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Pakistan stands ready to work with SCO states: PM

APP

ISLAMABAD: Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Zhang Ming has felicitated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the successful organization of SCO Council of Heads of Government meeting and its positive outcome.

He expressed these views during a meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad today.

The SCO Secretary General also appreciated Pakistan's constructive contributions to SCO's work and activities across all domains and expressed satisfaction over Pakistan's leadership role as Chair of the SCO Council of Heads of Government.

In his remarks, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the SCO Charter, and assured the Secretary-

General that as an SCO member, Pakistan would continue to work wholeheartedly for promotion of the organization's development priorities for the benefit of all its member States and the wider region.

He stressed that Pakistan stands ready to work with SCO Member States so as to make the organization more effective and stronger.

The Prime Minister also thanked Zhang Ming for his dedication and outstanding services as the outgoing Secretary-General of SCO and wished him every success in his future endeavours.

Recalling Zhang Ming's earlier visit to Pakistan in July 2022, the Prime Minister welcomed the Secretary-General in Islamabad and thanked him for the support extended by the SCO Secretariat to Pakistan in organization of the SCO Council of Heads of Government meeting.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary General Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Zhang Ming calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

PPP and PML-N 'step back' from constitutional court proposal

Evolve consensus with JUI-F for establishing constitutional benches

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: What could be termed a big development in the ongoing efforts to get the 26th constitutional amendments passed, following the PPP, the PML-N and other parties, which are part of the present coalition government, too on Thursday threw their weight behind the proposal to form constitutional benches as laid down in the JUI-F's draft.

That all coalition parties had now backed down on their insistence on setting up constitutional courts in the country.

The idea to set up constitutional courts had now been dropped, they said, adding that the JUI-F and the coalition parties had now prepared a single draft on constitutional benches.

Sources went on to say that the JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman would hold consultations with the PTI leadership over the new draft today in the evening.

Agreement on single draft in day or two, says Khurshid Shah

On the other hand, Syed Khurshid Shah, senior PPP leader and Special Parliamentary Committee convener, expressed the hope that the parties would reach a consensus on the amendments in a day or two.

Earlier, the committee, at its meeting, discussed the drafts presented by different political parties.

The PTI did not present its draft even today. Later, the committee's meeting was adjourned until tomorrow.

JUI-F, PTI leaders to meet today in the evening

JUI-F leaders, led by the party chief Maulana Fazl, will meet with the

PTI leaders at 5:00 in the evening today to take them into confidence on the draft agreed between the JUI-F and the parties, part of the coalition government.

Pakistan's first multi-mission satellite becomes operational

APP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's first multi-mission satellite, PAKSAT-1MM1, under the facilitation of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), has become operational successfully.

The operationalization of the satellite is an important milestone in the country's space and digital development.

The success of PAKSAT-1MM1 will transform Pakistan's communication infrastructure, which will benefit various IT sectors.

The satellite will provide services such as television broadcasting,

community internet, and tele-education to promote local industries.

This satellite will also increase internet connectivity in remote areas which will further the government's vision of Digital Pakistan.

In the United Nations E-Governance Development Index, Pakistan has improved its ranking by 14 points.

The country now stands at 136 in overall ranking which was at 150 in 2022.

Hosting SCO meeting improved image of Pakistan globally: Tarar

INP

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar has said hosting the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Council of

Heads of Government meeting has further improved the image of Pakistan globally. In an interview with PTV, he termed the hosting of SCO summit a result of country's successful foreign policy.

The Minister said world is acknowledging the true potential of Pakistan and its importance as a key player in the region.

He highlighted the important role of Pakistan in addressing the issues including climate change, sustainable development, counter-terrorism, economic policies, investment and trade and peace and security. He said the hosting of SCO meeting will bring long term benefits for the country.

Attaullah Tarar said the visiting dignitaries of the SCO were appreciative of Pakistan's role in the region.

He said Pakistan's economic indicators are improving and there will be more good news for the public in the coming days.

Aurangzeb vows to continue reforms on taxation, energy

APP

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb has reiterated the government's resolve to carry on with broad-based reforms on taxation, energy and SOE fronts. He was talking to US Ambassador Donald Blome, who called on him in Islamabad today.

Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb said the government is committed to raise the country's tax to GDP ratio to 13.5 per cent by plugging leakages and bringing untaxed sectors in the net.

He said the government under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had approved a comprehensive transformation plan for FBR.

The Minister called the macro-economic reforms "work in progress" and pointed to more serious challenges of climate change

and child stunting which threatened to perpetuate inequalities and disrupt the pace of economic growth and stability in Pakistan over the medium to long term.

He said Pakistan looks forward to building climate resilience through adaptation reforms and averting malnutrition with the technical and financial support of development partners for ensuring holistic development goals. US Ambassador Donald Blome appreciated Pakistan's efforts for improving macroeconomic stability and lauded the government for initiating challenging and bold reforms, particularly in the taxation and energy sectors.

He reaffirmed his commitment to enhancing bilateral cooperation in technical and development initiatives, and promoting high-quality US investment for economic growth of Pakistan.

CM Balochistan, Commander 12 Corps Attend Khuzdar Jirga

Local leaders express confidence in government and Armed Forces' support for peace initiatives

NEWS DESK

KHUZDAR: A jirga (tribal council) was held in Khuzdar, Balochistan, attended by Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti, Corps Commander Balochistan, local elders, civil and military officials, women, and community members.

The event aimed to address pressing issues in the region and foster dialogue among various societal representatives.

During the gathering, Chief Minister Bugti highlighted the government's commitment to education by announcing scholarships for students in both local and international universities.

He also promised interest-free loans for educated unemployed youth to encourage entrepreneurship.

Bugti emphasized that no one would be

allowed to disrupt peace and development in Balochistan. He condemned the recent attacks on unarmed labourers, asserting the state's dedication to standing by the oppressed and dealing firmly with those challenging its authority.

Local tribal leaders expressed their gratitude to law enforcement agencies and the Chief Minister for their efforts in maintaining peace.

