

QUETTA VOICE

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'Biparjoy': Sherry Rehman urges caution as relief efforts continue



Shell Petroleum to sell stake in Pakistan

After 40 days, dead bodies of 2 coal miners recovered in Dukki

Manan Mandokhail
Hussain Zarkoon
Syed Ali Shah

DUKKI, QUETTA: After 40 days, rescue workers recovered the dead bodies of two coal miners trapped in a coal mine in Balochistan's Dukki district. The rescue workers ended after 40 days when the dead bodies were retrieved from the mine.

Rescue workers recovered the decomposed dead bodies of two miners, Muhammad Hanif Kibzai, the Assistant Commissioner Dukki said. He said the dead bodies of the hapless miners could hardly be identified.

On May 4 two coal miners trapped inside a mine

At least two coal miners were trapped in a mine on May 4 this year. The coal miners were trapped when the mine was suddenly filled with rainy water. The miners were buried deep inside the mine for more than 900 feet, Muhammad Hanif Kibzai said.

Family members suffered through physiological trauma

The anguished family members went through physiological trauma for forty days. "We were like on fire for 40 days", Maulavi Abdul Sattar, the uncle of one of the hap-



less coal miners said. He said after a week the family members were praying for the recovery of the dead bodies of their loved ones. The heirs of the family members of the victims were also present outside the mine when the dead bodies were retrieved. The dead bodies would be handed over to the

heirs of the victims, Syed Saboor Agha, the District Police Officer (DPO) Dukki said. The dead bodies of the hapless coal miners were shifted to the Dukki district headquarter's hospital. A large number of fellow coal miners and the heirs of the victims also reached the hospital. Hazardous working

conditions have claimed scores of precious human lives in Dukki and other parts of Balochistan. Rights groups and labourers unions have demanded of the government to improve working conditions for the coal miners working in coal mines of the province.

Teachers hunger strike enters 8th day outside Balochistan Assembly

Manan Mandokhail

QUETTA: Government teachers hunger to death strike outside the Balochistan Assembly entered 8th day on Wednesday. Eleven teachers have been observing hunger till death strike outside the provincial assembly to mount pressure on the government for acceptance for their 22 points demands.

"Upgradation of teachers is our main demand", Muhammad Siddique Mashwani, one of the central leaders of the Government Teachers Association Balochistan (GTAB) said. He said despite repeated appeals and requests, the



provincial government was reluctant to issue the upgradation order of teachers.

30,000 teachers to benefit from upgradation

In Balochistan, 30,000 junior teachers would benefit from the upgradation. Mr. Mashwani informed. Scores of teachers and office-bearers of other associations were also present outside the Balochistan Assembly.

Provincial ministers and members of the provincial assembly also

visited the teachers on hunger strike assured resolution of their problems. "We support all demands of the teachers", Arif Jan Muhammad Hassani, a lawmaker from the ruling Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) said.

Lawmakers ask government to take notice of teachers strike outside the assembly

He however urged the government and especially the education department to take notice of the strike observed by the teachers community outside the assembly.

"Someone should listen and resolve the grievances of protesting teachers", Muhammad Hassani said. The condition of two teachers on hunger strike also deteriorated. The teachers were provided medical treatment inside the protest camp. An ambulance was also parked outside the camp by the health department to provide all basic facilities in the case of any emergency situation. GTAB has complained that all junior teachers were elevated in the rest of the country and the teachers of Balochistan were denied their rights. Teachers would also stage massive protest outside the assembly on the eve of the provincial budget. Habib ur Rehman Mardanzai, the GTAB Chief warned.

May 9 rioters to be given 'right to fair trial' in military courts

Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar on Wednesday said that suspects involved in May 9 mayhem would be given a "right to the fair trial" in military courts.

A large number of workers and supporters of PTI staged almost countrywide demonstrations on May 9 — when Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan was arrested by paramilitary troops on the directions of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in connection with an alleged corruption case.

The demonstrators destroyed public and private properties, attacked military installations, and the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi and the Lahore Corps Commander's House (Jinnah House) — and ransacked relief of-



tions and desecration of martyrs' monuments on May 9.

