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Pakistan to abolish 'non-filer' status, impose strict penalties on tax evaders: Aurangzeb

ONLINE

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Aurangzeb has announced that the government will eliminate the term "non-filers" and impose strict penalties on those who fail to declare their income. These individuals will face significant restrictions that will impact their daily activities.

In an interview with VOA on Thursday, the minister stated that the government has gathered extensive data on non-filers, including their lifestyles, vehicle ownership, and international travel. "We are now at a point where we cannot afford leniency. Those who hide their income and evade taxes will be restricted from many essential services," Aurangzeb said.

He highlighted plans to reduce the tax burden on salaried individuals, while expanding the tax net to cover sectors like

retail, wholesale, agriculture, and real estate. "We aim to ease the load on the working class while ensuring that previously untaxed sectors contribute their fair share," he explained.

When asked about the IMF's concerns regarding debt repayment, the finance minister said the government had presented a comprehensive economic reform plan. "We had no

choice but to implement these reforms, and we will also bring all untaxed groups into the system."

Aurangzeb noted that despite a 29% increase in tax revenues last year, the tax-to-GDP ratio remained at 9%, a figure too low to stabilise the economy. He credited support from China and Saudi Arabia for securing \$7 billion in IMF loan and emphasised that large-scale reforms are necessary if Pakistan hopes to avoid future IMF programmes.



Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif exchanging views with Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during meeting on the sidelines of 79th session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, in New York

PM reaffirms commitment to implement structural reforms PM reaffirms Pakistan's complete solidarity with Palestinians

By Khawaja Farooq

NEW YORK: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a meeting with Managing Director International Monetary Fund Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session in New York. Appreciating the collaboration with IMF for successful Staff Level Agreement for a 37 month, seven billion dollars' Extended Fund Facility for Pakistan, the Prime Minister highlighted government's commitment to implementing structural reforms and promoting private sector development. Shehbaz Sharif also expressed appreciation for the IMF's technical assistance and

capacity-building programs, which have helped to strengthen the country's institutions and improve its economic management. The IMF Managing Director expressed the Fund's support for Pakistan's efforts and emphasized the importance of maintaining macroeconomic stability and promoting inclusive and sustainable growth.

During the meeting, they also discussed the urgent need of mobilizing adaptation financing for climate change. The Prime Minister agreed to have the Finance Minister take up this critical issue with senior management at the IMF during the Annual Meetings next month. Therefore, Prime Minister

Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed Pakistan's complete solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Talking to the media after his meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in New York, he said the hearts of people of Pakistan beat with the hearts of Palestinian people.

The Prime Minister strongly condemned Israeli atrocities in Gaza over the last one year. He said this kind of barbarism has not been witnessed by mankind for ages. He emphasized that the time has come to collectively demand an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the creation of a State of Palestine, without which peace cannot be restored in the region.

Deputy Chairman Senate hails efforts to bolster Quetta Bar Association

ONLINE

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan has commended the ongoing efforts to bolster the Quetta Bar Association with an aim to address the challenges faced by the legal community.

Speaking during a meeting with delegations of lawyers led by President of the Quetta Bar Association, Qari Rehmatullah Khan here on Thursday, he recognized the judiciary's vital role in fostering democracy and reiterated that enhancing the judicial system is a government's priority.

The meeting focused on judicial reforms, with particular attention to the difficulties faced by the lawyers in Quetta.

Qari Rehmatullah Khan presented several requests to the

Deputy Chairman, which included the allocation of land in

Islamabad for Quetta lawyers, the introduction of a laptop scheme, and scholarships for Bar at Law and LL.M programs.

In response, Deputy Chairman Syedaal Khan assured the delegation that their concerns would be addressed promptly.

Dr Shah Nawaz was victim of fake encounter: Sindh minister

INP

KARACHI: Sindh Home Minister Zia-ul-Hasan Linjar confirmed on Thursday that Dr Shah Nawaz - a doctor from Umerkot - was killed in a staged police encounter.

Speaking at a press conference in Karachi, the provincial minister revealed that an investigation, aided by CCTV footage, had concluded that the encounter was fake. The officials involved in the incident have since been suspended.

The inquiry was initiated following allegations of extrajudicial killing in Umerkot, where police claimed that Dr Shah Nawaz had

been involved in a violent exchange of fire.

However, the inquiry committee - formed under the directives of Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah - found that the encounter was fabricated. The minister further stated that the Mirpurkhas police, along with the CIA Mirpurkhas, were responsible for the incident.

"Upon confirmation that the encounter was staged, the responsible officials were immediately suspended," said Linjar. "The family of Dr Shah Nawaz is free to file a First Information Report (FIR) against those involved, but if they do not, the state will proceed with registering a case."

Security forces kill eight terrorists in North Waziristan IBO

APP

RAWALPINDI: Security forces in Pakistan have killed eight terrorists in a successful operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province's North Waziristan district, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) confirmed on Wednesday.

The intelligence-based operation took place in the Razmak area on the night between September 25 and 26, following reports of terrorists present in the area.

According to ISPR, a heavy exchange of fire ensued between security forces and the terrorists during the operation, resulting in the deaths of eight members of the Fitna Al Khawarij (FAK), also known as the Tehreek-i-Taliban

Pakistan (TTP).

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the scene.

The military added that the terrorists, referred to as Khawarij, were involved in various activities targeting security forces, as well as the killings of civilians.

This operation comes just days after security forces conducted similar missions in North and South Waziristan,

where 12 terrorists were killed. That operation also saw the loss of six security personnel who were martyred during the intense combat.

The recent operations underscore the ongoing efforts by Pakistan's security forces to eliminate terrorist threats in the region.

IMF says unaware of Pakistan securing commercial financing at 11% interest rate

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has clarified that it is unaware of Pakistan securing any commercial financing at an 11% interest rate.

In a statement issued on Thursday, an IMF spokesperson stated that the global lender has not requested Pakistan to pursue such high-interest commercial loans.

The spokesperson further noted that no such financing is necessary to meet the program assurances under Pakistan's current agreement with the IMF.

Prior to the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approving the critical

\$7 billion loan package for Pakistan, it had been reported that the country borrowed from international commercial banks at an interest rate of 11% -- one of the highest rates in the country's history.

This new bailout program, spanning 37

months, marks Pakistan's 24th IMF assistance package. With its approval, Pakistan will also be eligible to receive funds from other international organizations and countries.

The approval of the loan follows a staff-level agreement reached between Pakistan and the IMF on July 12. Pakistani officials have confirmed that all preconditions for the loan, including securing \$2 billion in additional financing and consolidating \$12.7 billion in debt, have been fulfilled.

China, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait have also provided crucial support by deferring Pakistan's loan payments for one year.

On Wednesday night, the IMF Executive Board approved a \$7 billion loan for Pakistan under the Expanded Fund Facility (EFF), and immediately released nearly \$1 billion to help Pakistan address its economic challenges and restore macroeconomic stability.