They acknowledged the critical role of security forces

in establishing stability and assured their collaboration with all institutions for a peaceful environment.

The jirga concluded with local elders expressing their trust in the cooperation between the government and the armed forces, reaffirming their commitment to working together for a better future.

Akhtar Mengal to return to Pakistan amid political turmoil

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Sardar Akhtar Mengal, leader of the Balochistan National Party (BNP), has decided to return to Pakistan in light of the country's current political situation learnt on Thursday.

According to sources, Mengal, who had resigned from the National Assembly in protest and left the country ahead of the constitutional amendments, is now planning to return due to the evolving political landscape. He is expected to arrive in Islamabad tomorrow morning from Dubai and will announce his next steps after consultations.

Two days ago, Mengal claimed on social media that two of his party's senators were

being harassed for not supporting the constitutional amendments. "In such a situation, our only option may be to ask both senators to resign," he stated.

A day before, Islamabad police had visited Mengal's apartment in the Parliament Lodges. BNP's acting president, Sajid Tareen, alleged that the police raided the flat, though Mengal was not present. The police, however, claimed they acted based on intelligence reports regarding the occupants of the apartment. Tareen condemned the raid, asserting that such actions would not intimidate the BNP into supporting the government. He maintained that the party's senators would not yield to pressure during the judicial reforms voting.



QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhel in a meeting with Parliament Secretary Muhammad Khan Lehri.

Govt offering 'bribes of up to Rs 1b' for amendment support: Omar Ayub

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Omar Ayub has claimed that the government is offering up to Rs 1 billion to individuals in an alleged attempt to secure support for the constitutional amendment bill.

Speaking to the media, Omar alleged that senators are among those receiving financial offers, claiming the government's numbers "are not complete."

Omar further stated that PTI opposes the constitutional amendments, stressing that the committee's role is not to amend the constitution.

He also revealed that raids are being conducted on the homes of PTI members and leaders, adding that wife of Shah Mehmood Qureshi's son Zain Qureshi was abducted from near the home of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi.

Omar shared his own experience, saying that his house was raided, and added PTI leader Maqdad Ali Khan is currently 'missing.'

PTI vows legal and political resistance against constitutional amendment: Barrister Saif

Meanwhile, Barrister Saif, Information Advisor for Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, announced that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) will mount both legal and political resistance against the proposed constitutional amendment.

Saif labelled the current government as 'illegitimate' and accused it of attempting to secretly alter the constitution with-

out public representation.

In a public statement, Saif referred to the government as a "Form 47 fake government" and claimed that the proposed amendments were designed to undermine democracy in Pakistan. He warned that the PTI leadership and its supporters would strongly resist any attempt to subvert the constitution under the guise of the upcoming SCO summit. Saif also criticised the Sharif family, accusing them of exploiting state power to maintain control. He condemned the alleged abduction of PTI member Zain Qureshi's wife, calling it an unprecedented act of fascism. He further accused the ruling party of suppressing human rights and detaining PTI founder Imran Khan under false charges, restricting his visitors in violation of basic rights.

PTI remains firm in its stance, with Barrister Saif stating that the party will confront the government through all possible legal and political avenues.

Supreme Court dismisses petition against 26th constitutional amendment bill

The Supreme Court of Pakistan dismissed a petition challenging the 26th Constitutional Amendment after the petitioners opted to withdraw their case.

The decision was made during a hearing led by a three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa.

Advocate Hamid Khan represented the petitioners and informed the court of their desire to withdraw the appeal.

In response, Chief Justice Isa questioned whether Hamid Khan had been specifically engaged for the withdrawal or if

Abid Zuberi himself could have stated it. Hamid confirmed that he represented all petitioners in the case.

During the proceedings, Chief Justice Isa also addressed a pending petition from Advocate Abid Zuberi, noting that it had not yet been scheduled for hearing. He added that it might be taken up at a later time.

With the withdrawal request granted, the Supreme Court officially dismissed the case against the 26th Constitutional Amendment.

JUI-F, PML-N, PPP achieve breakthrough in constitutional amendment talks

A consensus has been reached between the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People's Party (PPP), and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) on judicial reforms concerning the 26th Constitutional Amendment, while discussions on other matters are set to continue.

After a dinner hosted at Jati Umra, JUI-F leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar held a joint press conference on Wednesday. Rehman stated that all three parties have reached an agreement on judicial reforms but other issues are still under negotiation. He also announced plans to visit Islamabad to meet with the leadership of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in an effort to gain their support for the proposed judicial reforms. "We are working towards consensus on other points as well, and I will also try to reach an agreement with PTI on the matter of judicial reforms," he said.

Nawaz Sharif calls for renewed Pak-India relations, cricket ties in meeting with Indian journalists

NEWS DESK

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz President Nawaz Sharif met with a delegation of Indian journalists covering the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) conference, where he shared his thoughts on the restoration of Pakistan-India relations and cricketing ties.

The meeting took place in Lahore, with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz also in attendance.

During the discussion, Nawaz expressed optimism about the potential for the SCO conference to serve as a starting point for improved relations between the two neighbours.

"If Pakistan-India relations improve, many things will get better," he stated. He further emphasised the importance of cricket diplomacy, suggesting that India's cricket team should participate in the Champions Trophy in Pakistan.

"Ask the Indian cricket team, and they would say they want to come to Pakistan and play," he remarked.

Nawaz also mentioned that it would have been positive if India's prime minister had personally attended the SCO conference.

Reflecting on the tense history between the two nations, he added, "The past has been bitter, let's see what happens in the future."

Maryam expressed a desire to visit India, stating, "I want to visit Indian Punjab to see the differences. Both sides have much to learn from each other."

Israeli media claims Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar killed in Gaza offensive

MONITORING DESK



Israeli media has reported that Hamas politburo chief Yahya Sinwar has been killed in Gaza. Two Israeli media outlets, KAN and N12 News, cited officials on Thursday, claiming Sinwar was dead, though there has been no official confirmation from Hamas.