Cases in military courts will be "proceeded as per int'l conventions"

During an interaction with journalists today, Tarar said that the cases related to May 9 incidents will be heard in the military courts as per the international agreements. "Suspects will have the right to engage counsel of their choice," he said, adding that they will be allowed to present evidence INP-

'Biparjoy': Sherry Rehman urges caution as relief efforts continue

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister of Climate Change, Sherry Rehman Wednesday stated that the coalition government has taken proactive steps by establishing 75 relief camps throughout Karachi, as tropical cyclone "Biparjoy" threatens the coastal city.

While addressing a presser, the minister emphasized that camps are designed to assist affected individuals, particularly in the form of providing shelter and necessary supplies. She reassured the public that the projected path of the cyclone remains consistent with previous forecasts, urging resi-



dents to take necessary precautions. With the storm clocking in at a speed of 150 km/h, Rehman warned of the strong winds accompanying it. The impact of Biparjoy - a cyclone over

the Arabian Sea - is anticipated to be manifested through heavy rainfall, prompting the need for preparedness and vigilance among residents.

Recognizing the enormity of the task at hand, Minister Rehman acknowledged the challenges of forcibly evacuating and relocating a large number of people. She stressed the importance of cooperation between civil and military administrations in effectively carrying out relief efforts. In this regard, a meeting of the Prime Minister's Building Committee has been scheduled for today to streamline coordination and ensure efficient response mechanisms. Meanwhile, the Chairman of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has also issued INP-

Chances of Pakistan securing IMF bailout are 'dimming': Moody's

As the coalition government struggles to meet external debt obligations, Moody's Investor Service has warned that Pakistan is at an increased risk of failing to restart its \$6.7 billion bailout programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), putting the country closer to a sovereign default.

"There are increasing risks that Pakistan may be unable to complete the IMF programme that expires at the end of June," a sovereign analyst with the rating company in Singapore Grace Lim said.

Pakistan may not be able to complete the IMF programme

Pakistan is making a final effort to revive its IMF pro-



gramme, with a financing gap of \$2 billion and exchange rate policy among the biggest hurdles. While the government has pledged to meet billions of debt obligations, investors have remained sceptical about the nation's dollar bonds trading in the distressed territory since last year. Pakistan faces about \$23 billion of external debt payments for the fiscal year 2023-24, which is July.

"Pakistan could default," says sovereign analyst with Moody's

The rupee, which is trading near a record low against the dollar, may face further downward pressure. Lim said in an emailed response to questions. The IMF's comments on the exchange rate likely referred to the gap in the interbank and retail markets, she said. The local currency has lost more than 20% this year after officials devalued the currency in January, making it one of the worst performers globally. Pakistan's financing options beyond June are highly uncertain. INP

School attacked in Mastung Balochistan

From Our Correspondent

A school was attacked in Balochistan's Mastung city on Wednesday. Police sources said unknown accused lobbed a hand grenade at the Taleem Foundation School, which fortunately exploded outside the school. Teachers and students were inside their classes when the hand grenade exploded with big bang. The incident happened in Sarawan Town Major Chowk Mastung. Police reached the spot and started an investigation into the incident. The attackers sped away on their motorcycle after the attack. Security was tightened in and outside the school after the hand grenade attack. Panic prevailed among the students and teachers after the attack.



Pakistan's economic research

Editor Asim Khan

The forgotten flood affectees of Balochistan

Almost a year on, thousands of flood affected people are yet to be rehabilitated in various flood-hit districts of Balochistan. In scorching heat, the flood affectees in Balochistan's Naserabad, Jafferabad, Sohbat Pur, Lasbela and other districts continue to suffer.

Flood affectees appeals for rehabilitation and relief almost fell on deaf ears in the province and their work was very shocking for every sane person that the federal government has not paid a single penny out of a total amount of Rs.10 billions announced by the prime minister Shehbaz Sharif for flood affectees of Balochistan.

Islamabad yet to pay a single penny out of Rs.10 billions announced by Prime Minister.

Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Qudus Bizenjo lodged a protest before the federal government regarding the financial crisis of Balochistan and demanded the payment of funds announced by the premier on August 28 last year in Jafferabad district for flood affectees.