Achakzai warns Fazl against supporting constitutional amendments

INP

QUETTA: Chairman of the Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, Mahmood Khan Achakzai, has cautioned JUI-F leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman, stating that endorsing the proposed constitutional amendments could harm his political standing. During a press conference at the party's central secretariat, Achakzai emphasized that amendments should not be made behind closed doors or through conspiracies. Instead, all political parties and stakeholders must come together to resolve the ongoing crisis in the country.

Achakzai stressed the importance of fresh elections as a necessary step to pull Pakistan out of its current turmoil. He described the

constitution as a "sacred document," not just a piece of paper, and said that any amendments should reflect national and public interests, achieved through consensus in Parliament.

"The newly formed parliamentary committee could play a key role in paving the way for fresh elections," Achakzai remarked, reiterating that only new elections can help resolve the crises. He also called for the establishment of parliamentary supremacy and the immediate cessation of establishment interference in the country's political affairs.

He further noted that the purpose of the constitution is to protect the rights of every citizen, and any changes must prioritize the needs and welfare of the people.



QUETTA: Federal Minister for State and Frontier Region (SAFRON) and Kashmir Affairs, Engineer Amir Muqam Addressing a press conference here in Commissionerat of Afghan Refugees Quetta.

Bill Gates lauds PM's oversight of polio vaccination efforts

Pakistan committed to strengthen ties with EU: PM

By Khawaja Farooq

NEW YORK: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reiterated Pakistan's unwavering commitment to ensure complete eradication of polio from the country.

He highlighted this resolve of the country during his meeting with Bill Gates, the founder and co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) on the sidelines of the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Recalling Bill Gates' recent visit to Pakistan in June this year, the Prime Minister thanked him for the invitation to visit the Gates Foundation in Seattle in December 2024. He also appreciated the Gates Foundation's engagement and support to Pakistan on polio eradication, maternal and child health, nutrition, immunization, digitization, and financial inclusion.

Shehbaz Sharif thanked the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for its longstanding support in this effort and underscored the need for sustained efforts and supports to Pakistan, particularly for health system strengthening and maternal and child nutrition in this regard.

Acknowledging Pakistan's efforts, Bill Gates stressed polio

eradication is vital to protect its future generations from this crippling disease. He appreciated the Prime Minister's personal supervision and engagement of the provincial governments in the polio vaccine program across the country.

Bill Gates shared updates on a comprehensive Health Dialogue with Afghanistan and requested support for the initiative. He also communicated his willingness to focus more on the pockets where the number of missed children or refusal of polio vaccines is higher, especially where the morbidity of children is greater.

Bill Gates also shared with the Prime Minister on King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre's support for polio and other health relief-related initiatives.

He also apprised the Prime Minister about his foundation's work on nutrition especially the micronutrients for pregnant women and how it can be increased by providing them additional vitamins in support of UNICEF.

The Prime Minister complimented the Gates Foundation for its Polio campaign in Gaza, given the challenges there and the plight of children. He emphasized on immediate ceasefire and the resolution of the conflict as per the UN Resolutions.

Shehbaz Sharif also complimented Bill & Melinda Gates

Foundation for being a trusted ally in Pakistan's socio-economic development and expressed interest in broadening collaboration in areas such as information technology, STEM education, agriculture, and livestock.

Therefore, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has emphasized Pakistan's dedication to strengthening its relationship with the European Union.

He was talking to European Commission President Ms. Ursula Von Der Leyen at a meeting with her, on the margins of the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

The Prime Minister further underlined the importance of continued dialogue and cooperation in advancing shared goals. Commenting on the GSP Plus Scheme, Shehbaz Sharif mentioned that Pakistan has demonstrated consistent political commitment to fully implement the GSP Plus related international conventions. The discussions encompassed a wide array of topics, including bilateral relations, regional and global issues. The Prime Minister congratulated Ms. Ursula on her re-election as the President of the European Commission and commended her unwavering commitment to advancing the interests of the European Union.

Imran Khan cancels Rawalpindi rally on Sept 28

INP

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan on Thursday directed the party to postpone its power show scheduled in Rawalpindi on September 28.

Talking to media in Adiala Jail, the former prime minister said that he knew that the government wouldn't allow PTI to hold a rally.

Imran Khan directed the party to withdraw the application that was earlier submitted seeking permission to hold power show.

However, the party would stage protest in Rawalpindi on Saturday.

"We'll hold protests in Rawalpindi while the lawyers' forum of party will protest outside the Supreme Court," said Imran Khan.

Earlier, PTI had submitted a request to hold a rally in Rawalpindi on September 28.

CJP Isa reveals why he removed Justice Akhtar from judges' committee

ONLINE

ISLAMABAD: In response to senior puisne judge Justice Mansoor Ali Shah's letter raising questions on removing Justice Munib Akhtar from the judges' committee, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa on Thursday gave 11 reasons to justify his action.

CJP Isa on September 20 appointed Justice Amin-Ud-Din Khan to the three-member judges' committee, excluding Justice Munib Akhtar hours after the promulgation of the new Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Amendment Ordinance 2024.

The ordinance empowers the chief justice to nominate a judge in the committee that constitutes the benches. As per the ordinance, the body will comprise the chief justice, the most senior judge after the CJP and the judge nominated by Justice Isa.

In his letter, the CJP said legally he could not be asked about why he nominated a judge as the committee's third member, however, "Since I have always advocated accountability and transparency I shall provide reasons why Justice Akhtar has been replaced.

"Let it be remembered that this I do because of your insistence, lest someone takes umbrage."

He gave 11 reasons for his replacing Justice Akhtar from the body.

The chief justice said Justice Akhtar ardently opposed the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act, which had removed the dominance of the chief justice over the Supreme Court as well.

"He was one of two judges who availed the full summer vacations; indifferent to the piling backlog cases," he said.

The letter mentioned that while on vacation and not available to do court work, Justice Akhtar insisted on participating in the committee meetings, suggesting his lack of trust in the next senior judge, Justice Yahya Afridi.

"The Act [also] stipulates that urgent cases are to be fixed within 14 days but this statutory provision and the constitutional right to seek review was negated by his [Munib Akhtar's] refusal to hear urgent constitutional cases while he was vacationing.

"Disrespecting those who were his seniors (the ad hoc judges) and selecting 1,100 specific cases and confining them to hear only those cases, something wholly unprecedented," it stated as additional reasons for removing the senior judge from the committee.

The letter mentioned Justice Akhtar's not allowing ad hoc judges to be part of the Shariat Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court to hear the long pending cases as another reason behind the chief justice's decision.

Giving further reason for his choice of cutting Justice Akhtar from the committee, CJP Isa mentioned the display of his rude and unreasonable behaviour towards a distinguished member of the committee and walking out of the meeting. The said committee comprised all the chief justices, senior puisne Judges, and distinguished members of the bar.

The apex court's chief justice also said the bench headed by Justice Akhtar adjourned most of the cases and often finished its work before 11am; a concern expressed by his companion judges.

He also said the senior puisne issued a stay order in the audio leaks case and did not fix it for hearing. In a letter written to the secretary of the Supreme Court on September 23, Justice Shah raised concern over the judges' committee's reconstitution and Justice Akhtar's removal from the composition of the committee within hours of the promulgation of the ordinance. Justice Mansoor, in his letter, noted that no reasons were given as to why the second senior-most judge, Justice Akhtar, was removed from the composition of the Committee.