Earlier, the Israeli military stated it was investigating the possibility that Sinwar had been killed during an offensive targeting three Palestinian resistance fighters in Gaza. Sinwar became the leader of Hamas after the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran in July.

Sinwar, Israel's most wanted Hamas leader, was accused of orchestrating the deadly October 7 cross-border attack that led to Israel's ongoing military campaign in Gaza, which has reportedly claimed over 45,000 lives, according to local health authorities.

Gaza now lies in devastation after ten months of conflict, exacerbated by a blockade that has cut off food, clean water, and medicine. The Israeli military noted no signs of hostages being present in the targeted building.

Israel has killed several commanders of Hamas in Gaza as well as senior figures of Hezbollah in Lebanon, including its veteran leader Hassan Nasrallah, dealing heavy blows to its arch-foes. Hamas has not commented on the fate of Sinwar, who was recently elevated to paramount leader of Hamas.

Over 150 arrested as violent protests against alleged Lahore rape spread to Rawalpindi

INP

RAWALPINDI: At least 150 violent protesters were arrested in Rawalpindi as police used tear gas to disperse students demonstrating against the alleged rape of a Lahore student.

Last week, reports related to the alleged rape of the private college student went viral on social media, prompting the police to arrest a security guard at the college who was allegedly involved in the incident. Enraged by the alleged incident, students mobilised on social media and staged protests outside different colleges in Lahore in the past few days. On Monday, at least 28 were injured due to clashes with the security guards of the college and police. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has declared that the alleged rape was "fabricated news", blaming the PTI for spreading the "fake reports" on social media. Punjab Group of Colleges (PGC) group Director Agha Tahir and other office-holders have termed the incident "baseless".

Benazir Kafalat quarterly stipends amount to be increased upto Rs. 13,500 by 2025

APP

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid has announced increase in the amount of the Benazir Kafalat quarterly installment for beneficiaries upto Rs. 13,500 by the year 2025.

"The amount of Benazir Kafalat stipends will be increased from Rs. 10,500 to Rs. 13,500 by the year 2025" she said during a visit to the Benazir Nushonuma Center at Sindh Government Hospital PIB Colony in Karachi. The chairperson inspected the facilities, interacted with the women beneficiaries of the program, and expressed satisfaction with the availability of adequate services, said a news release.

While speaking to media personnel at the hospital, Senator Rubina Khalid praised the Sindh Health Department for providing necessary facilities and resources for the program.

She highlighted that child stunting is a significant issue that BISP is addressing by providing both cash and nutritional support to mothers of children up to two years of age. She added that 9.3 million families are currently registered with the BISP and this number is expected to reach 10 million by 2025. The chairperson rejecting the notion of BISP promoting dependency, stated that BISP is a visionary initiative of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and President Asif Ali Zardari and has been recognized globally due to its impact.

The programme aims to eradicate poverty, empower women, and reduce income disparity. To ensure its effectiveness, she mentioned that an independent third-party survey and monitoring are conducted annually. Regarding the issue of the agent mafia and the limited number of banks handling cash transfers, Senator Rubina Khalid shared that BISP is in discussions with the State Bank of Pakistan to streamline cash transfers for beneficiaries.



QUETTA: Provincial Parliamentary Secretary Information Technology Samad Khan listening problems of people.

We are ready to bring change in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir: PNP's leaders

By Khawaja Farooq

Mirpur: Secretary Pakistan Nazriati (Ideological) Party Raja Jawad Asad, Chairman Kashmir Committee Pakistan Nazriati Party (PNP) Muhammad Shabbir Raja and Member CC Ali Gailani said that we are ready to bring change in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir, only the youth can change the destiny of this country. They expressed these views while addressing a press conference at Kashmir Press Club Mirpur. They said that Pakistan Ideological Party consists of youth, in all the districts of Azad Kashmir, we have decided to mobilize it by forming a party.

They said that inheritance has to be removed from Pakistan, Kashmir belongs to Kashmiris.

If Allah gives us power, then we

will hold a referendum here so that Kashmiris can decide for themselves that they want to be independent or want to go with Pakistan, they said. They said that education is the manifesto of all of us and we demand that a uniform education system be implemented in the country so that everyone can have the same opportunities and especially the children of MPs and MNAs should be sent to government schools so that they can get awareness of the problems at the grass root level.

They said that it is welcome to hold a national jirga on KP issues



and we support it, the government should solve all the problems of Jirga with this, sectarianism in Para Chinar should be stopped and peace and tranquility should be brought to the area. They said that the silence of the international community on the issue of Palestine is regrettable, Iran showed courage but other countries including Pakistan showed weakness and did not even verbally support.

Mohsin Naqvi praises law-enforcers, Army, Islamabad admin for successful SCO Summit

INP

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi praised the Islamabad administration, police, and Pakistan Army on Thursday for ensuring the successful and peaceful organisation of the SCO Summit 2024 in Pakistan.

In a tweet, Naqvi also commended the Punjab Police, Rangers, and Sindh Police, stating that all forces worked tirelessly day and night to ensure the peaceful event.

The interior minister also added that the dedication of the security forces reflects Pakistan's commitment to regional peace and international cooperation.

It is worth mentioning that the SCO Summit members before their departure have also congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the successful organisation of the conference, while the PM expressed his gratitude to all the guests.



Director Health Metropolitan Corporation, Dr. Nosheen Khan along with Rizwan Khalid, Coordinator Education Foundation are visiting different District Health Offices (DHOs) in Quetta.

Mir Humayoun Marri Passes Away

APP

Quetta: In a tragic development, former Caretaker Chief Minister of Balochistan, Mir Humayun Khan Marri, has passed away in Quetta, according to family sources. Marri, a prominent political figure, also held the esteemed post of Deputy Chairman Senate during his career, contributing significantly to the province's political landscape.

Mir Humayun Marri, who was twice elected as a Member of the Provincial Assembly from Kohlu, played a

key role in the political and legislative processes of Balochistan. His leadership as Caretaker Chief Minister was marked by his efforts to maintain political stability during transitional phases.