The current year's monsoon season is about to start and neither the provincial nor the federal government has announced an effective steps for the rehabilitation of the flood affectees of the last year.

All abandoned flood affectees of Balochistan Government departments in general and the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) in particular have almost abandoned the flood affected areas. The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have spread about the areas affected by floods.

If the federal government has not paid any penny for the rehabilitation of the flood affectees, this is painful. This is also a bitter reality that the provincial government has also not taken effective steps to support the affectees in this hour of trial.

Collapse of bridges after devastating floods are yet to be reconstructed in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan, which covers half of the country in terms of area.

It is both the responsibility of the provincial and federal governments to take effective steps to rehabilitate the flood affectees before it is already late.

By Syed Asad Ali Shah Pakistan is currently facing the most challenging conditions in history, with a severe economic crisis compounded by political uncertainty. The economy is facing stagnation as it is expected to shrink 0.4 per cent compared to the current year. Current expenditure is budgeted at Rs13.3 trillion, up 52 per cent from the original budget and 27 per cent compared to the revised estimate for the current year. The biggest item in the budget is obviously interest on debt of Rs7.3 trillion, 85 per cent higher than the original budget for the current year. The country is also encountering the most devastating floods last year that affected over one-third of the population, and has been impacted by the consequences of the Russia-Ukraine war.

Adding to the difficulties is the need to revise the IMF programme, which is essential for receiving loans from international institutions and maintaining some confidence of the rest of the world in its progress towards stabilization of balance of payments. At the same time, three major credit rating agencies have downgraded Pakistan's rating to near-default status. In this context, it is astonishing that the finance minister has presented a hugely expansionary budget for FY24, with total federal government expenditure of Rs14.4 trillion, 50 per cent more than the original budget for the current year. The budget targets a fiscal deficit of 6.5 per cent and primary surplus of 0.4 per cent compared to the original budget and 27 per cent compared to the revised estimate for the current year. The biggest item in the budget is obviously interest on debt of Rs7.3 trillion, 85 per cent higher than the original budget for the current year. The country is also encountering the most devastating floods last year that affected over one-third of the population, and has been impacted by the consequences of the Russia-Ukraine war.

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Pakistan's AI and technological race

By Shaza Arif With an era marked by technological innovations and significant breakthroughs across different fields, the transformation and progress of artificial intelligence is shaping a whole new reality defining the bounds of our expectations.

For this reason, states worldwide are awakening to the never-ending potential of this technology, which is evident from the fact that many countries have already launched their national AI policies in this regard, with 69 countries now with active policy initiatives.

Over the last few years, it has been repeatedly highlighted at various events that Pakistan needs to be more receptive to AI and embrace it to ensure national competitiveness and improve the life of its citizens. Finally, the state has shown its inclination towards embracing the potential of this technology, as shown by the launch of the National AI Policy of Pakistan by the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecom.

The 41-page document highlights the goals of instilling AI competencies and transforming Pakistan into a technology empowered nation. The policy aims to create public awareness regard-

ing AI, develop skilled workforce, invest in research and development, establish a regulatory framework, and promote centres of excellence in the field of AI. It also pushes for launching national projects in AI to address the ever-evolving challenges, ensure responsible use of AI, and promote the best practices, and support accessibility to AI models. Finally, it aims to transform the public sector with AI, provide technical support and enable academia with the technology.

At its core, the policy directives are based on four pillars, namely, awareness, creating AI enablement and readiness, and implementing a program of innovation and transformation and evolution.

One of the national AI policy is a positive development and a crucial requirement. The policy is comprehensive and provides a detailed roadmap regarding integrating the technology across various sectors. It is worth noting that it particularly aims at transforming areas such as agriculture and manufacturing. The policy aims to create public awareness regard-

Pakistan's economic growth. The emphasis on employment of AI in public services, including healthcare, education and agriculture, has the potential to make public service delivery more efficient. It is also encouraging to see that the inclusion of women in the trajectory towards AI has been prioritized in the policy document.