Adopting digital transformation vital to boost investment in pharmaceutical sector: Gilani

ONLINE

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani declaring the pharmaceutical sector as one of the key pillars of the country's economy has said that it is highly promising that the sector is expanding its reach into high-value markets such as Europe, the USA, and emerging markets in Asia and Africa.

Speaking as chief guest of the 3rd Pharma Export Summit & Awards (PESA) held here on Thursday, he said, "Despite the smaller scale, Pakistan's pharmaceutical industry is expanding, with local companies increasingly capturing market share from multinational corporations."

Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani highlighted few key areas where industry can strategically focus to increase exports and compete on a par with regional players in global market. He called for investing in innovation, building partnerships, and embracing digital transformation as the world is changing rapidly, and the pharmaceutical sector is no exception.

He suggested to focus on expanding our research and development capabilities, improve regulatory frameworks, foster

international collaborations with renowned peer companies and strengthen public-private partnerships to enhance our competitive edge and lastly investing in the production of generic drugs and bi-similar that can help Pakistan tap into the growing global demand for affordable medications.

"By addressing these areas, Pakistan can bolster its pharmaceutical exports and strengthen its position in the global market" he emphasized.

The Chairman Senate also cautioned to be mindful of Global inflation and the resulting economic slowdown. He underlined the need to check crippling reliance on imported raw material if we want our Pharma Industry to truly thrive and realize its full potential.

He said that such intervention would not only help save precious foreign exchange reserves spent on expensive imports, but also bring down prices and boost exports.

Today, as we honor the top 50 exporters of pharmaceuticals and allied products, we recognize their invaluable contribution to not just the industry but to Pakistan's broader economic landscape, he remarked.



NEW YORK: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets with the Bill Gates, founder and co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) on the sidelines of 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Mr. Sajid Tarar Intensifies Fundraising Efforts for Donald Trump, Calls for Unity Among Muslim Community Ahead of 2024 Elections

By Khawaja Farooq

NEW YORK: Prominent Pakistani-American businessman and founder of American Muslims for Trump, Mr. Sajid Tarar, reached out to Mr. Khawaja Farooq in a detailed telephonic conversation.

Tarar shared his ongoing efforts in raising funds for the Republican Party, spearheaded by Donald Trump for the upcoming presidential elections. Touring across the United States, Tarar emphasized his role in representing Muslim Trump supporters and highlighted his commitment to rallying communities in support of Trump's candidacy.

Despite his busy schedule of meetings and fundraising, Mr. Tarar expressed his intention to visit



Mr. Sajid Tarar with President Donald Trump.

Brooklyn, New York soon. He requested Mr. Farooq to gather the local Muslim community for a direct meeting. During their conversation, Tarar stressed that President Donald Trump remains a beacon of hope, not only for the United States but for global peace

and economic stability. He argued that under Trump's leadership, the world would see an end to ongoing conflicts and bloodshed. Further elaborating on Trump's manifesto, Tarar discussed Trump's vision of restoring America's global respect, revitalizing the economy, and addressing domestic challenges such as homelessness and security.

He positioned Trump as the only leader capable of resolving international disputes and bringing global order. In a final note,

Tarar promised to bring Republican vice-presidential candidate James David Vance to meet the local community during his Brooklyn visit. He also pledged to organize a meeting between a group of Pakistani community members and Donald Trump himself.

Purpose of constitutional amendments only to subordinate judiciary to executive: Abbasi

INP

MULTAN: Former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has voiced strong opposition to recent proposed constitutional amendments, claiming they aim to subordinate the judiciary to the executive.

Speaking to a private TV channel, he expressed doubt that the current Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif has even seen the draft of these amendments, emphasizing that the government is not engaging the public in this critical process.

Abbasi criticized the timing of the amendments, suggesting that proposing changes "in the dark of night" likens it to banditry.

He lamented the lack of transparency, stating, "You think that the people of the country are stupid; they have no right to express their opinion?" He called for the draft to be made public for an extended debate of three to four months before being presented to Parliament.

He further argued that the amendments are intended to diminish judi-

cial independence and prevent certain individuals from political participation.

Although Abbasi noted the judiciary's past mistakes, he stressed that these issues should be addressed without undermining the entire system. He advocated for reform in the selection of the Chief Justice and the judiciary's current operational structure.

Abbasi also urged the government to accept the Supreme Court's recent ruling on reserved seats, recalling that both Yusuf Raza Gilani and Nawaz Sharif faced consequences for ignoring judicial decisions.

He reflected on historical attempts to amend the constitution in the late 90s and noted that opposition from

his party ultimately led to those efforts being abandoned. In conclusion, Abbasi's remarks highlight a broader concern over judicial independence and the need for transparent governance, as he called for a more democratic approach to constitutional reform.

FC Balochistan celebrates Pashtun Culture day

INP

QUETTA: Frontier Corps (FC) Balochistan North organized celebrations for Pashtun Culture Day 2024 across various districts including Chaman, Quetta, Zhob, Qila Saifullah, Harnai, Ziarat, and Kohlu. The events aimed to highlight and preserve Pashtun traditions and cultural heritage.

Seminars and cultural programs were conducted in different schools throughout these areas. FC Balochistan collaborated with tribal elders and local communities to commemorate the day.

The celebrations featured stalls displaying traditional attire, jewelry, and cuisine. Additionally, attendees enjoyed performances of Attan, a traditional Pashtun dance, and participated in cultural games.

This annual observance serves as an effort to better understand

Senate Body urges to prioritize education sector in provision of funds

By Zahid Ahmed Khan

ISLAMABAD: Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training has urged for allocating maximum funds for education sector.

Chairperson of Education Committee, Senator Bushra Anjum Butt has summoned the Secretaries of Finance and Planning for the next meeting of the Senate Education Committee to provide a detailed briefing on the bifurcation and disbursement of funds allocated to the Ministry of Education across various provinces and departments. The committee, at the ministry's request, also

proposed an evaluation of the budgetary allocations, advocating for an increase in funding for education. Senator Butt emphasized that education, being vital to the prosperous future of Pakistan, warrants significant attention and should be prioritized.

The proposal was given during meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training, chaired by Senator Bushra Anjum Butt held at the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training. The agenda included discussions on allowances for professors and teachers, the provision of classrooms, issues related to retired teachers.



Civil Secretariat Staff Association Chand Panel leader, Mir Dilawar Khan Raisani along with others addresses to media persons during press conference, held at Quetta press club.



Bangladesh ex-skipper Shakib announces international retirement

SPORTS DESK

Bangladesh ex-captain Shakib Al Hasan, facing prosecution at home for his relationship with the country's former leader, said on Thursday he would retire from international cricket by March next year.

Shakib is facing murder charges at home, along with dozens of other members of ex-premier Sheikh Hasina's party accused of culpability in a deadly police crackdown on protesters.

The 37-year-old has not returned to Bangladesh since the toppling of Hasina's government in last month's student-led revolution.

Shakib said that next year's Champion's Trophy in Pakistan would be his last international outing.

