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Bugti pays tribute to KORT for handing over 250 houses to flood affected people

APP

Quetta: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Wednesday paid rich tribute to Kashmir Orphan Relief Trust (KORT) for completing works of 250 houses for flood affected people in Balochistan.

He said that helping people affected by natural disasters is a selfless service to humanity. Institutions like Kashmir Orphan Relief Trust are a practical manifestation of this service which has completed construction of 250 houses for flood affected areas of Balochistan including Quetta City, Mastung, Pishin, Qila Saifullah, and Suhbatpur that is a new ray of hope for the victims. He expressed these views while addressing a ceremony held at the Chief Minister Secretariat here.

In the ceremony, the flood victims of the year 2022 were given a gift from Kashmir Orphan Relief Trust and the keys of the houses constructed by the trust were given. Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that the Balochistan government would provide

all possible support and encouragement to such institutions as these organizations are fulfilling the great duty of humanitarian service. He expressed his concern over the delay in the federal government's flood rehabilitation project and said that the victims are still facing difficulties in the areas of Balochistan which we are well aware of them. Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari inquires about the progress of this project in every meeting and directs the immediate rehabilitation of the victims, he said. The CM said that if the federal government gives us this project, we could complete it in 8 to 9 months under public-private partnership. He said that according to the vision of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, like the Sindh government, we would also successfully complete this project in a short period of time. The Chief Minister announced the establishment of a grand institution for orphaned boys and girls in Balochistan and said that the Balochistan government should provide land free of charge for this purpose.



Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding measures taken against human trafficking, in Islamabad.

PM for further improving IT infrastructure to boost exports by upto \$25 bn in 5 years

PM Shehbaz orders strict action against human traffickers

APP

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday expressed his satisfaction over the steps being taken to boost Information Technology (IT) exports by up to US\$ 25 billion in the next five years and directed the relevant authorities to further improve the IT infrastructure to achieve the target.

Chairing a meeting regarding the IT sector here, the prime minister directed the relevant authorities to simplify further the current Right of Way rules to promote broadband services through fiber optics in the country.

He also issued directions to provide the youth with IT training as per international standards so that they could easily get jobs abroad.

PM Shehbaz Sharif directed the facilitation in visa issuance for businesspersons interested in investing in Pakistan's IT sector.

On the recommendation of PSEB, the prime minister instructed the issuance of visas within

24 hours for foreign businesspersons seeking services from Pakistani IT companies.

The prime minister also called for the formulation of a strategy for the marketing of Pakistan's IT sector internationally.

During the meeting, the prime minister was briefed on measures taken to increase IT exports to \$25 billion.

Therefor, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has directed all the concerned institutions to play an active role in curbing human trafficking and take strict legal action against the perpetrators defaming the country through their heinous business.

He was chairing a meeting to review the measures against human trafficking in Islamabad today.

The Prime Minister instructed to address the shortage of manpower in the Federal Investigation Agency and ensure effective screening of those traveling abroad at the airports.

DPM assures Sindh CM of timely release of funds for projects

APP

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar has assured the Chief Minister Sindh of the Federal government's commitment to ensure full and timely release of funds for all approved projects.

He gave this assurance, while meeting Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, who called on him in Islamabad today. The Deputy Prime Minister further assured that any increase in cost of on-going projects will be expeditiously considered by CDWP and ECNEC for decision. The meeting reviewed in detail the on-going development projects included in Public Sector Development Programme of Sindh. It was deliberated upon the issues related to allocations, implementation and approvals of the reviewed projects, particularly pertaining to road connectivity, water storage, schools infrastructure and housing.

The meeting discussed in detail the approval and implementation status of such projects. It was agreed that timely completion of projects within approved cost was imperative for the development of Sindh province and betterment of the population.

Four terrorists killed in North Waziristan IBO: ISPR

APP

RAWALPINDI: Security forces have killed four terrorists during an intelligence-based operation in the Spinwam area of North Waziristan, the military's media wing said on Wednesday.

The operation, conducted overnight between January 14 and 15, targeted the terrorists' hideout after credible intelligence reports confirmed their presence, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

In a heavy exchange of gunfire, four terrorists were neutralised, it said, adding that security forces also recovered a cache of weapons and ammunition from the site. The ISPR stated that the terrorists were involved in several

terrorist activities against security forces and the targeted killings of innocent civilians.

Following the operation, clearance activities were initiated in the area to eliminate any remaining threats. The ISPR reiterated the military's resolve to uproot terrorism and ensure peace and stability across the country.

"Pakistan's security forces remain steadfast in their commitment to eradicating the menace of terrorism," the statement added.

Yesterday, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir visited Peshawar where he met with political leaders from various parties in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa to discuss the ongoing efforts to maintain peace and security in the region.

Pakistan eager to tap Yuan bond market: Aurangzeb

ONLINE

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has said Pakistan is eager to tap the Yuan bond market to broaden its ties with China.

In an interview with Nikkei Asia, he said an initial issuance of a Panda bond by the end of this year is expected to be worth around 200 million to 250 million dollars.

Muhammad Aurangzeb expressed the hope to reach the "B" rating zone in due course by carrying out reforms in accordance with the IMF's terms.

He emphasized that the China Pakistan Economic Corridor is a

flagship of the Belt and Road Initiative, a core economic and geopolitical drive spearheaded by Chinese President Xi Jinping.

The Minister said government attaches focused attention at the highest

level" to the safety issue not only for Chinese but for all foreign nationals in the country.

He said we are now in the 25th IMF program and we want to ensure that this is the last program.

The Minister said the country needs to firmly establish an export-led growth model, attract more foreign direct investment and go back to the international capital market.

ISPR slams Indian army chief's remarks as baseless and duplicitous

Islamabad rejects terrorism allegations, highlighting India's actions in IIOJK and oppression of minorities

ONLINE

ISLAMABAD: Military has dismissed recent comments by the Indian Army Chief alleging Pakistan to be a 'epicentre' for terrorism, calling the accusations baseless and an attempt to deflect from India's actions in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

In a strongly worded statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) highlighted that such remarks are contrary to facts and an exercise in futility, reiterating that they reflect extreme duplicity.

The ISPR accused India of using these claims to overshadow state-sponsored brutality in IIOJK, where the Indian military has faced criticism for human rights abuses. The statement further alleged that the

Indian Army Chief's remarks were politically motivated, citing his involvement in overseeing repression during his tenure in IIOJK. "The world is witness to India's hate-speech conclaves provoking genocide against Muslims and its oppressive policies targeting minorities," the ISPR said.