Drafting the policy has marked an important milestone for Pakistan, as it is the first of its kind. However, towering challenges lie ahead on the path to realizing the policy's potential and witnessing positive results in Pakistan.

First, the policy has been formalized in the absence of specific laws, leading to rising doubts about its credibility. Apart from the lack of legislative support, Technology and Telecom, the involvement of relevant ministries such as Agriculture and Industry, and the Ministry of Science and Technology is lacking, casting a shadow of doubt on the effectiveness of the policy and suggesting lack of coherent effort towards the cause. In addition, the proposed timelines appear considerably tight, making implementation an unfortunate task. Complicating matters further, Pakistan is

facing economic challenges. The emphasis on employment of AI in public services, including healthcare, education and agriculture, has the potential to make public service delivery more efficient. It is also encouraging to see that the inclusion of women in the trajectory towards AI has been prioritized in the policy document.

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Pakistan's IMF borrowing like grown-ups

By Dr. Abid Qayyum Suleri

The ongoing talks between the PDM-coalition government and the IMF have survived the avoidable road on Chaudhry Pervaz Elahi's resignation.

Irrespective of the outcome of these talks, the fact that the IMF and political opponents have agreed to disagree amicably is welcome news. It also indicates virtually no inflow of foreign currency loans, thus more stringent negotiations. The IMF also indicates virtually no inflow of foreign currency loans, thus more stringent negotiations. The IMF also indicates virtually no inflow of foreign currency loans, thus more stringent negotiations.

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Teach the girls of Pakistan a new way of surviving

By Taimur K. Bandyopadhyay

By most accounts, 2023 seems to be election year for Pakistan. In this case, all political parties will prepare their manifestos and go into the campaigning mode. Media, civil society and even rival political parties will scan the manifestos and raise questions on many of their salient features. This time, what the political parties must add and what all political parties must talk about is the education of the girls of Pakistan.

The most important thing for any political party is to focus on the more than 23 million out-of-school children. This is, by no means, a small number at all. This means a catastrophic future if this untapped and wasted human resource isn't educated.

Girls continue to be left out as the larger percentage of the millions of out-of-school children. This requires a more targeted specific policy and action.

be done in local/regional languages and the state party of Pakistan should use to drive this thought vehemently into the households of the country. The focus on female education in manifestos and election campaigns is just a starting point. The idea is to take this noise into parliament and government offices, and even when in opposition.

Political parties need to treat women's education as a priority not just for the optics but also for the economic reasons. Pakistan has wasted enough of more than half of its workforce in the name of shame, honour, religion, social pressures, a catastrophic future and political negligence.

Today's Pakistan should not even see this as an option but a complex task that we are already late on. It requires financial, social and political opportunity cost of not educating our women has been disastrous. This is the root cause of many social and economic problems that we are facing today. Thus it is time to deliberate upon it and chalk out what can be done to promote education for the girls in Pakistan.

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Dams pipeline solves drinking water problem in Gwadar: GDA

GWADAR. The completion of a 58km pipeline, constructed to channel water from the Shal Kor and Sada dams, has successfully resolved the water scarcity...

Govt urged to expedite land acquisition process for Surgical City in Sialkot

ISLAMABAD. Sialkot, a city known for its world-class surgical instrument industry, is set to witness a significant transformation and rapid growth with the establishment of a surgical city...



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal chaired a meeting to review the progress of projects in Gwadar.

Huawei contributes to multilevel digital transformation across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD. Huawei contributes to multilevel digital transformation across Pakistan, with total 3,200 local employees. Currently, Pakistan is undergoing a period of Internet and digital services booming...

Four shot dead in Khyber district

BARA. Unidentified culprits shot dead four people, over unknown dispute in tribal Bara district Khyber of Pakhtunkhwa province on Wednesday...

Property dispute claims man's life in Okara

OKARA. Armed men shot dead one person over property dispute in suburban village 39A-L of Okara, police said on Wednesday...

Two youth killed, another injured in dumper-bike collision

FAISALABAD. Two youth were killed while a teenager injured after an over speeding dumper knocked down a motorcycle here on Wednesday...