But he added that he wanted to return home for a slated two-match Test series against South Africa, and had asked the Bangladesh Cricket Board if he could return.

"It's my desire, I have said this to BCB and the selectors," Shakib told reporters ahead of Friday's second Test against India in Kanpur.

"They agreed with me, that they are trying to organise everything if possible, so that I can go back to Bangladesh play those two Test matches in Mirpur and finish my Test career there." He added: "If that doesn't happen maybe this is my last one."

The South Africa tour due to start on October 21 is still under a cloud, with the Proteas assessing whether Bangladesh is safe enough after last month's revolution.

"Right time for me" Shakib said he had already called time on his T20 career following the World Cup in June.

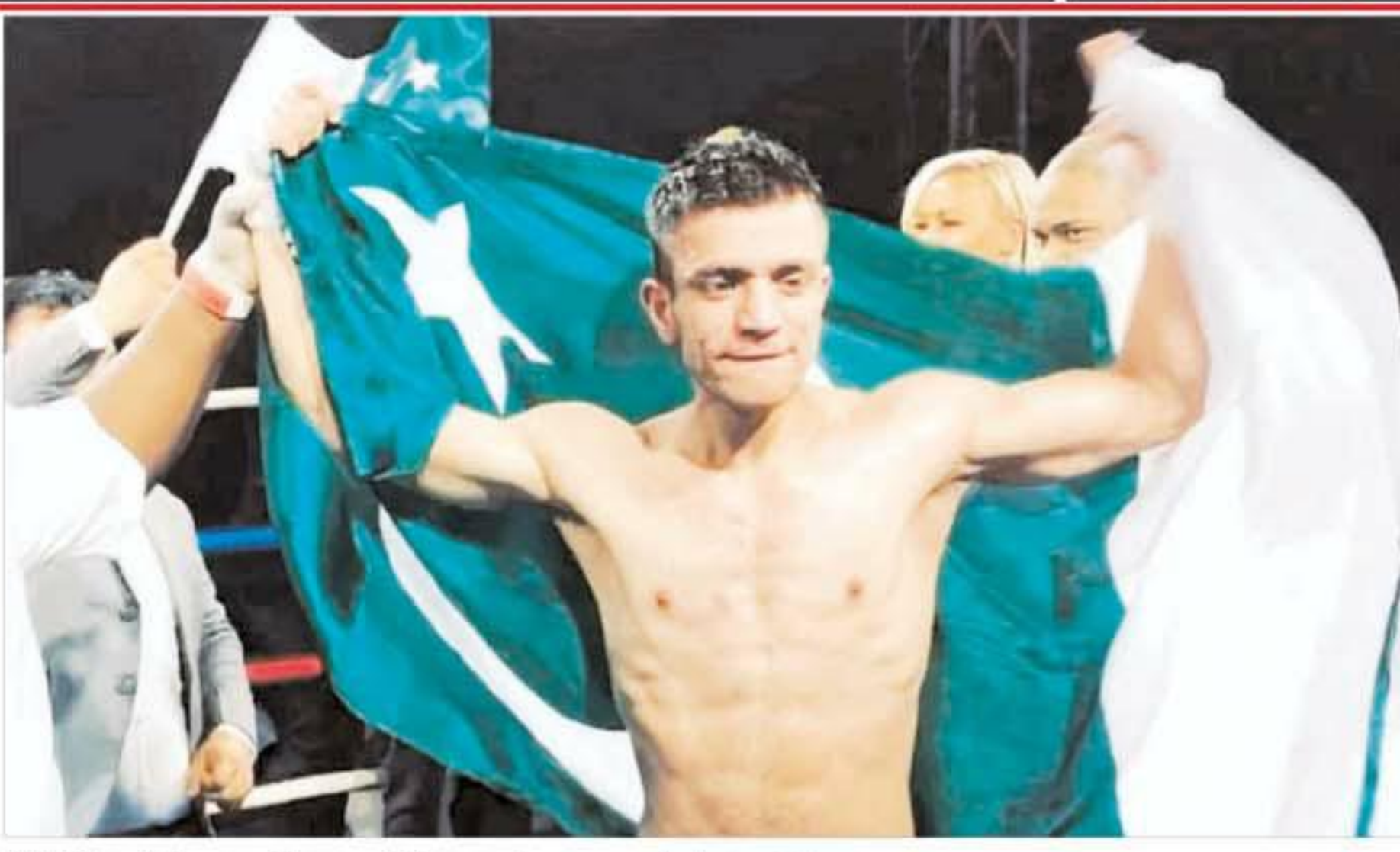
"I played my last match during my last game of the World Cup. We have discussed this with selectors and board," he said.

"This is the right time for me to move on and BCB will look into some new players."

Shakib said that he would play his final 50-over matches at the Champions Trophy, which will be hosted by Pakistan in February.

"I have eight games to go in ODI's and the Champions Trophy will be last," he said.

Shakib was the driving force of the Bangladesh team's rise to become serious international contenders, enthralling fans through both star turns and scandals. He remains the only player to have topped the International Cricket Council all-rounder rankings in all three formats simultaneously.



Pakistani boxer Usman Wazeer in an undated picture.

Pakistan's Usman Wazeer knocks down Indian boxer in just 65 seconds

> This victory marks Wazeer's 14th consecutive win in professional boxing

SPORTS DESK

Pakistan's Usman Wazeer sensationally dismantled Indian boxer, Thehlak Selvam, in just 65 seconds in a highly anticipated professional boxing clash.

The six-round bout, held at a boxing arena in Thailand, barely made it past the first few seconds of the opening round when Wazeer delivered a powerful punch that knocked the Indian boxer to the ground.

Struggling to recover, Thehlak Selvam received another

heavy blow after which he couldn't recover. Seeing that the Indian boxer was unable to respond, the referee stopped the fight, declaring Usman Wazeer the winner on technical grounds.

This victory marks Usman Wazeer's 14th consecutive win in professional boxing, solidifying his reputation as a rising star in the sport.

He has secured prestigious titles including the World Youth Title, Asian Title, and Middle East Title, bringing honour to Pakistan and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Taking to X (formerly Twitter) after his triumph, Wazeer called upon the prime ministers of Pakistan and India to work towards fostering better relations between the two nations. "We all want peace. Share this message and show some love."

Alcaraz hopes Davis Cup finals won't be Nadal's 'last dance'

SPORTS DESK

BEIJING: Carlos Alca-raz said Wednesday he is relishing teaming up with Rafael Nadal for Spain at the Davis Cup finals but hopes it won't be "a last dance" for the 22-time Grand Slam champion.

Spain this week named both players in their five-man team for the finals in November on home soil in Malaga, the duo having competed together in doubles at the Paris Olympics.

The 38-year-old Nadal was included for the Davis Cup despite not seeing competitive action since Paris and only playing one of the last seven Grand Slams because of injury and fitness struggles.

The 21-year-old Alcaraz said he had "missed" his compatriot at the recent Laver Cup, which Nadal skipped because of injury.

"I don't want to think that it is a potential last dance for him in Malaga," four-time major winner Alcaraz said at the China Open in Beijing.

"Obviously it is a great support having him in the team. He can bring a lot of experience. For me it's going to be my first Davis Cup final, it's going to be a great experience for me."