Marri's death marks the end of an era, with political circles mourning the loss of a seasoned leader known for his dedication to the province. Further details regarding his passing and funeral arrangements are awaited.

PTI in amateurs' hands, Fazl's role is key in politics: Fawad Chaudhry

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Former Federal Minister Fawad Chaudhry has claimed that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is currently being run by "amateurs," while lauding the crucial role of Jamiat Ulema-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman in navigating Pakistan's political landscape.

Speaking to the media outside the Islamabad High Court, Fawad stressed that politics in Pakistan is at a critical juncture, with the coming week expected to

shape the country's political future, Express news reported.

He noted that Maulana Fazlur Rehman's leadership has been instrumental in managing the opposition and showing political wisdom during negotiations with the government. Fawad also pointed out that Fazl's opposition to military courts and changes to the judiciary's structure has boosted his political standing. "The hopes of the Pakistani people are tied to Fazlur Rehman's role in these crucial times," he said, adding that PTI, despite being the largest party, lacks effective leadership.



QUETTA: Traffic police lifting vehicle from no parking area.



'Nothing of the sort': India dismisses reports of FM Dar, Jaishankar talk discussing cricket ties

SPORTS DESK

India's foreign ministry spokesman Randhir Jaiswal on Thursday dismissed media reports of talks between Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Indian Minister for External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on resuming cricket ties during the 23rd Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit.

Jaishankar arrived in Pakistan on Tuesday for the SCO summit — the first such visit by an Indian foreign minister in nearly a decade. Over lunch on Wednesday, Jaishankar and FM Dar exchanged a few words. Media reports immediately claimed that they were talking about cricket, but FM Dar did not respond when Dawn sought confirmation of this account.

The Times of India reported earlier today, citing diplomatic sources, that the two had "casual conversations". It added that there was a "brief pull aside", lasting five to seven minutes, between the two in Tuesday's dinner, during which they were reportedly joined by Interior Minister and Pakistan Cricket Board Chairman Mohsin Naqvi.



India's Virat Kohli walks back to the pavilion after his dismissal during the second day of the first Test cricket match between India and New Zealand at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru, India.

New Zealand on top after India bowled out for 46 in rain-hit Test

SPORTS DESK

New Zealand powered into a lead of 134 after fast bowlers Matt Henry and William O'Rourke combined to devastating effect to dismiss India for 46 in the weather-hit first Test on Thursday.

Opener Devon Conway hit 91 before being bowled while he attempted a reverse sweep off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin on a dramatic day two in Bengaluru.

New Zealand were 180-3 at stumps with Rachin Ravindra on 22 and Daryl Mitchell on 14 when bad light stopped play in an extended session.

India were dismissed in 31.2 overs in the second session after they elected to bat in overcast conditions. The opening day of the Test — the first of a three-match series — was washed out.

It was India's third-lowest Test score ever and lowest on home turf. Their previous lowest at home was 75 against the West Indies in New Delhi in 1987. Their lowest overall is 36 against Australia in a pink-ball Adelaide Test in 2020.

New Zealand launched a strong reply. Conway put on 67 runs for the first wicket with new skipper Tom Latham, who made 15.

The left-handed Conway took on the Indian attack and handled the spinners with aplomb as he reached 50 off 54 balls with a six off Ashwin.

Kuldeep Yadav struck the next ball to send back

Latham with his left-arm wrist spin. India successfully reviewed the decision in their favour after the umpire denied the appeal.

Conway put on a partnership of 75 with Will Young, who hit 33 and was in for the injured Kane Williamson.

Young fell to Ravindra Jadeja before Indian wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant missed a stumping and in turn injured his knee to hobble off the ground. Dhruv Jurel came in as the substitute wicketkeeper.

Earlier, Pant had top-scored with 20 in a disastrous Indian innings that witnessed five ducks, including that of star batsman Virat Kohli.

Henry wrapped up the innings with a five-wicket haul, and his last strike of Kuldeep was his 100th Test wicket.

Tim Southee struck the first blow in the seventh over with the score on nine, bowling India skipper Rohit Sharma through the gate with a sharp inswinger after he had made two.

O'Rourke struck in his first over to get Kohli caught at leg gully without adding to the score, silencing a stunned home crowd.

There was a brief rain interruption but there was no respite for India when the players returned as the shell-shocked hosts slumped to 33-5, and then 34-6 at lunch.

Wickets continued to tumble and soon after lunch O'Rourke (4-22) and Henry (5-15) packed off the remaining four batsmen, assisted by some great catching.

Spain reach Nations League quarters, Ronaldo's Portugal held by Scotland

SPORTS DESK

PARIS: European champions Spain sealed their place in the UEFA Nations League quarter-finals with a comprehensive 3-0 win over Serbia on Tuesday, while Cristiano Ronaldo and Portugal were frustrated in a 0-0 draw with Scotland.

Spain, who are also the reigning Nations League champions, became the second team to clinch a quarter-final spot as they followed in the footsteps of Germany by moving to 10 points from a possible 12 in Group A4.

Lamine Yamal and Nico Williams, the two wing stars of Spain's triumphant Euro 2024 campaign, were not involved against Serbia on a rainy night in the Andalusian city of Cordoba.

Yet that didn't matter as La Roja went ahead through Aymeric Laporte's early header and then shook off Alvaro Morata's penalty miss at the start of the second half.

Captain Morata made it 2-0 with a lovely finish on 65 minutes and Alex Baena, who featured at the Euros before starring in the Spain team that won Olympic gold, made it 3-0 from a free-kick. Serbia finished with 10 men after defender Strahinja Pavlovic was sent off.

"We're in another final phase, which is the important thing — it might seem easy but we're in all of these final phases in recent years, and that deserves credit," Morata told state broadcaster TVE.

Denmark are best placed to go through with Spain after they drew 2-2 away to Switzerland, who prop up the group.

The Danes twice came from behind, with Remo Freuler's opener cancelled out almost immediately by Gustav Isaksen, only for Zeki Amdouni to put the Swiss back ahead with a penalty in first-half stoppage time.