Exhibitions play key role in promoting exports: DG

ISLAMABAD. Director General Defense Export Promotion Organization (DEPO) Major General Azhar Iqbal Abbas has said that exhibitions play a key role in the development and promotion of exports of nations...



ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary Health Iftikhar Ali shalhwani visits PIMS Hospital OPD.

Pakistan ranks 2nd top supplier for CPenny with its cost-quotable competitive products

WASHINGTON DC. Senior Vice President, global sourcing and product development of renowned US departmental store chain CPenny, Wayne Milano has said that Pakistan is ranked second in global sourcing for CPenny...

Two girls tortured by stepmother in Karachi, rescued

KARACHI. Police on Wednesday claimed to have recovered two girls who were being subjected to brutal torture by their stepmother and father in Karachi...

Fawad Chaudhry summoned on June 17 in case of inciting institutions to revolt

ISLAMABAD. A local court of Islamabad has summoned former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Fawad Chaudhry on June 17 in a case of inciting institutions to revolt...



KARACHI: Pakistan Navy personnel give first aid to fisherman after rescue out at sea during 'Rescue & Relief operations at Creeks area amid Tropical Cyclone BIPARJOY.

Saif Power's losses soar in QCY23 on heavy finance costs: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD. Saif Power Limited (SPWL) net loss increased to Rs100 million in the first quarter (January-March) of the ongoing calendar year 2023 compared to the net loss of Rs29 million over the same period of 2022...

Galloping inflation bogs down Pakistan's construction sector: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD. The galloping inflation has slowed down the construction industry of Pakistan as spiraling prices have increased costs, delayed projects and reduced investments in the sector...



KARACHI: Pakistan Navy personnel evacuate local populace of creek and coastal area during 'Rescue & Relief operations at Creeks area amid Tropical Cyclone BIPARJOY.

Pakistan-Russia trade in RBM, the beginning of de-dollarisation movement: Experts

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan-Russia trade in RBM is the beginning of de-dollarisation movement, Gwadar Proponent on Wednesday quoting Experts.

On June 11, Pakistan received its first shipment of Russian crude oil, a cargo carrying 45,000 metric tonnes, from the southern city of Karachi. The payment for this historic strategic international partnership, based on G2G, was made in Chinese currency RBM, according to an official statement.

Leading Pakistani economists believe this move will decrease Pakistan's reliance on the US dollar, marking the beginning of an international de-dollarisation movement.

State Minister for Petroleum, Musadik Malik, termed the arrival of the first Russian oil cargo in 75 years as a 'major development' on Tuesday (June 13). He stated, "We have purchased 100,000 tons of Urals (second lightest crude oil) from Russia."

The arrival of this cargo signifies the beginning of a continued import of crude oil from Russia. "Our target is to import one-third of our required oil from Russia, and we intend to pass on the discount to the consumers."

In an interview with Gwadar Pro, Professor Dr. Ashfaq Hussain, Dean of Business School, National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, echoed Malik's ideas. He called the purchase of

Russian crude oil in RBM a 'major development', saying it would reduce Pakistan's 'dependence on the dollar'.

He further added, "This is the first time that in international trade we are using Chinese currency as a current-currency of international settlement. This is just the beginning of the de-dollarisation movement."

Dr. Hassan also noted that many other countries were also trading using currencies other than the US dollar. He stated, "This is part of the de-dollarisation move which is going on at the international level; the United States has been using economic sanctions as an instrument of war or punishment against other countries. I think this is just a reaction to that. The business deal between Gwadar and Islamabad in RBM, according to him, should serve as a wake-up call to the United States, hopefully curbing the use of economic sanctions as a war tactic. Dr. Zilakhan Malik, a renowned economist at the Department of Economics, University of Peshawar, says that trading between Russia and Pakistan in RBM will "definitely reduce the burden on Pakistan's dollar."

Gwadar Pro, "Pakistan and China have good trade relationships; it will be beneficial for the country if payments are made in the respective currencies of these countries instead of dollars." Zilakhan Malik also revealed that Pakistan, China, Iran, and Russia recently signed an agreement to conduct trade via a barter system, exchanging goods for goods and eliminating currency involvement.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif inaugurates 7th Avenue Interchange on Srinagar Highway.