Pakistan also pointed to what it described as India's "trans-national repression" and the use of force against unarmed Kashmiris, claiming such actions have only strengthened their resolve for self-determination as per UN resolutions.

Highlighting a recent incident, the ISPR noted that a serving

Indian military officer in Pakistan's custody was allegedly caught orchestrating terror activities, a fact it said was being ignored by Indian leadership.

Power Division announces 44% discounted tariff for EV charging stations

APP

ISLAMABAD: The Power Division has announced a special 44 percent discounted tariff for electric vehicle charging stations.

This announcement was made by Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, while addressing a news conference in Islamabad today.

He said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has allowed this special discounted rate for EV charging stations, reducing the current electricity rate of 71 rupees per unit to 39.70 rupees per unit.

The Minister for Power said regulations regarding EV charging stations have also been implemented, allowing registration and business operations within 15 days.

According to details, the reduction in per-unit electricity rates will allow up to three-fold savings in travel costs compared to petrol and other fuels and will likely result in a significant reduction in fares. Additionally, reduced reliance on petrol and other fuels will save substantial foreign exchange.

It is estimated that there are currently 10 million motorcycles in the country, consuming six

billion dollars annually on fuel.

Converting these motorcycles to electric technology, which costs an average of 50,000 rupees, will enable a return on investment within three to four months while saving billions of dollars in foreign exchange.



QUETTA: CM Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti addressing a Key Handover Ceremony 250 Houses for Flood AFFECTEES-2022.

SC asks why Army Act was not applied in APS attack cases

Justice Mandokhail raised concerns over the constitutional amendment for military trials of terrorists

ONLINE

ISLAMABAD: The Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan on Wednesday sought clarification from authorities on why the Army Act was not applied in the cases related to the 2014 Army Public School (APS) attack.

The constitutional bench, led by Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, heard an intra-court appeal challenging the decision to try civilians in military courts. Khawaja Haris appeared on behalf of the Ministry of Defence during the proceedings.

During the hearing, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail questioned the necessity of amending the Constitution to permit military trials for terrorism, pointing to the existing nexus between civilian crimes and military courts, Express News reported.

He also asked why such trials were not conducted previously, despite the existence of the Army Act.

The defence ministry's lawyer, Khawaja Haris, argued that the nature of the crime determines whether the trial is held in a civilian or military court.

He emphasised that if a civilian crime is linked to the armed forces, it falls under the jurisdiction of military courts.

Justice Mandokhail, however, suggested that the perpetrator's intent should be considered to determine if the crime was against national interests.

Khawaja Haris clarified that military courts could try terrorist acts linked to religious or terrorist groups under the Army Act, with or without constitutional amendments.

Justice Mandokhail inquired about the handling of significant cases, like the 2014 Army Public School (APS) attack, under the existing legal framework.

Khawaja Haris stated that the APS attack was linked to the military but was not directly tried under military courts.

He noted that the constitutional amendment covered additional crimes beyond military duties.

Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar added that the court was focused on assessing the constitutional status of the law, not the nature of specific crimes.

Khawaja Haris argued that if the Supreme Court upheld Sections 21D and 22D of the Army Act, challenges to military courts should be dismissed.

The bench also referenced the 21st Constitutional Amendment, which allowed military trials for terrorism cases after the APS attack.

Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan remarked that the amendment had been a subject of parliamentary debate and applied judicial reasoning, while Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi noted the emotional context in which the amendment had been approved.

Khawaja Haris defended the role of the parliament in passing the amendment, acknowledging the crucial role played by former Senate Chairman in its approval.

The constitutional bench then adjourned the hearing till Thursday (tomorrow).

JUI-F chief says political differences should be resolved through dialogue

NEWS DESK

LAHORE: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Pakistan (JUI-F) head Maulana Fazlur Rehman has urged political forces to move beyond the politics of revenge, emphasizing that issues should be resolved through negotiation.

Speaking to the media, he stated, "As a political person, I firmly believe in dialogue. Politicians should not be behind bars."

Reflecting on past political practices, Maulana Fazlur Rehman urged the need for free and fair elections, devoid of manipulation.

He criticized the prevailing attitude of political leaders and said, "Parliament has become meaningless due to the negative attitudes of politicians. Their role has not been satisfactory, as they have compromised democracy and its principles."

The JUI-F leader expressed his commitment to ideological politics, distinguishing his stance from opportunistic practices.

Addressing broader geopolitical concerns, he criticized the undue attention given to US President-elect Donald Trump and remarked, "America was defeated and fled from this region."

Reiterating the intertwined destinies of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Maulana Fazlur Rehman said, "Afghanistan and Pakistan are inseparable; both are essential for each other. Disputes among neighbors are natural but are usually resolved amicably. We must not let emotions dictate our state policies."

Maulana Fazlur Rehman also expressed concerns about the establishment's interference in political processes, stating, "The establishment has no connection with ideology."

Bangladeshi defence delegation calls on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Sidhu

ONLINE

ISLAMABAD: A high level defence delegation of Bangladesh led by Lieutenant General S M Kamrul Hassan, Principal Staff Officer, Armed Forces Division, Bangladesh, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force here Wednesday at Air Headquarters.

During the meeting, Chief of the Air Staff reaffirmed his commitment to enhancing military partnership between the two Air Forces through joint training initiatives, said a press release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The dignitaries also agreed to explore avenues of collaboration in order including exchange initiatives and joint training.

Lieutenant General S M Kamrul Hassan lauded the innovative projects, cutting-edge technologies and indigenously developed technological framework of Pakistan Air Force under the current leadership.

He expressed profound interest in sophisticated military hardware being developed, notably the JF-17 Thunder fighter jets.

The meeting between Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force and Bangladeshi defence delegation signifies a resolute commitment to reinforce military partnership, fostering collaboration and promoting robust relations between the two countries.

Bilawal 'invited' to US President-elect Trump's inauguration

INP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has been invited to US President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration ceremony on January 20 in personal capacity, claimed well-placed sources on Wednesday. The PPP chairman would depart for Washington in next few days to attend the inauguration of President-elect Trump. Besides Bilawal, the US president-elect also invited Chinese President Xi Jinping and other global leaders to his inauguration

in Washington. It is pertinent to mention here that PPP Co-chairman and incumbent President Asif Ali Zardari had attended the pre-inauguration oath ceremony of then

US president-elect Trump in Washington, DC in 2017. Zardari was accompanied by PPP leaders Rehman Malik (late) and Sherry Rehman. Following his landslide victory in the November 5 presidential election, Trump will be sworn in as the 47th head of the state during the inauguration ceremony at the Capitol next week.

