul's territory together — pausing on the line for photographers — where they were joined by South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

"It's a great day for the world and it's an honour for me to be here," Trump said. "A lot of great things are happening." The impromptu meeting in the DMZ — which came after Trump issued an invitation on Twitter on Saturday — comes with negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington over the North's nuclear arsenal at a deadlock.

The two would "just shake hands quickly and say hello because we haven't seen each other since Vietnam", Trump said earlier.

Their first summit took place in a blaze of publicity in Singapore last year.



but produced a vaguely-worded pledge about denuclearisation, and a second meeting in Vietnam in February intended to put flesh on those bones broke up without agreement.

Contact between the two sides has since been minimal — with Pyongyang issuing frequent criticisms of the US position — but the two leaders have exchanged a series of letters and Trump turned to Twitter on Saturday to issue his offer. "If Chairman Kim of North Korea sees this, I would meet him at the Border/DMZ just to shake his hand and say Hello(?)", he wrote from from Osaka in Japan, where he was attending a G20 summit before flying to Seoul.

In an unusually fast and public response, within hours of Trump's tweet the North's official KCNA news agency

quoted Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui as saying the offer was "a very interesting suggestion".

Trump's entry onto North Korean soil is a dramatic re-enactment of the extraordinary scene last year when the young leader invited South Korean President Moon Jae-in to walk over the Military Demarcation Line that divides the Korean Peninsula — who seized on last year's Winter Olympics to broker the process between Pyongyang and Washington, after tensions soared in 2017 amid missile and nuclear tests and mutual insults — will be going to the DMZ with Trump.

"The leaders of the US and the North will have a handshake for peace at Panmunjom, the symbol of division, for the first time," Moon said, referring

to the "truce village" in the DMZ. "BARREN NO-MAN'S LAND": But analysts were divided over the headline-grabbing meeting's potential impact on the underlying issues.

The four-kilometre-wide (2.5 miles) DMZ, running for 250 kilometres, is where the front line lay when the Korean War ended with a ceasefire rather than a peace treaty, and is described as the world's last Cold War frontier. John Delury of Yonsei University in Seoul said an encounter in the "barren no man's land that embodies the unhealed wound of post-WWII division, the Korean War, and 70 years of animosity" would help improve ties.

"It's not just about denuclearisation and it's not all about a deal — important as those are," he said. "If Trump and Kim meet [and] can announce some kind of interim agreement, that's great. If they meet and don't, that's ok too. If in the end they don't meet, it's good that Trump offered to."

But Joshua Pollack of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies cast doubt on what it could achieve.

The Hanoi meeting foundered amid disagreements on what the North — which has carried out six nuclear tests and developed missiles capable of reaching the entire US mainland — would be willing to give up in exchange for relief from sanctions that have crippled its economy. "An agenda-free, made-for-TV encounter won't undo a year of inflated expectations and disappointment," said Pollack.

What was needed, he added, was "something more than a one-page letter and another handshake". The DMZ has been a regular stop for US presidents visiting the South, a security ally — although Trump's helicopter was forced to turn back by fog in 2017 — while Panmunjom saw the first two summits between Moon and Kim last year.



Tourists stuck in Murree's Patriata chair lifts rescued

MURREE
STAFF REPORT

The Pakistan Army has rescued all the tourists, who were stuck in the air after a chair lift wire detached from the pulley due to a typhoon in Murree, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Sunday. A popular visiting spot in Murree, the elevated chairlifts met with a malfunction resulting in hundreds of getting stuck in the air precariously. The rescue operation to retrieve and rescue all chair lift riders was completed by the army contingent along with the civil administration, and all the tourists were safely evacuated. "Army engineers repaired the cable tower to rescue the tourists", the army's military wing said. The Patriata chair lifts in Murree are the main tourist attraction, it is the highest point in the area and the hills stand 7,500 feet above sea level. In 2017, at least 10 people were killed and two injured when a chairlift cable broke and it plunged into a ravine. The accident occurred some 30 kilometers (18 miles) north of Islamabad in the Charra Pani village in Murree. Rescue teams had shifted injured persons and the bodies to the hospital.

Qureshi rejects opposition's demand of mid-term polls

KHANEWAL
INP

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Sunday turned down the opposition parties' demand of mid-term elections as uncalled for. Talking to media in Jahanian near Khanewal, Qureshi said demand for mid-term elections by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in current situation was unjustified. Qureshi said that general elections in the country held recently, hardly one year ago, so as there was no justification of demand for the snap polls. He also said that the government has proved its clear majority during the approval of federal budget in the National Assembly. Pakistan is facing external and internal challenges, he said, advising the opposition to extend cooperation to the government in this regard. Qureshi expressed hope that Pakistan will overcome all challenges under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan. The foreign minister also said that dialogue process with Afghanistan progressing in right direction and we are waiting for a positive outcome. He said matters with India were also under process. Qureshi said that Pakistan is committed to durable peace in Afghanistan, he added.