However, Christian Eriksen struck on 69 minutes to ensure Denmark left St Gallen with a point.

Portugal dropped points for the first time in Group A1 as they were forced to settle for a share of the spoils with Scotland at Hampden. On his 216th international appearance, Ronaldo made his 200th start for his country, more than 21 years on from his first. However, the 39-year-old failed to add to his 133 Portugal goals and stormed off the field at full-time ranting at the officials.



ST GALLEN: Denmark's Christian Eriksen (second L) shoots to score during the UEFA Nations League match against Switzerland at The Kybunpark.

TENDER NOTICE

Only electronic bid will be submitted. No physical bid is required. Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. The Divisional Forest Officer, Sherani invites bids from eligible Bidders for supply of following items.

TSE-242510573692 Tender Fee Rs. 1000/-

S.No	Class of Object	Bid Security
1	Environmental Services (Total Item(s) Count: 8)	2%
	Establishment of Cluster Plantation using water harvesting structures @ 50x3x3ft dimensions @ 6 structures per acre. Cover an area of 100 acres with impact generation on 200 acres Amounting to Rs. 5.00 million.	

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: 2 Assignments of Similar Nature and Complexity Worth PKR. 5 Million each in Previous 2 Years Accumulated Turn over of at least PKR.5 Million in 1 Subsequent Previous Years Presence in Active Tax Payer List BRA Registration Certificate The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan Submission of Credit Line Certificate with business address indicate. Submission of completion certificate from Balochistan Forest & Wildlife Department Submission of completion another certificate from Balochistan Forest & Wildlife Department Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage One Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee, Deposit at Call of 2% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.gob.pk. Issuance of tender Documents: Complete Bidding Document can be viewed at www.bppra.gob.pk Last Date of bid submission: Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by 30 October, 2024 till 09:00 AM through supplier dashboard. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at 10:00 AM on EPPS System Address: Zhob Phone no: 08222414466 /03458354351 Email: rfpplanning@gmail.com

Deputy Conservator of Forests Sherani

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Successful summit

WITH a focus on multilateralism and Eurasian connectivity, the two-day SCO Heads of Government summit wrapped up successfully in Islamabad yesterday.

The prime ministers of China and Russia attended, as well as top leaders and officials from other member states, and observers. The meeting sent the much-needed message that Pakistan was once again open for business and ready to play a central role in multilateral bodies. The major themes of the event, as summed up in the summit's joint communiqué, covered a range of topics, including commerce, the environment, cultural exchanges, etc.

Significantly, the document reaffirmed efforts to set up the SCO Development Bank and increase "the share of national currencies in mutual settlements". The document also observed that the "unilateral application of sanctions is incompatible" with international law. All these appear to be barely disguised jabs at the West, which has weaponised sanctions and the dollar against geopolitical foes such as Russia and Iran, both SCO members. Additionally, the statement emphasised the preservation of "traditional values and cultural and civilisational diversity".

For his part, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif highlighted climate change as an "existential crisis", while discussing the need for stability in Afghanistan, which, although an SCO member, has not been participating in the group's meetings since the 2021 Taliban takeover. Mr Sharif also observed that the "ongoing genocide in Gaza" could not be ignored.

While hosting such multilateral events is routine for states, considering Pakistan's peculiar challenges over the last few years — particularly security issues, financial troubles, and internal political tumult — organising the moot and ensuring the security of such a large number of foreign dignitaries was no mean feat. Fellow SCO states also recognised Pakistan's efforts, while observing in the joint communiqué that the summit was held in a "constructive and friendly atmosphere".

From hereon, it will take time and much effort to translate the SCO vision, particularly concerning a common bank, currency swaps, seamless regional connectivity, etc, into reality. After all, the bureaucracies of all 10 states, with varying systems of government, have to be on board and work towards these common goals, which is a considerable challenge. But while the objectives may be difficult to achieve, they are not impossible. From Pakistan's perspective, regional connectivity with its Eurasian neighbours is essential for economic growth. The country cannot remain isolated in the region. At a time when there is increased fragmentation in the world, and several conflicts are smouldering across continents, platforms like the SCO present an opportunity for states to set aside narrow differences and come together to pursue common goals for the benefit of their people. Rather than negatively viewing this as a revival of 'bloc politics', as some may do, a more optimistic view is required.

By F.S. Aijazuddin

Hope triumphant

SOMEONE in the IMF is not familiar with Dr Samuel Johnson's witty definition of a second marriage: "a triumph of hope over experience". The IMF and Pakistan have been in and out of wedlock not twice, but multiple times.

One would have imagined that an institution as experienced as the IMF would spot a habitual offender amongst a pack of its financial delinquents. Apparently not. No sooner had Pakistan digested the Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) of \$3 billion extended by the IMF in 2023-24, than it applied for a new loan of \$7bn. Even addicts draw a breath before the next snort.

Recall our predicament in 2023, as we waited desperately for the release of the last \$1.1bn tranche of the SBA. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif assured the IMF MD Mme Georgieva that, if re-elected, he stood "committed to turning over the economy with the help of IMF and development partners".

On her part, Mme Georgieva reminded him that, although he had "built a very convincing case", the IMF Board recalled "the past trust deficit" and reiterated its scepticism about Pakistan's freshest undertakings. She then mollified her Board with the assurance that Pakistan would "deliver on its commitments ... as she had personally met the prime minister and seen his seriousness to deliver". The IMF programme repeats a familiar mantra.

In reciprocation, our PM expressed his "profound gratitude" for her "support and assistance" and sent her some mangoes in appreciation of "her leadership and professionalism". Apparently, mangoes did the trick. A year later, on Sept 25, 2024, the IMF approved a 37-month

Extended Arrangement for SDR 5,320 million. (around \$7bn). It was an anniversary of sorts. This is the 25th time Pakistan has approached the IMF for a bailout.