Development of Balochistan among priorities of govt: Ali Hassan

APP

Quetta: Provincial Minister of Agriculture, Industry and Crafts Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said that the development and prosperity of Balochistan is among the priorities of the government to bring reforms to establish good governance in the province.

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Central Senior Leader, Spokesperson President Asif Ali Zardari, Ali Hassan Zehri said that foreign investors are being attracted to invest in agriculture,

industries, livestock, fisheries and other sectors in Balochistan. While talking on the occasion of the dinner given by him in honor of on this occasion, Parliamentary Secretary Labor and Manpower Baba Ghulam Rasool Umrani, Parliamentary Secretary for Transport Abdul Majeed Badeni, Parliamentary Secretary for Minority Affairs Sanjay Kumar, Minority Member Balochistan Assembly Ashok Kumar, Secretary Agriculture Noor Ahmed Pirani, Secretary Industries Mehboob Dasthi, DG BISP Jalal Faiz, DG

Planning Aurangzeb Kasi, DG Industries Anees and others were also present.

Provincial Minister Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said that according to the vision of President

Asif Ali Zardari and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the collation provincial government of PPP in the province is using all best available resources to bring Balochistan at par with other provinces in terms of development and for the first time in the all areas of province giving rights on equal bases but the net of development work is being laid. He said that Balochistan is a province rich in natural minerals, the government is taking steps to utilize the minerals for the development and prosperity of the province and providing facilities to foreign investors for investment in the fields of agriculture, livestock, industries, fisheries and minerals. The Minister said that the provincial government has started the process of reforms to ensure good governance in the province, the positive results of which have started to be conveyed to the people.



QUETTA: CM Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti in a meeting with JUI General Secretary Molana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri.

Pakistan should be redline for youths: Maryam Nawaz

ONLINE

SIALKOT: Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said Pakistan should be redline of the youths.

"PTI is fully focusing on igniting fire in the country. We are on crossing point. Either we have to take forward the country or push it into bottom of regression. It is last opportunity that students and youths should elect rulers in future taking into account merit, she said this while addressing Honhar scholarship ceremony here Wednesday. She stressed parents should give space to daughters according to sons.

Honhar girls and boys students are future of Pakistan, she held. We will raise scholarship amount of Rs 30000 to Rs 50000.

I do every job on merit. Not a single appointment has been made in chief minister house on favoritism. No appointment has been made in any department in Punjab on favoritism. We have not given any scholarship out of 20000 scholarship under favoritism.

All the appointments in all department including police have been made on merit. People get angry with me. But I don't accept favoritism. I have to be held accountable by people. I am answerable to people.

In the past the political rivals kept me in death cell twice. I never raise hue and cry. I did not ask for AC or TV.

Criticizing KP government she said terrorism related incidents are taking place in KP and Balochistan.

Who was saying "chor, chor" is facing case of what chori today. We gave answer to every question. You should also render your account.

How 190 million pounds case was enacted, give us answer to it. Expressing differences is right of every one but no one should be humiliated.

Whatever development works were done in the country were executed during Nawaz Sharif or PML-N rule. One who has no performance to show launches offensive. If I continue to provoke you for firing petrol bombs, then there will be no time for bringing scholarships and lap top schemes for you.

Becoming chief minister does not mean I have become monarch. Only I want to say you this we are standing on cross road.

Development stops where there is no rule of law: Shahid Khaqan Abbasi

ONLINE

FAISALABAD: Former Prime Minister (PM) Sahahid Khaqan Abbasi has said election is basis of democracy and where there is no rule of law, development stops therein.

"There is agenda of talks always which is being seen here.

What talks are needed by government and opposition these should be held in parliament. There is need to abolish political circus what has been made. Reserving the decision and not announcing the decision in time is question on the system, he said this while talking to media men here Wednesday after condoling with Umar Israr Munnay Khan on the death of his father PML-N leader Israr Ahmad Munnay Khan.

What happened on May 9 and November 26 is before all of us, he underlined.

There is no guarantee of completing term in parliamentary system. We unfortunately tried to abolish governments in different ways. In 2018 sentence was announced for Mian Nawaz Sharif before election. We need unity by ending dissection. He underlined internet is basic need of country and economy. KP government has launched offensive several times against federation.

President of Pakistan appoints Prof. Dr. Sher Muhammad as Dean Faculty of Sciences at AIOU

PRESS RELEASE

Islamabad: President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari has appointed Professor Dr. Sher Muhammad, Chairman Department of Agricultural Sciences at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) as the Dean of Faculty of Sciences. The Federal Ministry of Education and Professional Training issued a letter to the university yesterday, formally notifying the appointment.

It is worth mentioning that, as per the Act of Allama Iqbal Open University, the President of Pakistan serves as the Chancellor of this federal university. The university's faculty, particularly the Academic Staff Association has highly praised Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood for this appointment and commended his adherence to merit-based policies.



23 profiteers held, 14 shops sealed, 10 sent to jail in Quetta

APP

Quetta: District Administration conducted operation against those selling adulterated milk and substandard products in the city and arrested 23 shopkeepers and sealed 14 shops beside 10 of them sent to jail on Wednesday.

At least 145 shops and bakeries were visited, 14 shops were sealed, 23 people were arrested, 10 shopkeepers were sent to jail, 30 shopkeepers were fined and 42 shopkeepers were warned by the district administration during operation in the area. According to the details, operations are underway against price gougers in different areas of the district city under the supervision of Quetta District Administration. In this regard, Assistant Commissioner (Kuchlak) Bahadur Khan along with the Food Authority team conducted a joint operation against various bakeries, retail stores and tandoors in Kuchlak Bazaar.

Govt decides to take action against those doctors involved in illegal strike of hospitals

APP

Quetta: Balochistan government decided to take action against those doctors and subordinate staff involved in illegal strike and closure of hospitals.