"To have the chance to spend more time off the court, on the court as well with him, it's going to be great for Team Spain and I think for the country as well that we're playing in Spain."

"Hopefully it's not going to be the last time for him." Nadal is not in the Chinese capital and the Spanish great has given mixed messages about his future in the sport.

Preparing to play on home soil, Zverev said of Alcaraz: "It's a privilege to share the court with a legend of our sport already." The two have clashed three times in 2024, including in the French Open final, which Alcaraz won in five sets. "I think it's amazing to hear my team-mates call me a tennis legend, but I try not to think about it," said Alcaraz.

"Above all, what makes you a legend in tennis is what you contribute to the sport and how you try and take tennis to the top, to be heard in every corner of the world. To attract the largest possible audience, to people who have never seen tennis in their lives, thanks to you they watch it on TV or start to play, that makes you a legend, apart from the tournaments you have won and the success you have."



Carlos Alcaraz of Spain and Rafael Nadal of Spain react during their match against Austin Krajicek of United States and Rajeev Ram of United States.

CORRIGENDUM
Reference PRQ No.970/10-09-2024 published in various Newspapers dated 10-09-2024 under TSE#-24259544633 & TSE#-24259544553. Now the last date of bid submission has been extended to 02nd October, 2024 at 01.00 PM. The bid will be opened manually on same day at 02.00 PM. All other terms and conditions shall remain same.
Executive Engineer Buildings
CWPP&H, Department, Zhob
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Taxation plan

AT first glance, the new FBR 'transformation plan', which aims to broaden the tax net, scrap the category of 'non-filers', and improve compliance and enforcement through fresh punitive measures, might come across as a positive step.

Yet, without addressing the deep-seated and long-standing issues of tax equity, policy reforms and institutional restructuring of the FBR, can it work? Indeed, the idea of making 'dirty money' redundant through imposing restrictions on asset purchases and investments by tax evaders and cheaters should be appreciated.

But how will the plan be executed? The proposed plan shifts the entire burden of tax scrutiny of a spender on other regulators and sellers rather than building its own capacity to net the dodgers. It is also likely to create problems for tax-exempt segments, including those whose annual income is less than Rs600,000 or housewives or Pakistanis abroad. Will they also be required to file annual tax statements? The plan does not distinguish between tax evaders and middle-class taxpayers showing an annual income of less than Rs10m in their tax statements. They could also face the same spending curbs as articulated for non-filers when they try to purchase a vehicle or real estate or financial instruments or attempt to open bank accounts. This is not the first time the tax bureaucracy has come up with a plan to boost tax revenues. But previous efforts have, for the most part, only made the taxation system more complex and expensive for taxpayers, providing a 'reason' for others to stay out of the net. That inflation-adjusted real tax revenue growth has stood at a mere 2pc a year since 2018 confirms the futility of past FBR plans. Little wonder, Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio has grown to just 9.5pc from 8pc in 2000. In comparison, India has improved its taxes to 18.5pc of its GDP from 13.4pc and Nepal to 17.5pc from 8.7pc in the same period.

These countries have improved their tax performance not just by taking punitive actions against tax dodgers and cheaters but also making their tax regimes equitable, fair and easier to comply with through wide-ranging policy and administrative reforms. Unless Pakistan also follows the principle of equity, does away with wasteful exemptions of Rs4tr, and restructures the FBR to weed out inefficiencies and corruption, punitive actions will not have the intended effect. The measures to make dirty money difficult to spend are welcome. Those who do not pay their taxes or underreport their income should be punished. But the FBR must also give details on how it intends to execute these proposals without creating more difficulties for compliant taxpayers or tax-exempt segments. So far, the intent seems to be to squeeze existing taxpayers to meet the revenue targets rather than broadening the net.

By F.S. Aijazuddin

On thin ice

PAKISTAN skates too dangerously on thin ice. Despite the blunt-bladed incompetence of its governments, it has managed to wobble and stumble for 77 years.

Today, many Pakistanis wonder how long it can continue to defy the laws of economic gravity and ignore the need for a national purpose. How long can our state sustain this war with itself — the judiciary vs its brother black coats; the state vs its public; the legislature vs its electorate; impetuosity vs common sense?

We survive each day in an uneasy condition, the very opposite of Chamberlain's peace with honour.

In many countries — certainly those with a burgeoning population the size of ours — political parties prepare a plan on the essentials of governance before coming to power. Others with less foresight wait until they are in government and then announce national strategies. The foolhardy prefer the doctrine of *arrière-pensée*, steering themselves by using the rear view window.

We survive each day in an uneasy condition. Take the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960. In 1947, the water system was bifurcated, with headworks located in India and downstream canals running through Pakistan. After six years of desultory talks, Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and our president Ayub Khan signed the IWT in September 1960. The lollipop provided by the World Bank financed the Mangla and Tarbela dams.

The treaty spawned a Permanent Indus Commission with commissioners from each side to ease implementation of the treaty. The

118th meeting of the Pakistan-India Permanent Indus Commission was held in New Delhi from May 30-31, 2022. During it, "Pakistan highlighted its objections on India's hydroelectric projects on the western rivers. The Indians assured that Pakistan's outstanding objections would be discussed in the next meeting". Both sides reiterated their commitment "to implement the Indus Waters Treaty in its true spirit". In effect, the party to the First Part promised to continue living with the party to the Second Part.

The 119th meeting is unlikely to be held, as India refuses to hold any more meetings until the IWT is renegotiated. India issued a notice in 2023 and another in 2024 seeking "a review and modification" of its terms. India has cited "changes in population growth, agricultural needs, and the evolving water usage situation since the treaty's inception in 1960". PM Modi's rationale is blunter: "Blood and water cannot flow together."

Our powers that ought to be should recall the warning of the expert David Lilienthal, who conceived the IWT: "No armies with bombs and shellfire could devastate a land so thoroughly as Pakistan could be devastated by simple expedient of India's permanently shutting off the source of water that keeps the fields and people of Pakistan green."

Our governments, however, continue to behave like some tethered goat, tied to the past, bound to the rigid terms of the IWT and the now sterile UN resolutions on Jammu & Kashmir. PM Modi resolved the J&K conundrum by abrogating Article 370 and absorbing its possession of the disputed territory into India. He now propos-

es to abrogate the IWT and leave us dehydrated, a modern Mohenjodaro.