To obtain this \$7bn loan and its first tranche of \$1.1bn., Pakistan assured the IMF that it will implement radical changes which will test the public's patriotism and the sinews of our federation. The new programme comes with several conditions, or 'bitter pills'. These include bringing undertaxed sectors including retail, export, industrialists, developers, and large-scale agriculture into the income tax regime.

The Government has agreed to reduce "non-transparent support through exemptions for privileged sectors like real estate, agriculture, manufacturing, and energy, as well as, through the proliferation of Special Economic Zones". The IMF demands the abolition of SEZs by 2035. CPEC, however, plans into 2030 the expansion of SEZs and Free Trade Zones, especially Gwadar Port.

The IMF programme repeats a familiar mantra — earn more, spend less, and minimise borrowing. The IMF recognises the inherent schisms in Pakistan's political structure: "Political economy considerations and pressures from vested interests could delay or weaken the reform momentum and put at risk still-fragile stability."

The IMF also expects Pakistan to be supported by "development and bilateral partners", ie, the World Bank, ADB, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and China. The CPEC is the IMF's bugbear. The IMF sought transparent disclosure; Pakistan hid behind legal obfuscation. In 2022, the IMF carped that Pakistan owed more to China than the IMF and DFIs com-

bined. In 2022, Pakistan owed China \$26.6bn, and the IMF about \$7bn.

The IMF's staff report supporting the \$7bn loan approval contains an odd justification: "Reputational risks would arise if the Fund were perceived as treating Pakistan differently from other members that ostensibly enjoy less support. Alternatively, not proceeding with a new programme also raises reputational risks as the new authorities, or other members, may accuse the Fund of not being even-handed."

The IMF recognises that some debtors have no prospect of being repaid on time, unless a major creditor (China) either reschedules or rolls over or writes off its loans. The Chinese may do the first, possibly also the second. China is not in the business of giving charity without cause. When will China tire of being Pakistan's banker of the first and the last resort? One suspects it will reconsider its largesse after the next US administration is in place.

For the time being, Pakistan is enjoying the advantage of a pre-US election windfall. The latest IMF loan is spread over the next three years, with periodic reviews. Whichever candidate — Donald Trump or Kamala Harris — wins the White House in November, our \$7bn IMF lifeline will definitely come under scrutiny.

President Trump gave a previous prime minister a personal tour of the White House. Will he be inclined to extend a similar courtesy to his successor? Kamala Harris knows Pakistan as India's irascible neighbour. Her DNA could colour her judgment.

Meanwhile, to paraphrase Herbert Hoover: accused are the young, for they shall inherit our national debt.



By Rabiya Javeri Agha

Rights review

LIKE any country in the world, Pakistan is host to multifaceted and complex human rights issues. The country's marginalised groups, women, minorities, and children frequently face systemic rights violations that are rooted in entrenched power structures.

Perpetrators enjoy impunity, with little rehabilitative support offered to victims. It is thus of little surprise that Pakistan's performance on international indexes is faltering. Pakistan ranked 164 out of 193 countries under the latest Human Development Index, placing it firmly in the "low human development" category in terms of education, health and income levels.

The situation on the ground is worrying, especially when one considers the Government of Pakistan's international commitments under the seven core United Nations human rights treaties it has ratified. These treaties are more than just paper. They create concrete obligations for the government to respect and fulfil key civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all those in its territory. On Oct 17, 2024, the Government of Pakistan's performance pertaining to civil and political rights, as enshrined under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), will come under review before the UN Human Rights Committee. The committee will engage in a constructive

dialogue with the government, at the end of which a list of recommendations will be issued.

While Pakistan has ratified the core UN human rights treaties, its commitment to upholding the rights within remains fragile. The upcoming review underscores the importance of reform. The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) plays a pivotal role in this process. In its capacity as an official, independent rights watchdog under the NCHR Act of 2012, it has resolved over 7,900 cases and played a key role in advocating for human rights at home and abroad. Through its research and advocacy, the NCHR has successfully challenged discriminatory practices, secured the release of prisoners, and worked to maintain our operational independence despite challenges. However, these efforts alone are not enough to reverse the systemic issues that hold Pakistan back. Our report to the UN committee outlines Pakistan's legislative and administrative strides, but also highlights persistent challenges in enforcement. Pakistan's commitment to upholding human rights remains fragile.

An area of grave concern is violence against women. Despite constitutional and legal protections, 23 per cent of married women in Pakistan report physical abuse, while 26pc face emotional abuse. These alarming statistics point to systemic flaws in law enforcement and the judiciary, where patriarchal norms limit justice for

victims. With only 18pc of reported rape cases reaching court, the path to justice is fraught with challenges. The economic cost of this violence, estimated at \$189.7 million annually, is a further burden Pakistan can ill afford. Strengthening legal frameworks, providing better protection, and empowering women must become national priorities.

Religious minorities in Pakistan also face escalating violence and discrimination. The misuse of blasphemy laws led to 705 people being jailed by mid-2024, and continues to cause concern, while forced conversions — especially of Hindu girls — underline the vulnerabilities of marginalised communities. While legislative measures exist, enforcement is weak, leaving minority groups exposed to socioeconomic and religious persecution. The NCHR has worked diligently to address these issues but recognises that more comprehensive reforms are urgently needed, particularly in tackling extremism and reforming religious education. Torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement remain troubling realities. Despite the passage of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act in 2022, implementation has been slow. Torture is not only a violation of human dignity, but a symptom of larger institutional flaws. Inhumane prison conditions, exacerbated by overcrowding and inadequate medical care, add to the suffering, with pre-trial detainees making up a significant

DAILY MIRROR

Senate passes Deposit Protection, Establishment of Special Court (Overseas Pakistanis Property) Bills unanimously

By Zahid Ahmed Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Thursday passed the Deposit Protection Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2024 and the Establishment of Special Court (Overseas Pakistanis Property) Bill, 2024 unanimously.

Minister for Finance and Revenue moved the bill to amend the Deposit Protection Corporation Act, 2016 (The Deposit Protection Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2024) in the House.