This was stated on Wednesday by Balochistan Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar saying that the government has started departmental action against those doctors, paramedics, and pharmacists involved in the strike and closure of hospitals with the aimed to improve provision of health facilities to patients in the official hospitals. He said that show-cause notices have

been issued to 29 doctors and pharmacists including medical officers Dr. Bihar Shah, Dr. Kaleemullah, Dr. Saboor Kakar, Dr. Yasir Achakzai, Dr. Mubarak Khan, Dr. Abdul Malik, pharmacists Ijaz Agha, Abid Abdullah, and Farid Khan and other staffs. Balochistan Government spokesman Shahid Rind said that a decision has been taken in principle to suspend all those doctors, pharmacists, and paramedics involved in the closure of hospitals. He said that the registration of doctors involved in the forced closure of hospitals would be canceled saying that government is considering the write a letter to PMDC in this regard.



Fishes and sea foods are being selling at a roadside stall, as the demand of fish and sea food items have increases during the winter season, at Joint road in Quetta.



QUETTA: Resident woman from Quetta Safia Banu addressing a press conference.



Devastating LA fires prompt 2028 Olympics debate

SPORTS DESK

LOS ANGELES: The Los Angeles wildfire disaster has cast a shadow over preparations for the 2028 Olympics, raising questions over whether the city can deliver a safe and successful Games.

So far, none of the more than 80 venues due to stage Olympic competition in Los Angeles have been directly affected by the infernos that have left at least 24 people dead and reduced entire neighbourhoods to smouldering ruins.

But experts say the ongoing disaster has underscored the challenges of staging the world's largest sporting event in a region increasingly under threat of wildfires.

"The situation is clearly grave and given the prospect of significant climate change, you do have to wonder whether the current situation might be repeated, possibly even during the Games," Simon Chadwick, professor of sport and geopolitical economy at Skema Business School in Paris told British daily The iPaper.

"This raises very serious questions, not least about insurance, and whether Los Angeles' big-ticket 2028 attraction might be about to become an uninsurable mega-event."

While the flames that razed Pacific Palisades came uncomfortably close to the Riviera Country Club — which will host 2028's Olympic golf tournament — the overwhelming majority of venues are situated outside what would be regarded as high-risk fire zones.

Historical data, meanwhile, indicates that the chances of a similar disaster erupting during the 2028 Olympics are highly unlikely.

Prior to last week, no fire in Los Angeles County had appeared on a list of the 20 most destructive fires in California history, according to statistics provided by CalFire, the state's fire agency.

The 2028 Olympics will also be taking place in July, a time of year when there are no Santa Ana winds, the powerful seasonal gusts widely seen as the biggest factor behind the unprecedented scale and scope of last week's carnage.

And Los Angeles has already staged the Olympics successfully on two occasions — in 1984 and 1932.

'LESSONS LEARNED'

Bill Deverell, a professor of history at the University of Southern California, said the ongoing disaster could provide important lessons for 2028. "Once this is over ... there's no question that we would expect that there would be lessons learned about ways we could presumably try to mitigate cataclysmic disasters like this," Deverell told AFP.

Pennsylvania State University professor Mark Dyerson has floated the idea of the Olympics being moved to 2024 hosts Paris if LA is unable to deliver the games.

"They could go back to Paris," the academic told the New York Post. "It would be unfortunate, but

"I'm sure they have some kind of committee — the IOC is a huge bureaucracy — that allegedly looks at contingencies." California Governor Gavin Newsom, however, told NBC's "Today" morning program that planning for the 2028 Olympics and the FIFA World Cup in 2026 — where eight matches take place in Los Angeles — was on track.

Newsom said the flurry of major sporting events in Los Angeles over the next few years — the city will also host the Super Bowl in 2027 — should be seen as an opportunity. "My humble position, and it's not just being naively optimistic, (is) that only reinforces the imperative (of) moving quickly, doing it in the spirit of collaboration and cooperation," Newsom told NBC.



THE Dacia Sandriders' Qatari driver Nasser Al-Attiyah and French co-driver Edouard Boulanger compete during the stage nine of the Dakar Rally, from Riyadh to Haradh

Saudi Al-Rajhi takes Dakar lead as Al-Attiyah wins stage nine

SPORTS DESK

HARADH: Qatari Nasser Al-Attiyah hit the gas on Tuesday to win stage nine of the Dakar Rally as Saudi Yazeed Al-Rajhi took the lead in the drivers' standings.

South African Henk Lategan was dethroned having dominated the standings since stage two and is now 7min 09sec behind the Saudi driver with three days to go.

"It was a messy, messy, messy day for us but it's not the end of the world, we're still in it," said Lategan.

Five-time champion Al-Attiyah covered the 357km special between Riyadh and Haradh in 2hr 52min 59sec, to keep in touch with a sixth Dakar title.

"It was a good stage. I can be happy with the result. There are three days left, we really have to focus, everything is open," said Dacia driver Al-Attiyah, who is fourth over 25 minutes behind Al-Rajhi.

The Qatari finished 2min 47sec ahead of Belgian Guillaume de Veuvius' Mini and 3min 12sec ahead of Al-Rajhi's Overdrive.

"We did a great job like we planned to," said Al-Rajhi. "It won't be easy, but we will fight to the end. Everything is going well for us."

Having had to open the road following his victory in stage eight, Lategan crossed in his Toyota 11th on the day, 16min 2sec off the pace.

"It's a bit of disaster to be honest," said Lategan. "It

was really a mess, about 13 km in and we got lost. We thought we missed the way point but we actually had it. It wasn't great and when we got lost we got one puncture and then towards the end, we got another one and the wheel is actually flat."

Swede Mattias Ekstrom (Ford) is third overall at 24min 50sec, less than a minute ahead of Al-Attiyah.

On the bikes, Argentine Luciano Benavides (KTM) claimed his second straight stage win as Australian Daniel Sanders finished third to hold the overall category lead.

KTM's Benavides finished 1min 54sec ahead of French driver Adrien Van Beveren (Honda) after the 357m special.

Sanders crossed in third 3min 4sec off the pace to extend his lead on second-placed Spaniard Toshia Schareina (Honda) to 14min 45sec.

Benavides started first after winning the eighth stage and opened the road, also benefitting from a bonus of 4min 51sec for a time of 3hr 15min 38sec.

The 29-year-old Argentine achieved the fifth Dakar stage win of his career and is now fourth overall, 27min 44sec behind his team-mate Sanders. "Honestly, it was super hard to open," said Benavides. "There were many points with tricky navigation. It wasn't easy but I'm really happy with the rhythm I had opening because today I had to pay extra attention to the notes."