NDMA sets up monitoring cell to keep an eye on Biparjoo movement

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority, Islamabad has set up a monitoring cell in the wake of Cyclone Biparjoo.

The movement of the tropical storm is being monitored from the NASA satellite on big screens. The authority claims the storm will change its direction in the afternoon today. After changing the direction, Biparjoo will head to Kett Bandar instead of Karachi.

The storm is raging in the sea at a speed of 100 kilometers per hour. The waves at the central point of the cyclone have started to rise to 30 to 40 feet, as per the NDMA.

Tropical Cyclone Warning Center Director Zubair Ahmad has said that the Biparjoo is a category-3 storm at most, and by tomorrow it will reduce in intensity to category-2.

Karachi could face a flood-like situation tomorrow, he said, adding the sea may be in flood tomorrow.

Shah Farman's house raided, two vehicles taken into custody

PESHAWAR: A joint raid was conducted at house of former Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Shah Farman in Peshawar on Wednesday and two vehicles were impounded.

The police and excise department conducted raid at Shah Farman's house who had gone underground after violent incidents of May 9 in reaction to arrest of the Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

The excise department officials said that laboratory test of the impounded vehicles would be conducted. It is worth mentioning here that police was conducting raids for arrest of Shah Farman and other PTI leaders including Mirza Saad, Mian Aslam Iqbal and Hamid Azhar who went underground after May 9 vandalism. INP

Tribal Jirga bans dowry ritual in Buner

BUNER: A tribal Jirga in consensus imposed complete ban on the tradition of dowry in district Buner of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Wednesday.

A tribal Jirga that was held by a large number of tribesmen, religious scholars was organized in village Anzar, Tehsil Chitral, district Buner to discuss the major hurdles in organizing the wedding of youngsters especially girls which often lead to illegal and immoral acts.

The attendees were in consensus that dowry ritual was the major reason in delay or complete halt in organizing the wedding ceremonies of young girls. Speaking on the occasion, the members of the Jirga said that population of Buner was leading life before poverty line and in this situation dowry poses the marriages of girls. They said that dowry tradition was against the Quran and Sunnah besides it puts additional burden on the parents. The Jirga in consensus imposed complete ban on dowry in relative area and vowed to extend its limits to maximum areas. INP

Karachi police kill Lyari gangster in encounter

KARACHI: Police shot dead a street criminal during an alleged encounter in Gulshan Iqbal area of Karachi, police confirmed on Wednesday.

According to reports, the police party was chasing the gangster to arrest him as he was wanted by the police in several cases. Police on tip off, reached his hideout, on seeing the police the suspect opened fire. Police retaliated and exchanged fire took place leading to killing of the suspect.

Police said the suspect was involved in Lyari gang war and was booked under several cases of heinous crimes such as murder, attempt to murder, robbery, and other crimes.

Police took the dead body into custody and shifted it to a hospital for further medico-legal formalities. INP

Pakistan's beef export to China helps overcome balance of payments crisis: Officials

BEIJING: Pakistan's beef export to China helps overcome balance of payments crisis, said Ghulam Qadir, Commercial Counsellor of the Pakistani Embassy.

China, an all-weather friend of Pakistan, has once again extended its help to assist Pakistan in overcoming its balance of payments crisis by permitting the import of heat-treated beef from Pakistan.

Qadir confirmed that the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC) has granted Pakistan beef the access to the Chinese market, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Wednesday.

This news holds significant implications for both countries, as China is one of the world's largest meat importers, and Pakistan is a prominent beef exporter.

The Pakistani ambassador to China Moïn ul Haque expressed his elation via Twitter, stating, "Chinese Customs has issued a notification to allow the export of Pakistan's bottled beef to China."

This development marks a significant milestone in Sino-Pakistan bilateral trade. It presents Pakistani exporters with a big opportunity to tap into the \$15 billion Chinese market.

Qadir told Gwadar Pro that Pakistan, already a significant beef exporter, will see its economy boosted by this new market. For China, the move will help meet the country's growing demand for meat and provide greater variety for its consumers.