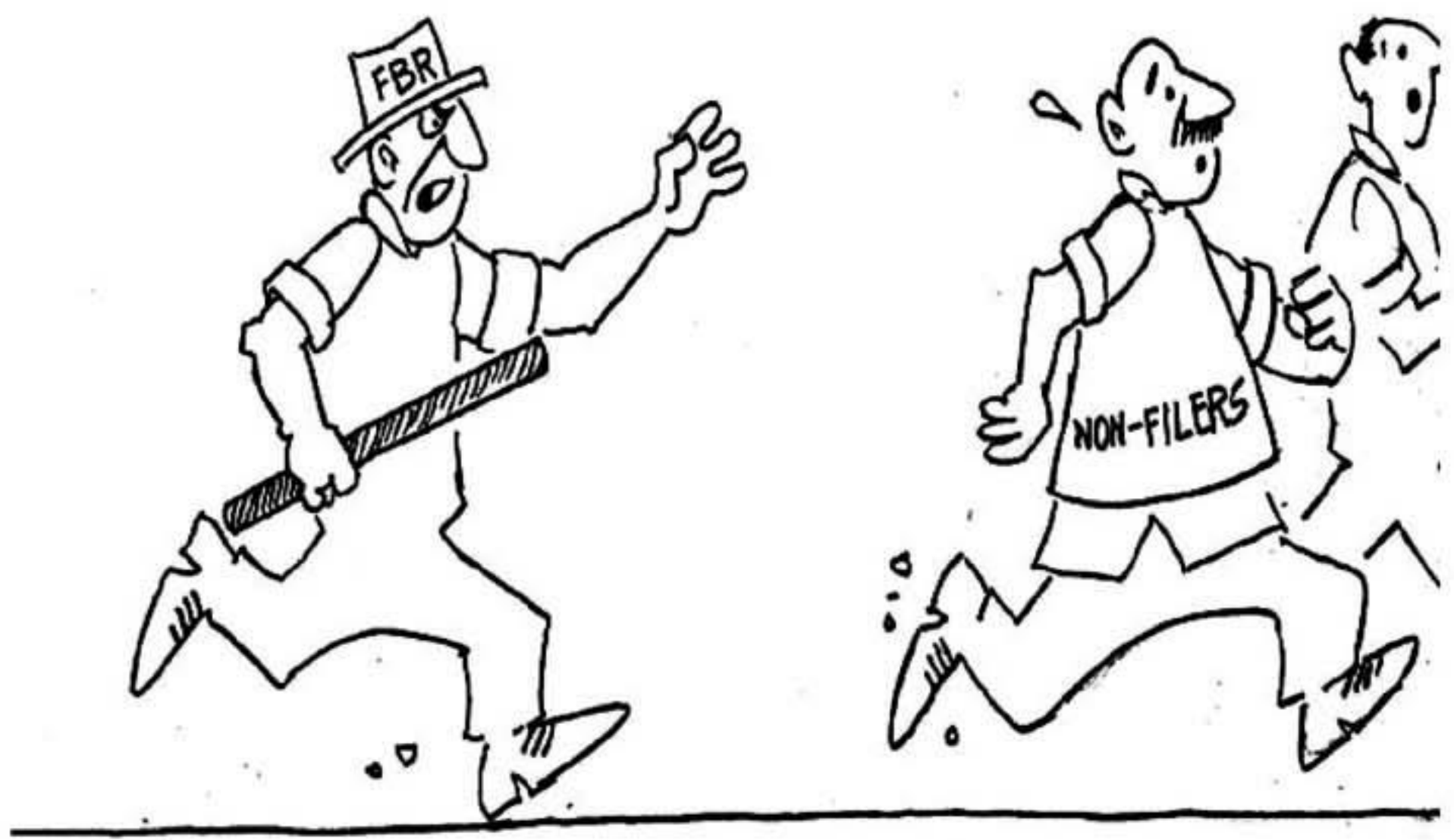
Has the government any more leeway than it had in the Reko Diq mining deal? Reko Diq is "the world's largest gold and copper mine, with deposits capable of producing 200,000 tons of copper and 250,000 ounces of gold a year for nearly 50 years". Our paper riches turned instead into \$11 billion in fines. Islamabad escaped them through a renegotiated deal which cost \$900m paid to a former investor.

In another deal gone sour — the Iran-Pakistan pipeline — we avoided a penalty of \$1m a day by building our rump of the pipeline, shrinking it from the planned 785 kilometres to 80 km.

Sadly, the independent power producers are headed also towards confrontation. Recently, the government "urged" owners of five IPPs to voluntarily terminate their power purchase agreements and shift to a 'pay and take' model. Worse still, some IPPs are being told to replace their feedstock from rich imported coal to poorer local Thar lignite. Such draconian measures can only dishearten existing owners and discourage future investors.

News now abounds that the Pakistan Steel Mills (Psmic) — a defunct monument to avarice and incompetence — is being resurrected with Russian help. As if on cue, a convoy of diplomats (including the Russian ambassador) returning from a jaunt in Swat to explore investment, was attacked by someone using an improvised explosive device. History reminds us that the assassination at Sarajevo started the First World War on flimsier grounds. In 1961, Russia helped us establish the Oil & Gas Development Company, and in 1974 Psmic.

GOVT TO GO ALL-OUT AGAINST NON-FILERS



By Kishwar Enam

Child protection

A FEW weeks ago, an 11-year-old girl in Karachi was kidnapped, tortured, raped, and murdered. Her body was discarded in a garbage dump. The Sindh Police responded swiftly, and apprehended the suspect. The culprit may face justice. But is this the end of the story?

Unfortunately, such horrifying incidents are common, and each new tragedy eclipses the previous one in the public's memory. Only cases that capture media attention or come under the radar of officials, NGOs, child rights activists, or concerned individuals see action, but even these are few and far between. The vast majority of child abuse cases in Pakistan remain hidden, neglected, or dismissed by the authorities.

Child abuse in Pakistan takes various forms, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, and neglect. Children are frequently exploited through begging, labour, domestic servitude, trafficking, and underage marriages. Many are also deprived of their right to education, healthcare, and shelter. Yet Pakistan lacks a centralised database to accurately record and assess the extent of child abuse.

Child abuse cases are handled in a disjointed, arbitrary manner, with no standardised protocol in place. Each case is treated uniquely, often resulting in haphazard responses that do more harm than good.

Each new tragedy eclipses the previous one in the public's memory.

According to Unicef, a child protection system consists of laws, policies, regulations, and services required across social sectors — such as social welfare, healthcare, security, and justice — to prevent and respond to risks related to child protection. Typically, such systems are government-led and supported by collaboration among various departments, NGOs, and citizen groups.

However, effective child protection requires seamless coordination between key stakeholders, including child protection authorities, police, medico-legal officers, and the judiciary. This is severely lacking in Pakistan. Each department operates its own helpline; efforts to create a unified helpline for child protection have met with resistance. Each department responds to cases according to its individual protocols, resulting in delays and confusion.

Hospitals are another critical part. When a case of child abuse is reported, hospitals should follow established protocols. Unfortunately, very few public or private hospitals here have such protocols. Also, the need for mental health services, which

are essential to help children recover from trauma, is often overlooked.

Given that children spend a significant part of their day at school, schools are also integral to the child protection system. By establishing child protection committees within schools and incorporating lessons on child rights, we can empower children to understand their rights and seek help when needed.

A group of concerned citizens from diverse backgrounds has drafted a document on an integrated child protection system. This group has studied child protection systems worldwide and reviewed SOPs of local authorities, many of which were found to be incomplete and complex. Some employees were unaware that these SOPs even existed.

For a child protection system to work in Pakistan, we need coordination among all stakeholders involved in child protection, including citizens, professionals working with children, child protection

authorities, police, the judiciary, lawyers, and healthcare providers. We need pre-designed forms for reporting incidents of child abuse, step-by-step guidelines for handling cases, and clear protocols for monitoring, auditing, and reviewing processes to ensure compliance with best practices.