Djokovic joins Alcaraz, Sinner in Australian Open second round

SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic survived a scare in his quest for tennis history before following Carlos Alcaraz and defending champion Jannik Sinner into the second round of the Australian Open on Monday.

But Greek former finalist Stefanos Tsitsipas and home favourite Nick Kyrgios both fell at the first hurdle, with the combustible Australian going out swearing and in pain.

In the women's draw, Iga Swiatek and Coco Gauff powered through with minimum fuss as they launched their bids to dethrone two-time defending champion Aryna Sabalenka.

Another winner was two-time Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka, who defeated France's Caroline Garcia 6-3, 3-6, 6-3.

On a blockbuster second day in Melbourne, Djokovic lost the first set to 107th-ranked American Nishesh Basavareddy in the prime-time evening match on Rod Laver Arena.

But the Serbian great, hoping to roll back the years and win an 11th Australian Open and record 25th Grand Slam singles title, recovered to ease through 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-2.

In front of new coach and former rival Andy Murray, Djokovic struggled to raise a smile in the immediate aftermath.

"At the end it was great but I think he was the better player for a set and a half," said the 37-year-old.

Italian world number one Sinner was warmly welcomed on Rod Laver Arena before defeating Chile's Nicolas Jarry 7-6(7/2), 7-6(7/5), 6-1.

Sinner is playing under a cloud after twice testing positive for traces of a steroid in March.

He denies wrongdoing and was cleared by tennis authorities, but the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) appealed and is seeking to ban him for up to two years.

"I was curious to see how it was. You never know what's happening," he said about the reception.

"I was happy about the crowd," added Sinner, who has not tasted defeat since losing to Alcaraz in the Beijing final in October. Alcaraz, a four-time Grand Slam champion but never a winner in Melbourne, had a couple of hairy moments before seeing off Kazakhstan's Alexander Shevchenko, 6-1, 7-5, 6-1.



GREECE'S Stefanos Tsitsipas (top) hits a return against Alex Michelsen of the US during their Australian Open first-round match at Melbourne Park.

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Missing justice

IT has taken a tour of Pakistan's provinces for Chief Justice Yahya Afridi to be "jolted" by the crisis of enforced disappearances. The issue has long been an open wound in Pakistan's body politic, one that successive chief justices have observed with varying degrees of concern but insufficient action.

The CJP told reporters that complaints from bar associations across the country have "disturbed" him but that it is imperative to also "hear the other side". However, these cases have languished in various courts for years. Why has the judiciary not been more proactive in addressing them?

Chief Justice Afridi's position that such cases fall under the high courts' jurisdiction per Article 199 of the Constitution, while technically correct, risks becoming another bureaucratic shield behind which justice can continue to be delayed. The Supreme Court's apparent reluctance to "interfere" with subordinate judiciary must not result in it abdicating its role as the ultimate guardian of fundamental rights. The mathematics of delay is simple but devastating.

Each day a person remains missing represents 24 hours of anguish for their families, who are left to navigate a labyrinthine legal system that seems designed to exhaust rather than deliver justice. The high courts, already burdened with backlogged cases, have treated these cases as routine litigation rather than the human rights emergencies they are.

While the CJP's broader vision for judicial reform — including plans for financial aid to underprivileged litigants and the professional development of district judges — is commendable, it should not distract from the immediate need to address enforced disappearances. The comparison of the SC to the Titanic, requiring time to change course, is unfortunate given how long the court has had to adjust its heading on this issue. The judiciary must recognise that its institutional credibility is intrinsically linked to its handling of missing persons cases. Each delay not only denies justice to the affected families but also erodes public faith in the legal system. If the high courts are indeed the appropriate forum for these cases, then the SC must at least ensure they are heard with the urgency they deserve. What Pakistan needs now is not merely acknowledgment of the problem but a clear timeline for addressing it. The 'jolt' should translate into concrete directives to high courts to expedite these cases, with regular monitoring of progress. The time for careful deliberation has long passed — what is needed now is swift action to ensure that Pakistan's missing persons are either produced before the courts or their fate explained to their families. Anything less would represent a continued failure of justice and a tacit acceptance of practices that have no place in a democratic society.

By Abraham Shah

Of rights and law

LAST month, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concluded historic hearings on placing legal responsibility for climate change. Led by the small Pacific island-nation Vanuatu, the proceedings witnessed over 100 countries and international organisations deliberate the legal consequences of atmospheric pollution.

The hearings mark a seminal moment because it is for the first time the ICJ is pondering legal responsibility for climate change. Interestingly, the Supreme Court of Pakistan in the 1994 'Shehla Zia vs Wapda' case established the 'right to a healthy environment' as an essential component of the fundamental right to life (Article 9 of the Constitution) and the right to human dignity (Article 14), raising essential questions about the state's responsibility to mitigate factors such as smog.

Globally, the ICJ's hearing raises critical inquiries. First, under today's neoliberal rationality, what exactly does it mean to have a 'right' and the protections it putatively affords? For many critical thinkers like Wendy Brown, the very legal edifice erected to protect individual rights serves as an instrument of oppression and displacement. This brings under sharp

scrutiny the contradictions inherent in legal decisions on collective concerns such as the environment under the hyper-individualist tenor of thought of modern capitalism. The ICJ must go beyond placing responsibility on polluters.

For instance, at what point does the right to accumulate unrestricted property or regenerate capital infringe on the 'right to a clean environment'? When global temperatures exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius — a chimera as it is — or worse? Do governments or international bodies like the UN then have the right to limit free enterprise to ensure the environment is protected? These are important inquiries that the ICJ's potential verdict will raise.

Associated inquiries that arise include why certain factors are considered 'fundamental rights' and others are not. A right to a clean environment is for instance, a fundamental right, but monetary equality is not.

This query strikes at the heart of modern, capitalist society and raises concomitant questions around who — or what — really is to blame for climate change. Thus, while the ICJ deliberates placing responsibility on historical emitters, will it indict an economic mode of production built on rapacious greed and

the exploitation of labour and nature?

The answer to this question is again critical because it highlights and identifies the dearth of collective imagination in addressing problems like climate change and food insecurity. While the salutary force of the law has been essential to safeguard and enhance human rights, the very premise of modern law remains constricted by its philosophical undercurrents, including the contested origins of private property. Unless we extend the contours of critical discourse to recognise power relations within the law and the silent yet inexorable force of capitalism, our hands remain tied when addressing pressing global problems.