This is major news for Pakistan and opens up a \$15 billion market and provides a great opportunity to enhance its exports. It will also have positive macro-economic implications for Pakistan's balance of payments," Qadir told Gwadar Pro that the GACC INP

Students celebrate 'Chinese Culture Hour' in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: The 'Chinese Culture Hour' exchange and exhibition was held at COMSATS University Islamabad to foster cultural exchange between Pakistan and China.

Constructing a cultural bridge and highlighting the vibrant and diverse Chinese culture, the students showcased knowledge of Chinese calligraphy, tai chi, kung fu, cuisine, tongue twisters, and Chinese music.

According to Gwadar Pro, the university campus buzzed with the vibrant atmosphere of Chinese culture as students eagerly displayed their knowledge and appreciation. The calligraphy art demonstrated the charm of Chinese characters, skillfully explaining the meaning behind each stroke to the captivated audience. The performances of tai chi and kung fu embodied the essence of traditional Chinese martial arts,

showcasing the students' excellent body control and graceful movements, which garnered the admiration of the audience.

In the food exhibition area, a variety of delicious Chinese cuisine delighted the senses. The students demonstrated their exquisite culinary skills by preparing dishes such as spicy chicken, dumplings, fried noodles, and fried rice. They ingeniously incorporated elements from local cuisine, adding a unique touch. Tongue twisters and music performances contribute to the joyous and lively atmosphere.

The students eloquently spoke Chinese and delivered melodious tunes, showcasing the diverse and enchanting facets of Chinese culture. To further support the university's Chinese culture education, a carefully curated collection of books encompassing various aspects of Chinese culture was presented to offer students INP

700MW Azad Pattan hydropower project ready for construction: Energy China

ISLAMABAD: Wang Huihua, Managing Director of China Energy Int'l Group's Pakistan Branch, announced that the 700-megawatt Azad Pattan hydropower project, run by Energy China, is ready for construction after the completion of a feasibility study and land acquisition.

Wang made these remarks at the Pakistan Energy Sector Landscape: Challenges & Opportunities conference held at NUST University, Islamabad. He explained that the project would provide cheap, clear energy to Pakistan. "We have been developing this project for six years. We hope the government would give it more priority in the China-Pakistan Economic

Corridor (CPEC) initiative to expedite financial closure," he said. He further stated that Energy China believed that investing in renewable energy in Pakistan was financially viable. "We are committed to setting up our long-term operation in Pakistan and investing more," he said. He highlighted that Energy China Engineering Corp (Energy China) has been present in Pakistan for the past 20 years. "Energy China considers Pakistan as its favored investment destination," he added. Wang also pointed out some of the challenges faced by foreign investors in Pakistan, underscoring the importance of realizing the CPEC initiative quickly to foster win-win cooperation. INP

China sets good example upgrading Pakistan's herbal medicine industry

ISLAMABAD: "More herbs can be cultivated in Pakistan. Pakistan has the potential to play a leading role in the export of herbs in the world," said Hakeem Pakistan, head of Development in Hamdard Laboratories of Pakistan.

The development of herbal medicine industry can not only increase the medicine care standards of the country but also play a role in the economy, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Wednesday.

In recent years, many towns and villages in China have cultivated and graded local people to cultivate herbal medicine, which helped increase their income and become rich.

"Our land used to be barren and drought, which is not suitable for planting traditional cash crops. So we encouraged farmers to use barren slopes and forest land to plant herbs." At present, more than 300 people in the area are engaged in herbal medicine cultivation, and the village has set up a rural cooperative to help promote local herbal medicine industry.

"Pakistan can produce the best herbs in the world. However, the herbs we use are not only local-produced but also imported from all over the world," Hakeem noted. Pakistan's herbal medicine industry can benefit a lot from its considerable climatic variety.

World Bank approves \$200m aid for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank (WB) approved \$200 million emergency financing for Pakistan for repairing infrastructure which was damaged in floods.

According to the World Bank's statement reported on Wednesday, the WB has approved the \$200 million for the uplift of the country's infrastructure during devastating floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The aid will be transferred to the State Bank of Pakistan's account in the upcoming days.