Prince William, Kate Middleton to visit Pakistan this autumn

LONDON
INP

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge Prince William and Kate Middleton will undertake an official visit to Pakistan this autumn, announced the Kensington Palace. The trip, which is being carried out at the request of the U.K.'s Foreign and Commonwealth Office, will take place in the autumn. According to a tweet published by Kensington Palace, The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge will undertake an official visit to Pakistan this autumn, at the request of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It will be the first official visit by a member of the British royal family to Pakistan since 2006 when Prince Charles and Camilla traveled to Pakistan. Previously, the Queen visited in 1961 and 1997, and Princess Diana traveled there on a solo trip in 1991. According to the U.K.'s Foreign and Commonwealth Office, approximately 270,000 British nationals visit Pakistan every year.

PML-N says few MPs met Imran at Bani Gala

PML-N PUNJAB PRESIDENT SAYS THE MEMBERS WHO CALLED ON PM WEREN'T PARTY LOYALISTS

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

A day after over a dozen of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) lawmakers from Punjab Assembly called on Prime Minister Imran Khan at his Bani Gala residence, the PML-N Punjab President Rana Sanaullah says there's a possibility that some of the PML-N members met Imran at his residence.

According to a local TV channel, Sana said the members who called on Imran include those who joined the party before the general elections after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) refused to give them the party ticket. "We have no information regarding PML-N parliamentarians meeting the prime minister. We also do not believe that such a meeting has happened. This is a deliberate attempt to spread fake news and divert people's attention from PTI's failed economic policies," she said.

Meanwhile, PML-N Spokesper-

son Marriyum Aurangzeb told a local media outlet that the PTI should name the lawmakers who visited Bani Gala if such a meeting ever happened. "If it happened then it was highly unethical," the former minister was quoted as saying.

Questioning the veracity of news, she said if PML-N members were defecting then it would have reflected in the budget votes. Meanwhile, a PML-N MPA Mian Jalil Ahmed confirmed his meeting with the premier, though he didn't name others who were part of the meeting. According to a media report, he said it was his democratic right to discuss his constituency's issues with the PM and chief minister.

Talking to journalists, Ahmed said that PM Imran assured that all the problems faced by the people in the area would be resolved. He said that the prime minister did not ask him to join his party. Ahmed had joined PML-N in 2018 before the general elections. He had remained in

FAWAD SAYS IT'S JUST A START, OPP MEMBERS FROM SENATE AND NA WILL ALSO MEET PM SOON

the PTI before that. However, Fawad Chaudhry, a former information minister in PTI government, said the meeting of PML-N lawmakers was a start and there will be more coming.

In a tweet, the federal minister said that the next groups to meet PM Imran will be from National Assembly and Senate. "Decisions are made on local political facts and PML-N and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) have lost their worth among people, therefore, the politicians will also make their decisions accordingly," he said.

FORWARD BLOC IN THE MAKING: At least 15 PML-N lawmakers had called on Prime Minister Imran Khan at his Bani Gala residence, leading to speculation that a forward bloc is being formed in the opposition parties. According to reports, the PML-N lawmakers discussed political issues with the PM. Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar was also present in the meeting. The PML-N lawmakers reportedly expressed confidence in the policies of Prime Minister Imran and Chief Minister Buzdar during the meeting.

Fighting rages across Afghanistan as peace talks continue

KABUL
AGENCIES

Taliban suicide bombers killed at least 19 people in an attack on a government office on Saturday night, officials said, in the latest episode of violence in Afghanistan as peace talks continue to end the war.

Election workers were registering voters ahead of presidential elections in September at an office in the Mar-roof district of the southern Kandahar province when fighters of the hard-line Islamist group launched an attack using four Humvee vehicles, officials said. Eight election workers were killed, they said. Eleven Afghan security force members were also killed

alongside the four suicide bombers, said Tadeen Khan, the police chief of Kandahar. The Taliban, which rejects the election process, claimed responsibility for the attack.

Taliban spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmadi said the group's fighters also killed 57 members of the Afghan security forces in the attack and captured 11 others, but Afghan officials disputed the account. The interior ministry in a statement said 25 Taliban insurgents were killed in the clash.

The Taliban, which controls or contests half the country, more than at any time since being overthrown by the U.S. invasion in 2001, has rejected calls for a ceasefire.

Fighting between the Taliban and

Afghan forces has intensified even as leaders of the Taliban and U.S. officials hold peace talks in Qatar to end 18 years of war in Afghanistan.

In a separate attack, Taliban fighters killed eight Afghan soldiers and injured eight others at a military checkpoint in Balabulak district in the western province of Farah, a local official said. Mahmood Naemi, the deputy chief of the Farah council, said the clashes ended after Afghan forces launched air strikes.

"Many Taliban fighters were killed in the air strike," said Naemi.

In the northern province of Takhar, over 600 villagers fled as Taliban fighters seized large areas of the province during heavy fighting in re-

cent days, government officials said. **TALKS CONTINUE:** The pace of talks between the United States and Taliban in Doha has sped up as Afghanistan heads for presidential elections on September 28.

Qatar's government, which is mediating the peace process between the United States and the Taliban, on Sunday said the two sides discussed the withdrawal of foreign troops, preventing militants from using Afghanistan to harm the United States or other countries and a comprehensive ceasefire.

"They (U.S. and Taliban) also stressed the mutual desire of both sides to move quickly and make tangible progress," the ministry said.