Statements made during court proceedings evoked similar themes, most significant of which is the intersectionality of climate change with other modes of oppression. Timor-Leste's representatives, for instance, highlighted the intertwined relationship of present-day climate change with the historical injustice of colonialism, which fed and established the economic system unravelling nature's equilibrium today.

Here again we witness how crucial it is that the ICJ go beyond simply placing legal responsibility on polluters,

and instead, use its decision to shed light on an iniquitous economic system that serves as the greatest perpetrator in this case. This will require a deep re-think of the political rationality that governs us and shapes every facet of our existence.

The State of Palestine raised equally significant concerns, highlighting the environmental ramifications of Israeli occupation and the displacement of the Palestinian people, drawing attention to the militarist and violent nature of capitalism.

This violence embraces overt forms, evinced through Israel's actions, but also covert assertions manifested in the displacement of farmers and low-income communities for corporate or real estate interests. Again, who the law or its enforcers choose to protect awaits judgement.

Closer to home, the proceedings remind Pakistanis that mitigating climate change requires an effort that recognises not only its disproportionate impact and its deep link with systems of production and consumption, but also the legal and constitutional aspects.

Addressing climate change in Gilgit-Baltistan is, for instance, futile without rectifying the area's marginalised constitutional status.

By Rafia Zakaria

Misery theatre

IT is well known that various social media platforms — from YouTube to Instagram — provide us a glimpse of lives that are very different from our own. We can see what the daily life of an office worker in Tokyo is like or how a woman survives in a small cabin near the Arctic circle. These videos — especially when they are viewed by people far away from where the content producers themselves live — fill us with wonder and awe. These sorts of visual explorations are not too old; previously, the best we could do was to imagine them through books or experience them through films and documentaries.

However, many of us are now more interested in the lives of those who live near us — the celebrities, influencers, and content creators in our own city or country. Not too long ago, most presented positive content — birthdays, weddings, and shopping videos along with 'unboxing' and 'hauls' where the items purchased are shown to viewers and used to attract sponsors. Young women showed their obsession with skincare and make-up tutorials and 'GRWM' ('get ready with me') videos. Sports talk and travel videos were more popular with men. These were (and still are) situations that tracked life according to a plan and schedule — they were familiar but still interesting in their everyday monotony.

More recently, a different genre has emerged in keeping with the spirit of oversharing that is encouraged by all these social media platforms. People have begun to share not only the usual events — ie, the happy occasions in their lives — but also events that are extremely sad, even catastrophic.

In some cases, content creators already producing material for these platforms have themselves been struck by illness or sudden misfortune, which they have decided to turn into material for their channel. However, in many other cases, people who were not documenting their lives

online have started to make a visual log of, for instance, their cancer journey, providing information about their diagnosis, their discussions with doctors, the details of their chemotherapy, etc. Even more centrally, they provide a blow-by-blow account of how they feel through the ups and downs of the entire process. The viewer gets pulled into the process — waiting as anxiously as the patient for the outcome of medical tests, biopsies, and operations.

Why do we allow an emotional connection to be formed with those we do not personally know?

From the patients' perspective, this sort of content-sharing is probably useful. The prayers, wishes and hope they receive from others with similar problems can be a motivating factor and provide some light at the end of the long tunnel that they must traverse. Such sharing can also help dispel fears and myths about their disease and raise awareness.

For example, a man who ran a blog providing health and fitness advice to men who followed him or who worked out in the same gym as his was diagnosed with a rare type of cancer. In the weeks that followed, he began to share information with his viewership about his sudden diagnosis. He also admitted that since he began to document his cancer journey on YouTube, his following had increased by tens of thousands.

But the problem with sharing health issues of this sort lies in the possibility of giving medical misinformation that could actually harm viewers who have been diagnosed with the same disease.

This could come in the form of promoting drugs or treatment that may not be appropriate for another patient. Social media platforms like YouTube have pledged to restrict such misinformation — often amplified by dubious testimonials — but regulation in an era of mass content, eagerness to share and viewer gullibility is not always easy to achieve.

Besides, it is not just bad news about

illness that people are sharing; rejection is another theme that attracts followers in their thousands. For instance, students have begun to record their reactions at being refused admission by top universities. Women have posted about being rejected by men because they are overweight. Each has a different reason to showcase their feelings of alienation or 'unfair' treatment — perhaps to win sympathy or present themselves as survivors. But the question is more about why the rest of us continue to consume these stories of misfortune, of impending death or rejection, with such gusto — including those who are in the pink of health and those whose educational and weight journeys have not been filled with disappointment? Why do we allow an emotional connection to be formed with those we do not personally know?

Part of the reason might be that this kind of content is our own version of a Greek tragedy, where terrible things happen to someone else, while we remain riveted to our seats, as we follow events or stories that could have been our own. The sick people whose detailed stories we consume do not require us to find the treatments that make them well again. Similarly, we do not have to help an overweight person shed pounds, or even rectify an embarrassing situation afflicting a random content creator.

Because we do not have to do all this, we can wait to see how it all ends. In many cases, sick people get well and we are happy for them, undergoing our own catharsis when they win their battle against disease. In other instances, the tragedy is that the cancer patient does not survive, and we record our feelings on ephemeral life. As we convert more and more of our experiences into visual media for sharing platforms we create new forms of performance. The misery theatre deals with events whose modes of production and dispersion may be new, but whose emotional content is as old as Greek tragedy itself.

DAILY MIRROR

Govt will not purchase electricity after March 2025: NA told

By Zahid Ahmed Khan

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly was informed today (Wednesday) that the government will not purchase electricity after March this year as authorization has been given for the creation of an Independent Electricity Market.

Minister for Energy Sardar Awais Ahmad Leghari told the House during the Question Hour that the Independent Electricity Market will enable the consumers to purchase electricity from multiple suppliers.

The Minister said contracts have been reviewed with over twenty-eight IPPs, benefiting the national exchequer to the tune of 1457 billion rupees. He said since June last year the per unit electricity tariff for industries has been reduced by eleven rupees and for the rest of the country by four rupees.

The Minister for Energy further shared that the electricity tariff for the EV charging stations has been reduced to thirty-nine rupees from seventy-one rupees per unit.

Awais Ahmed Leghari said special units have been established to improve

recoveries and check power pilferage. He said the result of this initiative has been positive and is being expanded. He said that there is no proposal to revisit the slab system. However, the government is working on a number of initiatives to reduce the burden on the common man.

Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari said advanced metering infrastructure has been introduced in all Discos and is being implemented in phases to ensure accurate billing and increased customers' satisfaction. He further said conditions for the privatization of power distribution companies will be met by the end of this month.

Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar told the House that ICT Senior Citizens Council has been reconstituted which will soon hold its meeting. He said approval of the relevant rules shall be made part of the agenda of the meeting.

Responding to a question, Parliamentary Secretary on Foreign Affairs Shezra Mansab Ali Khan Kharal said Pakistan and China are committed to ensuring CPEC's success for mutual benefit. She said recent agreements and consensus between the top leadership of the two countries during high level

visits have focused on advancing the Phase-II of CPEC, which includes industrialization, development of the Special Economic Zones, transfer of technology and development of Gwadar Port.

Regarding enhanced people to people contact, the Parliamentary Secretary said twenty thousand Chinese nationals are working in Pakistan while twenty-eight thousand Pakistani students are studying in China.

Responding to a Calling Attention Notice, Parliamentary Secretary Dr Darshan said only two cases of human metapneumovirus have so far been reported in Islamabad and the government is fully vigilant in this regard.

The National Assembly today adopted a motion, expressing its deep gratitude to President Asif Ali Zardari for his address to both Houses assembled together on 18th April last year.

Winding up discussion, Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar commended the President for ensuring continuity of democratic journey of Pakistan, promoting patience and tolerance in the country's politics, giving identity and strengthening the federating units.

The House will now meet again tomorrow at 2 p.m.



ISLAMABAD: Lieutenant General S M Kamrul Hassan, Principal staff Officer, Armed Forces Division, Bangladesh, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, and Pakistan Air Force at Air Headquarters in Federal Capital.

President Zardari, PM Shehbaz pay tribute to security forces for killing terrorists

INP

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday paid tribute to the security forces for eliminating four terrorists in an anti-terror operation in Spinwam area of North Waziristan.

The president and prime minister, in separately issued statements, lauded the bravery of the security forces for carrying out a successful intelligence-based operation.

"The entire nation stands united against terrorism. The anti-terror operations will continue till the elimination of terrorism as the security forces are carrying out the operations to achieve the objectives," President Zardari remarked.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the people of Pakistan were proud of their brave security forces.

"We will continue to foil the evil designs of the enemies of humanity. The government and the security forces are fully resolved to purge the country of terrorism," he added.

Govt Undertaking Rightsizing to Reduce Expenditures: Azam Tarar

APP

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Azam Nazeer Tarar on Wednesday said that the present government was undertaking rightsizing to reduce expenditures and strengthen the country's economy.

Responding to a question answer session of Senator Aon Abbas in Senate, the minister said that practical measures were being taken to ensure of rightsizing of the different ministries in a larger national interest. He said that proposals for rightsizing of five ministries including Energy, Federal education and Professional Training, Information and Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture and Finance Division were being finalized in the third phase.

Azam Tarar informed that rightsizing proposals for ten ministries had been approved in the first

two phases, adding that the government were believing and initiating rightsizing of various ministries to get desirable result and streamline the system. The minister emphasized that rightsizing was need of the hour, saying it was not the government's work to do business but it would provide a congenial environment for it.

Finance Minister Emphasizes Need for Innovative Solutions to Accelerate Financial Inclusion

ONLINE

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, encouraged PMIC to propose innovative funding mechanisms, such as equity endowment funds and targeted government-mandated allocations, to increase the sector's capacity and outreach.

During the meeting with the leadership of the Pakistan Microfinance Investment Company (PMIC). The PMIC delegation was led by Mr. Naveed A. Khan, Chairman PMIC, and included Mr. Yasir Ashfaq, CEO PMIC; Mr. Waqas ul Hassan, CEO Karandaaz Pakistan; and Mr. Saqib Siddique, Head of Portfolio & Sector Development, PMIC.

PMIC, established in 2016 under the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS), operates as a wholesale microfinance apex with the aim of enhancing financial inclusion across Pakistan. During the meeting, the PMIC team presented a detailed overview of the microfinance landscape, highlighting key challenges and opportunities.

It was noted that Pakistan significantly lags behind regional counterparts, such as Bangladesh, India, and the Philippines, in terms of financial inclusion, with a potential microcredit market of 41 million, of which only 7.4 million clients are currently served.

The discussion included a compar-

ative analysis of Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) and Microfinance Banks (MFBs). The team highlighted that while MFBs primarily lend against gold and offer nano loans, MFIs focus on rural communities and cater to underserved segments, particularly women. Several key challenges to financial inclusion were outlined, including:

1. Dual Regulatory Framework: MFIs and MFBs operate under separate regulations, complicating the ecosystem.
2. Limited Access to Funding: Substantial liquidity is required to expand outreach, but funding remains a challenge.
3. Insufficient Institutional Capacity: The limited number of entities in the sector hinders widespread financial access.
4. Low NFIS Target Ownership: Proactive oversight is needed to meet the ambitious targets of the newly drafted NFIS 2024-28.

The Finance Minister appreciated the insights shared and stressed the importance of addressing these challenges with realistic and practical solutions. He encouraged PMIC to propose innovative funding mechanisms, such as equity endowment funds and targeted government-mandated allocations, to increase the sector's capacity and outreach.

He reiterated the government's commitment to accelerating financial inclusion as a cornerstone of sustainable economic development.



Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chairs a meeting with the leadership of the Pakistan Microfinance Investment Company (PMIC) held in Islamabad.

Govt Vows to Resolve Balochistan Missing Persons issue within Legal Framework

APP

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar has assured that the issue of missing persons in Balochistan will be addressed in line with the legal framework and relevant laws.

Speaking in the Senate on Wednesday in response to Senator Kamran Murtaza, the minister revealed that the government has recently established a commission to tackle this critical matter.

He highlighted that maintaining law and order is the responsibility of the provincial government but added that the concerns raised will be conveyed to the interior minister to ensure swift resolution.

The government remains committed to addressing this pressing human rights issue effectively.

PTI to stage 'nationwide protest' on February 8: Fawad Chaudhry

NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Former PTI minister Fawad Chaudhry has said that the party members would stage a 'nationwide protest' on February 8 – the day when the general elections were held last year.

Talking to the media outside Adiala jail he said: "PTI founder Imran Khan remains in good spirits despite the challenging circumstances. He (Imran Khan) says Pakistan cannot move forward like this.