The statement of objects and reasons of the bill says that for the sake of stability of financial system, the bank resolution and recovery regime in Pakistan is being further strengthened. Resolution of financial institutions often depends upon a sound and reliable funding mechanism in order to enable the Resolution Authority to prepare and execute an effective resolution scheme that would be able to bridge any gaps in assets and liabilities of a non-viable bank. The funds held by a deposit protection agency is conceptually similar to the protection provided to depositors, in case of bank

failure, as in both cases the funds provided by the deposit protection agency is used to protect deposits' interest and contribute towards financial system's stability.

The amendments are aimed at enhancing the mandate of the Deposit Protection Corporation from 'Pay-box-only' to Pay-box plus' i-e to facilitate in the resolution of its member institution.

Similarly, Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Development moved the bill to establish special courts for adjudication of petitions in respect of immovable properties of overseas Pakistanis (The Establishment of Special Court (Overseas Pakistanis Property) Bill, 2024) in the House.

Commenting on the salient features of the bill, Minister for Overseas Senator Saalik Hussain said that the bill has been moved on the great demand from the Pakistanis living abroad. It would ensure secure process of land purchasing through online process by overseas Pakistanis.

Leader of the House in the Senate, Senator Syed Ali Zafar hailed the bill

presented for the overseas. Meanwhile, Senator Danish Kumar said that overseas approached him and demanded to bring such kind of law to secure their property in Pakistan. Through online process of property purchasing, the overseas will not have to bear travel expenditures.

Senator Irfan Ul Haq Siddiqui said that the bill has already been approved from the committee.

The house passed the both the bills through clause by clause.

Meanwhile, Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb on behalf of Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi introduced the National Forensics Agency Bill, 2024 in the Senate.

Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gillani referred the bill to the concern standing committee for detailed deliberation.

Moreover, the Finance Minister on behalf of Minister for Law and Justice laid before the Senate the Annual Report on the observance and implementation of principles of policy (2020-21), as required under clause (3) of Article 29 of the Constitution.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb called on by the Ambassador of USA to Pakistan Donald Blome..

Constitutional amendments package almost finalized: Siddiqui

APP

ISLAMABAD: Substantial progress has been made on the proposed constitutional amendments package, with just a few finishing touches needed, Parliamentary Leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in Senate Irfan Siddiqui said Thursday.

After attending a special committee meeting on constitutional reforms, he spoke to the media, stating that the committee was currently reviewing the draft of the proposed amendments.

Speaking on the occasion, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Ms. Sherry Rehman stated that both Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) and the PPP have reached an agreement on the amendments. However, a meeting of PTI and JUI-F leadership was scheduled later.

Ji lashes out at ruling coalition for striking a deal on constitutional amendment

INP

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Naib Emir Liaqat Baloch on Thursday slammed the stalwarts of major political parties for striking an unjust deal in the name of agreement on much-touted constitutional amendment.

In a statement, Baloch wondered why Prime Minister Shehbaz was being blackmailed by his coalition partners to go ahead with constitutional amendment.

Baloch went on to say that proposed constitution amendment was based on malicious intent, adding that it would pave way for horse-trading and add to political instability.

Speaking about the government's hints of normalization of relations with India after successful completion of the Shanghai Cooperation

Organisation (SCO) summit in Islamabad in which Indian Minister of External Affairs Jay Shankar also represented India, Baloch said that the JI rejected normalization of relations with India by hiding behind the SCO summit.

NAPHDA Violation of Financial Obligations Abandoned 'Low-Cost Housing Project' in Ali Pur: Tarar

APP

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar Thursday said the Naya Pakistan Housing and Development Authority (NAPHDA) failed to fulfill its financial obligations that led to financial constraints causing slow progress of low-cost housing project at Ali Pur Farash.

He said while responding to the query of Member National Assembly (MNA), Aliya Kamran's query pertaining to abandoned and in complete

projects of Capital Development Authority (CDA) and the slow pace development of Ali Pur Farash project on behalf of the Interior Minister.

Attaullah Tarar said Ali Pur Farash project was not abandoned by the CDA but rather non-fulfillment of contractual obligations, non-payment by NAPHDA and violation of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between CDA, NAPHDA and FWO led to halted financial progress.

"It is 66% complete and remaining halted due to financial constraints and unfulfilled contractual obligations," he said.

Cost escalation in Ali Pur Farash project has increased multiple times and the matter should be referred to the committee concerned, he said.

The Speaker National Assembly referred it to the Standing Committee on Interior.

The Minister for Information informed that the Margalla

Avenue extension till Bari Imam was the new road development project that would be completed in next two months as swift progress was underway.

He added that the Serena Chowk underpass was conceived by the Minister Interior which was under the original plan to facilitate foreign guests and high profile functions which would start from Serena Chowk to Jinnah Convention Center would be launched soon.

"A complete plan for U-turns, and underpasses is being prepared and ground breaking will be done soon," he said.

The Jinnah Convention Center, he said was refurbished in mere two months span by CDA which was a great achievement. He lauded Chairman CDA, Ali Randhawa for efficient work during the SCO summit preparations.

SCO summit boosts Gwadar port's regional significance: Minister

ONLINE

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh Thursday praised SCO summit as a resounding success, highlighting its potential to unlock new regional connectivity, opportunities and expressed optimism that exports will receive a significant boost through Gwadar Port, particularly as China relocates its industries to Pakistan. Federal Minister expressed optimism about Gwadar Port's potential to drive Pakistan's economic growth while speaking to PTV news channel.

He emphasized that the port's success is crucial for the country's economic progress, he added.

China's decision to relocate its middle industries to Pakistan is expected to sig-

nificantly boost the country's economy, he further mentioned.

This strategic move will not only improve economic growth but also create numerous job opportunities for the local workforce, ultimately enhancing the overall standard of living, he said.

Responding a query, he said the SCO summit's successful conclusion has earned Pakistan widespread appreciation for its exceptional hospitality.

It is an honor to have hosted this prestigious event, showcasing our country's capability to organize high-profile international gatherings seamlessly, he added.