The system should aim to simplify the documentation and procedural workflow, ensuring that it is consistently followed, reviewed, and improved as needed. By fostering an environment of transparency and responsiveness, we can hope to build public trust and encourage more families to report abuse.

The child protection system should be implemented in such a way that it unites all relevant stakeholders, ensuring cases are handled smoothly without the need for public pressure or social media campaigns to achieve justice. Its primary goal should be to protect the child and family from further trauma, while offering a systematic, trauma-informed approach to address child abuse. Awareness campaigns should be consistent and will only succeed when a strong child protection system is functioning effectively.

Pakistan is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and several child rights laws exist. However, enforcement remains minimal.

It is strongly urged that the relevant authorities prioritise child protection. Our children — the country's future — deserve a safe and nurturing environment where they can grow and thrive, free from the shadow of abuse and neglect. The time for action is now.

DAILY MIRROR

SAFRON Minister Urges UN Agencies to Allocate Funds for Local Communities

APP

QUETTA: Federal Minister for State and Frontier Region (SAFRON) and Kashmir Affairs, Engineer Amir Muqam on Thursday urged the United Nations agencies and world community to earmark the funds and facilities specified for refugees' worldwide for the local people of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as well.

Addressing a press conference here in Commissionerat of Afghan Refugees Quetta, he said that the repatriation process of Afghan refugees would be continued as currently Pakistan has been hosting over 30 million Afghan Refugees.

The minister said that "around five million of Afghan Refugees have been repatriated so far. Of them, over 130000 were sent back to their native country from Balochistan alone."

He said the hosting country Pakistan has taken all out measures for the welfare of Afghan refugees, providing best possible facilities including education and health for their wellbeing.

Condemning terrorism in Pakistan, Amir Muqam emphasized the Afghan

government to take steps to stop cross border terrorism curbing the Afghan territory for terrorist attacks in Pakistan.

He said that Pakistan has always supported the peace process in Afghanistan, adding that peace in Afghanistan means Peace in Pakistan.

While highlighting the recent initiatives taken by the federal government for the development of the Balochistan province, Amir Muqam said that the development of Balochistan was the top priority of federal government as it has allocated Rs 130 billion development budget which is higher than Punjab for the uplifting of the province.

He said the country has been moving forward and stabilizing financially thanks to the tremendous efforts of the Shehbaz Sharif lead government.

He said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz during his short tenure in the coalition government has paid heavy political price to save the country from default. The minister revealed that the second phase of CPEC would soon be kicked off which would enhance economic activities, sustainable development, and inclusive growth in Balochistan.

He hailed the approval of \$7 billion Dollar IMF deal, terming the development a major triumph of the incumbent government.

"The political rivals of the PML-N and anti Pakistan elements tried their best to sabotage the financial deal to put the country in the financial crises, however their nefarious designs failed," Amir Muqam remarked.

The wise and prudent policies of the government resulted into the decline of inflation and created ample job opportunities for the youth, he added.

Expressing his concern over the security situation in Balochistan, the SAFRON Minister said the maintaining law and order in the province is among the top most priorities of the incumbent government.

In this regard, minister said the role of security forces remained commendable. With the tireless and brilliant efforts of the valiant forces of Pakistan peace is being restored and borders are being protected from the foes.

He hailed Adeela Baloch for joining mainstream and discouraging the anti-Pakistan and anti-Baloch elements.

With her joining, this act is a clear message for the miscreants who use women as shield and use them for suicide attacks for their nefarious designs.

Criticizing the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on misusing public resources for their political gains, Amir Muqam said that the KP is on the agenda to embezzle the funds and spent illegally on the party's events.



Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar Speaking at a presser in New York.

Ambassador of Saudi Arabia calls on the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister

APP

ISLAMABAD: The Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy Thursday called on the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

A wide range of bilateral, regional, and global issues of mutual interest were discussed during the meeting.

The deputy PM underlined the importance of deep-rooted and brotherly ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

He extended warm wishes on the occasion of the 94th National Day of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

DPM Dar appreciated the Kingdom's unwavering support to Pakistan on various international platforms.

The Saudi ambassador reiterated the Kingdom's commitment to further strengthening the strategic partnership between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Task Force Establishes To Review Progress Of UN's SDGs In Balochistan

APP

QUETTA: A Provincial Task Force has been established under the leadership of Advisor to the Chief Minister of Balochistan on Women's Development Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi to oversee and monitor the implementation and progress of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Balochistan.

The task force will comprise 17 members from both the treasury and opposition benches, representing all parliamentary parties. According to a notification issued by the Secretary of the Balochistan Assembly, the Speaker of the Assembly, Abdul Khaliq Achakzai, has appointed Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi as the convener of this task force. The task force includes provincial ministers Noor Muhammad Dummar, Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, Mir Muhammad Sadiq Umrani, Saleem Ahmed Khosa, Bakht Muhammad Kakar, Sardarzada Faisal Khan Jamali, Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani, Parliamentary Secretary Haji Muhammad Khan Lehari, Nawabzada Zarin Khan Magsi, Leader of the Opposition Mir Younis Aziz Zehri, Ghulam Dastgir Badini.

FO supports Lebanon's sovereignty, condemns Israel's actions

MOFA calls for international accountability of Israel's actions, condemns war crimes in Gaza

APP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has condemned Israel's recent military aggression against Lebanon, calling it a grave violation of international law and the UN Charter.

Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch reaffirmed Pakistan's support for Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity in a press briefing on Thursday.

At the weekly briefing held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Baloch highlighted the ongoing violence in Gaza, accusing Israeli occupation forces of committing grave violations of international humanitarian law.

She also condemned the recent return of a container with 88 decomposing bodies of Palestinians to Gaza, describing the act as a violation of basic human dignity and international standards.

Baloch called on the international community to hold Israel accountable for its

alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In discussing Pakistan's international engagements, Baloch shared that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is currently in New York, attending high-level meetings at the 79th United Nations General Assembly session.

The Prime Minister has called for urgent global support to help developing countries escape the dual challenges of debt traps and climate change-related disasters. He emphasised the need for reforming the global financial system to create a more equitable environment for vulnerable nations.

She further highlighted that the Prime Minister also participated in meetings addressing the existential threat posed by rising sea levels and the UN Security Council's debate on leadership for peace.

Pakistan will actively pursue these objectives when it assumes its seat on the Security Council next year, Baloch added.

Prudent policies of government resulted in stability of economy, decrease in inflation: Tarar

By Khawaja Farooq

NEW YORK: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar has said that stringent measures and prudent policies of the government had resulted in stability in the economy.

Addressing a press conference here he said that due to steps of the present regime, inflation and prices of daily use commodities had fallen considerably.

"A certain political party wanted the economy to default," the information minister said, adding, but the government took steps to avert such a situation."

He said that the inflation ratio had decreased significantly compared to the same period last year and now it had come down single digit which was a good sign. Tarar said that the smuggling of dollars has been stopped by taking stringent measures and information technology sector-related exports have increased significantly.