He added: "The country is in a state of panic, and this has led to a resurgence in terrorism. The economy has stagnated, but Imran Khan is committed to seeing things improve."

Imran Khan has declared February 8 as Black Day, with protests planned across the country, he said stressing that Imran Khan has instructed all ticket holders to protest in their constituencies.

He urged the government to create a conducive environment for dialogue to ease political tensions. "Talks must go on. Tension should come down, and that would be good for Pakistan."

Pakistan, Djibouti sign MoU on bilateral political consultations

INP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Djibouti have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on bilateral political consultations and also held the inaugural session, expressing satisfaction at the existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the two brotherly countries.

Additional Foreign Secretary (Africa Division) Hamid Asghar Khan and Permanent Secretary General (Foreign Secretary) of Djibouti Mahmoud Ali Hassan signed it on behalf of their respective sides, according to a press release issued on Wednesday.

The two sides termed the MoU a historic step towards building a comprehensive and enduring bilateral partnership focusing on trade and investment in the coming days. The two sides reviewed the whole gamut of bilateral relations includ-

ing political, economic, and defence and security spheres, and exchanged views on further deepening bilateral ties through increased engagement at all levels.

Expressing satisfaction at the excellent multilateral cooperation, both sides also shared views on various regional and international issues of mutual concern. The discussion particularly focused on the situation in the Middle East and Horn of Africa.

Bilateral relations between Pakistan and Djibouti are strengthening day by day since Pakistan opened its resident Mission in Djibouti in May, 2022.

The next session of the Bilateral Political Consultations will be held in Islamabad early next year. The visit by the Foreign Minister of Djibouti and establishment of a Joint Business Council (JBC) is envisaged in the first half of 2025.

World's largest submarine cable now in Pakistan: Shaza Fatima

APP

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT Shaza Fatima stated that the world's largest submarine cable has arrived in Pakistan, and hopes are high that internet issues will be resolved soon.

The Senate session, chaired by Deputy Chairman Syedal Khan, began with Senator Mohammad Aslam Abro addressing the issue.

He mentioned that the ministry had stated the internet problem was technical, and while the world has reached the moon, Pakistan has not been able to solve this issue in a year. He suggested that the matter of internet disruptions be referred to a committee. Minister of State for IT, Shaza Fatima, said that the PTA (Pakistan Telecommunication Authority) oversees internet speeds, and over the past two years, it has doubled its frequency capacity. She mentioned that IT exports have increased by 33% in the last five months, making it the only industry with a trade surplus. Additionally, Pakistan's internet users have increased by 25%.

She explained that most issues have

occurred with mobile broadband, and they are in touch with businesses related to the internet. Pasha (Pakistan Software Houses Association) mentioned that three companies work across Pakistan on a 274 MHz spectrum.

There are eight submarine cables, one of which has completed its lifespan, and the world's largest submarine cable has now reached Pakistan. She expressed optimism that the internet problem would soon be resolved.

Senator Anusha Rehman pointed out that mobile companies had acquired 274 MHz spectrum over the past 30 years. She questioned the usefulness of imposing restrictions on data usage. She inquired whether any consultation had occurred regarding the new spectrum, especially if it would encourage investment and the government's plan to impose restrictions.

Shaza Fatima responded that mobile sector development had not been as significant over the past two to three years. She mentioned that the PTA had hired U.S.-based consultants and noted that things are changing globally.



Federal Minister for Energy, Sardar Ahmad Leghari addresses to media persons during press conference regarding introducing special electricity tariff for electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure and an EV policy, in Islamabad.

Saudi looking into \$100m investment in Pakistan's mining sector with focus on Reko Diq: minister

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Mining Minister Bandar Alkhorayef told Reuters on Wednesday that Saudi Arabian mining company Manara Minerals was looking at investing in Balochistan's Reko Diq mine.

He added that the Saudi Development Fund could contribute over \$100 million to Pakistan's mining infrastructure.

"Part of what we are looking at is how we can help Pakistan also in some infrastructure," Alkhorayef said in an interview on the sidelines of the Future Minerals Forum in Riyadh. "Without that infrastructure, the economics of the deal are not attractive, so through the Saudi Development Fund we are thinking about how we can finance it." Manara, a joint venture between state-controlled Ma'aden and the \$925 billion Public Investment Fund (PIF), was set up as part of the kingdom's efforts to diversify its economy away from oil,

including by buying minority stakes in assets overseas.

Executives from Manara visited Pakistan in May last year for talks about buying a stake in the Reko Diq mine, considered one of the world's largest underdeveloped copper-gold areas by global mining company Barrick Gold, which owns the project jointly with Pakistan. Separately, Alkhorayef also said that Saudi state oil giant Aramco's project to extract lithium was "promising, but not yet commercially viable". Aramco has partnered with the King Abdullah University for Science and Technology (KAUST) for the pilot, he said. Lithium Infinity, also known as Lihytech, a startup launched out of KAUST, is leading the extraction project with cooperation from Aramco and Saudi mining company Ma'aden. Lithium is a key component in the batteries of electric cars, laptops, and smartphones. Reuters previously reported that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates' national oil companies planned.

Pakistan was never a tactical ally of the US: White House official

John Kirby emphasizes that no formal treaty of alliance exists between Pakistan and the United States

By Khawaja Farooq

WASHINGTON: White House official John Kirby has clarified on Wednesday that Pakistan was never a technical or tactical ally of the United States, emphasizing that no treaty of alliance existed between the two countries.

During a press briefing in Washington, Kirby responded to a question about the Biden administration's actions regarding Pakistan's appeal over rising cross-border terrorism.

He noted, "Well, first, I'd – as you know, Pakistan was never a technical ally of the United States. I mean, there was no treaty of alliance with Pakistan." However, Kirby acknowledged the historical cooperation between the two nations in combating terrorism.

"But certainly, over many, many years in the last couple of decades, we partnered with Pakistan as appropriate to deal with the terrorist threat that still exists on that spine between Afghanistan and Pakistan," he added.

Kirby also addressed the ongoing security concerns, stating, "We recognize that Pakistan is still – still the Pakistani people fall victim to terrorist violence coming from across that border. We recognize that."

He reassured that the Biden administration remains committed to working with Pakistan to address these common threats, emphasizing, "We have and for as long as we'll be in office here remain committed to working with Pakistan to address those common threats and challenges. And that's not – that hasn't changed. It's not going to change."