Pakistan and China's relationship has been a cornerstone of regional cooperation, and their bilateral trade has witnessed significant growth over the years, he highlighted.

Successful anti-smuggling operations continue in Balochistan

INP

QUETTA: The Frontier Corps (FC) Balochistan (North), in collaboration with other agencies, is actively conducting successful anti-smuggling operations across various regions of Balochistan.

Between September 16 and October 16, 2024, attempts to smuggle illegal goods were thwarted in several areas, including Dera Murad Jamali, Barkhan, Pishin, Chaman, Nushki, Zhob, and Panjpai.

The seized items included 66 metric tons of sugar, 5,320 litres of Iranian diesel, 772 tyres, 29 metric tons of milk powder, and 6 metric tons of betel nuts.

Additionally, various other items, such as non-customs paid vehicles, cigarettes, and Chinese salt, were confiscated and handed over to customs authorities.

Smugglers were attempting to transport these goods using trucks, passenger buses, and through secret routes. However, timely action by FC Balochistan (North) successfully prevented these smuggling efforts.

Pakistan will continue its unwavering support to Kashmiri brothers, sisters: Amir Muqam

INP

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam has said that Kashmir resides in the hearts of Pakistanis and a clear message will be given on the occasion of Black Day on October 27.

It was on October 27 in 1947 when Indian troops, in total violation of the spirit of the Partition Plan of the Subcontinent, had militarily invaded Jammu and Kashmir and illegally occupied it against the will of the Kashmiri people.

A review meeting was held in Islamabad under the chairmanship of Engineer Amir Muqam regarding the observance of Black Day on 27th October.

He said that India had landed its troops in Jammu and Kashmir on October 27, 1947 and occupied it, which has been rejected by the Kashmiri people.

Engineer Amir Muqam said Pakistan will continue its unwavering support to its Kashmiri brothers and sisters and the voice of Kashmiris will be conveyed to the whole world and the Pakistani people will not take rest until the just solution of the Kashmir dispute.

PM Shehbaz invites Mongolia to explore avenues of cooperation

APP

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has said he looks forward to working closely with his counterpart of Mongolia, Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene, in the days ahead to further strengthen cooperation between the two countries.

He expressed this view while talking to Prime Minister of Mongolia Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene on the margins of the SCO Council of Heads of Government meeting in Islamabad today.

The Prime Minister warmly welcomed his counterpart of Mongolia and noted that his visit marked a new chapter in the history of bilateral relationship, defined by mutual respect, goodwill and amity. Shehbaz Sharif also felicitated him on his re-election as the Prime Minister of Mongolia.

The Prime Minister suggested that both Pakistan and Mongolia should explore new avenues of mutually advantageous cooperation with a particular focus on trade, investment, people-to-people contacts and connections.

He offered the Mongolian side to send

civil servants to training institutions of Pakistan.

He also proposed to declare 2025 as the year of Pakistan Mongolia Friendship year for bolstering the brotherly ties among the two countries.

On the occasion, the Mongolian Prime Minister felicitated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on successful conduct of the SCO Council of Heads of Government meeting. He also appreciated Pakistan's leadership role as the Chair of the SCO Council of Heads of Government.

The Mongolian Prime Minister reciprocated that Mongolia shares Pakistan's desire to build stronger and closer bilateral relations through joint efforts and collaboration.

Both the leaders agreed on forming a Joint Ministerial Commission to enhance cooperation in trade, tourism, agriculture and mining sectors.

Establishment of an inter-parliamentary union was also agreed in the meeting to expand the parliamentary relations between the two countries.

On the occasion, the Mongolian Prime Minister planted a sapling in the lawn of the Prime Minister's House.



Lawyers are holding protest demonstration against high handedness of Traffic Police, at Assembly Chowk in Quetta

DPM Dar felicitates nation on successful conclusion of SCO CHG conference

ONLINE

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday felicitated the nation on the successful conclusion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Heads of Government (CHG) meeting held in Islamabad.

"As our guests depart Islamabad after attending the 23rd Meeting of the SCO Council of the Heads of Government, I wish to congratulate the Pakistani nation on the successful conclusion of the Conference and thank all the Government departments/officials/bodies for their valuable contributions in making the event memorable," the Deputy PM wrote on his official X

account. With the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the lead, he said ministers and officials from the ministries of interior and information,

Capital Development Authority, and leadership of our security and law enforcement authorities, gave their best and fullest support.

"Very proud of the entire Pakistan Team for making the event a great success. AlhamdoLillah," he remarked.

Meanwhile, in his address to the officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the occasion of the Foreign Service of Pakistan Day, the deputy prime minister applauded the dedication and commitment of the Foreign Service of Pakistan and the invaluable contributions of Pakistani diplomats.

Biden announces \$4.5b in student debt relief ahead of presidential election

By Khawaja Farooq

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden announced on Thursday further student debt relief for public servants – amounting to around \$4.5 billion – with just over two weeks to go until the presidential election.

The action affects about 60,000 borrowers across the country, said the White House, touting Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris's efforts to improve loan forgiveness since taking office.

Harris is the Democratic nominee in November's White House race, running against Republican former president Donald Trump.

The announcement comes as households feel the weight of higher costs of living since the Covid-19 pandemic, with voters citing the economy as a crucial concern in polls.

Biden said in a statement that with the latest move, more than one million people have had their debt cancelled under Public Service Loan Forgiveness.

The promise of the program – supporting teachers, nurses and others – involved student debt forgiveness after 10 years of public service and 10 years



of payments.

"But for too long, the government failed to live up to its commitments, and only 7,000 people had ever received forgiveness," Biden said.

"I will never stop working to make higher education affordable," he added.

Biden has embarked on efforts to cancel student debt for millions of Americans, after a student loan payment freeze instituted by Trump during the coronavirus pandemic.

Americans hold \$1.6 trillion in student loans, and some end up repaying them over decades as they start jobs and families.



QUETTA: Balochistan NP Central Sectary Information Agha Hasan Baloch addressing a press conference.