After Pakistan after the last year floods, decided to reach out to global lenders, including International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and others for monetary assistance to meet with the devastating floods in the country.

According to the statement, the global lenders were conveyed a joint report of NDMA, finance and planning and development ministries over losses during the floods. INP

Bar Associations observe strike over acquittal of 'killer'

OKARA: After the acquittal of an alleged perpetrator involved in the murder of a lawyer's brother by police, the Bar Associations of three districts announced strike in protest on Wednesday.

According to the reports, Okara, Sahiwal and Pakpattan District Bar Associations announced to hold strike after the accused was acquitted in murdering the brother of Advocate Arif Baloch, a member of District Bar Okara.

In a statement issued by the lawyers' associations, it was stated that the suspects are being declared innocent by the lawyers' associations. The President of District Bar Association Okara strongly condemned the police conduct. INP

Police arrest 17 visitors from beaches amid cyclone threat

KARACHI: Police arrested 17 visitors from the coastal locations in Karachi for violation of the Section 144 that was imposed by local administration amid threats of tropical cyclone Biparjoo.

According to the sources, The Commissioner of Karachi imposed ban to bar the citizens from visiting the beaches as preventive measures after the issuance of alerts by the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) in this regard.

Police officials said cases had been registered against all the 17 people for defying the Section 144. They would be presented before a court for further legal proceedings.

On the other hand, District administration has vacated 36 buildings, which are declared dangerous in the north region while shops in these buildings have been sealed. The deputy commissioner north has also sealed all restaurants located on beaches.

The authorities have also set up shelter houses in Aram Bagh, Sadder, Lyari, Civil Line sub-divisions as mass evacuation centers for the people in the coastal areas. Furthermore, a contingency plan has been devised to handle any untoward situation.

With less intensity the tropical cyclone 'Biparjoo' is hardly 300 kilometers away from Sindh's port Kett Bandar, the National Disaster Management Authority said in its latest update on Wednesday.

According to the latest NDMA forecast, tropical cyclone has weakened into a 'Very Severe Cyclonic Storm' (VSCS) - Category 3, with sustained wind speeds of 140-150 km/h and gusts up to 170 km/h. INP

PM Sharif inaugurates, lays foundation stone of uplift projects

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday inaugurated and laid down the foundation stone of several development projects in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

PM Shehbaz Sharif inaugurated the Seventh Avenue overhead bridge at the Srinagar Highway. The project has been completed within 12 months.

There are four loops of the Seventh Avenue overhead bridge and the length of the underpass is 615 meters. The bridge connects Sector G-7 and G-6, which has added to the beauty of the Srinagar Highway.

Later, the premier attended the opening ceremony of the reconstructed IIP Road and also performed the groundbreaking of 11th Avenue.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

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Sindh leads in internet penetration in Pakistan: WealthPK

ISLAMABAD: Sindh province of Pakistan has emerged as a leader in internet penetration among the rest of the provinces, with a 22.17% penetration rate.

Sindh is followed by the Punjab province which has an internet penetration rate of 19.7%. Afterwards comes the provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with internet penetration of 14.73% and 14.30%, respectively.

According to a working paper by TabadLab, a think-tank based in Islamabad titled "Digital Now: A Guide to Pakistan's Digital Transformation," the state of Pakistan's digital ecosystem is trying to be better.

Although there are some notable gains in terms of policy initiatives and tech infrastructure globally, Pakistan ranks low among the countries with respect to digital transformation.

For example, there are no special technology zones (STZs) in Sindh and Balochistan, whereas there is only one in Punjab. It is Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which leads other provinces in STZs with only two operational zones. Punjab and KP have their own digital policies as special zone authorities towards the Draft-PITB, whereas KP has the "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Digital Policy (Khyber Digital Policy) 2020-25" and Sindh provinces, they do not have provincial digital policies in the first place, which indicates a lack of concern on part of provincial authorities towards the need and importance of digital technologies. Overall, on the penetration and quality of internet connectivity, Pakistan has a score of 0.9 on a scale from 1 to 10, according to the Fibre Development Index 2020. Pakistan's score on the Fibre Development Index is the same as Nigeria's, which lies on the lowest rung of digital development. INP