The economic stability of Pakistan was being acknowledged at the international

level as well, he said.

Moody's and Fitch also declared Pakistan's economy stable whereas Bloomberg described the Pakistani economic indicators as positive.

"According to a Bloomberg survey, Pakistan's stock exchange is moving in a positive direction", he maintained.

The arrival of record remittances from overseas Pakistanis was also a good omen, he remarked.

The agreement with the IMF, the minister said would make the economy more stable, he remarked.

The minister said that Turkish President

Tayyip Erdogan also praised Pakistan's step toward economic stability.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had held meetings with the heads of various countries on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly session.

The determination of the development of Bangladesh and Pakistan relations was reiterated during the PM's meeting with Chief Adviser Dr Yunus in New York proved quite useful.

Balochistan reports 15th polio case of 2024

INP

QUETTA: A new case of polio has been confirmed in Pakistan, bringing the total number of cases in the country to 22 this year. The National Institute of Health reported that a two-and-a-half-year-old child from the Pishin district in Balochistan province has been diagnosed with the virus.

This latest case marks the 15th polio infection reported in Balochistan alone in 2024.

Earlier this year, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif launched a special anti-polio campaign across 115 districts nationwide, aiming to vaccinate 30 million children under the age of five.

Around 286,000 polio workers were deployed to go door-to-door administering anti-polio drops to children.

However, a recent terrorist attack on the Zhob-DI Khan National Highway claimed the lives of three Anti-Terrorist Force (ATF) personnel deployed to protect polio workers, underscoring the risks faced by those involved in vaccination campaigns.

Amir Muqam for Utilization of Resources to Help out Afghan Refugees

APP

QUETTA: Federal Minister for State and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) and Kashmir Affairs Engineer Amir Muqam on Thursday emphasized the need for maximum utilization of resources to effectively achieve the objectives of the Commissionerat of Afghan Refugees.

Presiding over a high level meeting held here in Commissionerat of Afghan Refugees, Amir Muqam said that, "our tremendous efforts would be continued to ensure the protection and welfare of Afghan refugees living in Pakistan peacefully."

Commissioner Afghan Refugees Arbab Talib was comprehensively briefed the federal minister regarding the overall performance of Commissionerat.

The federal minister was informed about the execution of various projects, funding details and the implementation of proposed new initiatives in Balochistan.

On the occasion, the head of UNHCR sub office Quetta, Chief Commissioner car Abbas Khan and other high officials were also present.

Donald Lu hopes for further strengthening of 'strong relation' with PM Shehbaz-led govt

Says US "very encouraged" by Pakistan's currently undergoing economic recovery

Bureau Report

NEW YORK: US Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu has hailed and expressed hope for a further improvement of the United States' "strong relation" with the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif-led government.

Lu is the diplomat whose supposed warning to former Pakistan ambassador to the US Asad Majeed was the subject of a cipher sent by the envoy to Islamabad. It was the same document that PII founder Imran Khan used to allege a US conspiracy to oust his government in 2022.

In an interview with ARY News on Tuesday, Lu said while responding to a question on summing up relations with the incumbent government: "We have a very strong relation with Shehbaz Sharif's government. We have a very strong relation with Pakistani people. We look forward to that strengthening year after year."

remarking on the country's economic conditions, he said the US was "very encouraged" by Pakistan's currently undergoing economic recovery.

He said he met Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb who briefed him on the "very serious plans and reforms" being taken by the federal government.

A day prior, the International Monetary

Fund (IMF) approved a \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) for Pakistan, providing a critical boost to the country's struggling economy.

"These are not easy but this is the future of Pakistan. This is how Pakistan will stabilise its economy and really move forward for the benefit of its young people and all Pakistanis," Lu said.

Speaking on security issues and the increasing cross-border attacks from Afghanistan, Lu said that counter-terrorism efforts were ongoing with the military and government.

"We are there to support. We want Pakistan to succeed. We believe in Pakistan."

US President Joe Biden emphasised last week that an enduring partnership between Pakistan and the United States was crucial for global and regional stability.



Quetta Bar Association President, Advocate Qari Rehmattullah along with others addresses to media persons during press conference, held in Quetta

Ayaz Sadiq stresses to promote tourism for country's socio-economic development

ONLINE

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has stressed the need of promoting tourism for economic development and cultural exchange in Pakistan.

In a statement on the eve of 'World Tourism Day' to be marked across globe on September 27 (Friday) he said, "Tourism is not just an economic driver; it fosters understanding and cooperation among diverse cultures. Pakistan is home to a rich tapestry of history, culture, and natural beauty that attracts tourists from around the globe."

Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said that it was mandatory to tap into the potential of tourism to flourish the economy, to maintain a positive international image, and to

promote socio-cultural and religious exchanges for a better and peaceful future.

"Pakistan is a vital destination for religious and cultural tourism," he said while emphasizing on Pakistan's strategic location. The Speaker National Assembly elaborated on the government's commitment to provide better facilities to Sikh, Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims, who seek to fulfill their spiritual obligations at various historic sites across Pakistan. "Significant efforts have been undertaken to streamline visa services and ensure a hassle-free journey for religious devotees, reflecting our dedication to religious harmony and interfaith respect," he noted. Ayaz Sadiq also underscored the attraction held by diverse religions and cultures which pulls tourists from all corners of the world to visit Kalash valley, home to the world's .

Owais Leghari blames strategy gaps for rising electricity costs

ONLINE

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Energy Owais Leghari has attributed the increasing electricity prices to a lack of strategic planning, asserting that reforms could potentially reduce rates to as low as Rs. 10 per unit. Speaking at a recent event, he announced plans to privatize 10 power companies by the end of this year and revealed that subsidies previously given to nine distribution companies have been halted.

Leghari emphasized efforts to reduce the cost of electricity production and stated that the government is currently reviewing contracts with power plants and independent power producers (IPPs). He noted that the power sector is grappling with multiple issues and urgently needs reforms, particularly concerning IPP agreements. He pointed out that the burden of circular debt and high-interest rates is impacting consumers significantly.

"The political situation within distribution companies has been dire, and past government directives were often ignored," Leghari remarked, highlighting the challenges faced by the energy sector. He mentioned that a subsidy of Rs. 500 billion has been provided to sup-

port low-income households with their electricity bills, and proposals for privatizing electricity distribution companies are being considered.

Looking ahead, Leghari noted that Pakistan will require an additional 2,700 megawatts of electricity by 2034, which could be sourced from hydropower and solar energy.

He assured that the government is in contact with financial advisors and the Privatization Commission, with plans to appoint financial advisors within a month to facilitate the transfer of three state-owned distribution companies to the private sector.

Leghari stated that currently, 70% of power plants are operating under government control and that efforts are underway to resolve issues by assigning responsibilities. He acknowledged past bureaucratic inefficiencies within the Power Division that hindered project completion.

He reiterated that the main reasons behind rising electricity prices are the lack of strategic planning, the burden of circular debt,

and high-interest rates on consumers. Additionally, he announced plans to establish EV charging stations nationwide and reduce petrol imports.



Commissioner and Administrator Quetta, Hamza Shafqat along with others visiting various areas and markets during his visit to the city, in Quetta