

QUETTA VOICE

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Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti speaking during the assembly session: Photo provided by the DGPR

2 Soldiers Martyred As Mob Attacks Security Forces In Gwadar: ISPR

NEWS DESK:

QUETTA: A violent mob in garb of so called Baloch Raji Machi assaulted Security Forces' personnel employed for security duties in Gwadar district. Resultantly, Sepoy Shabbir Baloch (Age: 30 years; resident of District Sibi), embraced shahadat, the military's media wing said on Monday.

In addition, the unprovoked assaults by the violent protesters have resulted in injuries to

sixteen soldiers including an officer, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) stated. While on the other hand, fake

and malicious propaganda is being spread on social media using doctored pictures and videos by the propagandists to gain sympathy and

support for the unlawful violent march, the ISPR mentioned.

Security forces have displayed extreme restraint to avoid unwarranted civilian casualties despite provocations.

The violent actions of the mob are unacceptable and those responsible will be brought to justice.

All citizens are urged not to fall prey to the propaganda, remain calm and peaceful,

and to cooperate with law enforcement agencies in maintaining public safety and order.

Security Forces of Pakistan, in step with the Nation, remain determined to thwart attempts of sabotaging peace and stability of Balochistan.



CM Bugti: Gwadar Protests a Conspiracy Against CPEC, Rejects Terrorism and Extremism

Manan Mandokhail:

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti has labeled the Baloch Raji Machi protests in Gwadar as a deliberate conspiracy against the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. Addressing the provincial assembly, Bugti emphasized the government's commitment to democracy and peaceful resolution of issues but condemned any acts of terrorism and ex-

tremism. "The situation in Gwadar has been brought under control thanks to the intervention of security forces," Bugti stated. He revealed that 16 Frontier Corps (FC) soldiers were injured during the unrest, underscoring the seriousness of the situation. The Chief Minister accused the Baloch Yekjehti Committee (BYC) of exploiting the protests to pursue a dangerous agenda, sug-

gesting that their actions were not merely about local grievances but had broader implications for the stability of the region. Bugti reiterated that the government remains open to dialogue but will not tolerate actions that threaten national security or the integrity of the state. He called for calm and urged all parties to work towards a peaceful and constructive resolution.



Mir Sadiq Umrani: No Tolerance for Terrorism, Emphasizes Stability of Pakistan Amid Gwadar Protests

staff Reporter:

QUETTA: Senior Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Mir Sadiq Umrani has reaffirmed the party's stance on maintaining Pakistan's stability and rejecting terrorism, amidst ongoing protests in Gwadar, Balochistan. Speaking on the situation, Umrani stressed the importance of democracy, peace, and dialogue as the means to resolve the current issues.

"We are committed to democracy and the rule of law," Umrani stated. "Having spent ten years imprisoned for these values, I understand the importance of constitutional supremacy." He further clarified that while the PPP seeks peaceful resolutions to Balochistan's challenges, no one would be allowed to disrupt public order or threaten the stability of Pa-

kistan. His comments come as the Baloch Yekjehti Committee (BYC) continues its protests in Gwadar, with demands that have led to heightened tensions in the region. Umrani's message underscores the broader political consensus on the need for maintaining national security while addressing local grievances through negotiation and dialogue.

TLP vice emir booked under terrorism law as govt vows 'iron' action on threats to top judge

NEWS DESK: Pir Zabeerul Hasan Shah, the vice-emir of Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), has been booked in a terrorism case, it emerged on Monday, as the government vowed an "iron fist" response to elements inciting violence against a top judge. The development comes after the TLP held a series of gatherings last week in various parts of the country against the Supreme Court's judgement in the Maharaj Sani case, which was recently reviewed by the apex court in light of a plea filed by the Punjab government. Sani was booked under sections 7 and 9 of the Punjab Holy Quran (Printing and Recording) Act, 2011, for a crime he allegedly committed in 2019. However, the Supreme Court had ruled that the said provisions were made part of the law in 2021, two years after the crime was allegedly committed.

At one of the gatherings outside the Lahore Press Club, where TLP chief Saad Rizvi was also in attendance, Shah had delivered remarks amounting to incitement of violence against Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa. While the party vice emir had clarified that he was speaking in a personal capacity, the remarks drew immediate condemnation from official circles. The TLP vice-emir, along with

1,400-1,500 unnamed suspects, was booked by Lahore's Oha Gujjar Singh police last night, according to the first information report (FIR), a copy of which is available with Dawn.com.

The FIR, filed on the complaint of Station House Officer Hammad Hussain, was registered under sections 6 (terrorism), 7 (punishment for acts of terrorism), and 11W (printing, publishing, or disseminating any material to incite hatred or giving projection to any person convicted for a terrorist act or any proscribed organisation or an organisation placed under observation) of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997.

It further invoked sections 337(i) (shajah, intentionally causing hurt), 337(ii), 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation), 116 (abatement of offence), 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 505(ii) (statements conducing to public mischief), 148 (rioting, armed with deadly weapon), 149 (every member of unlawful assembly guilty of offence), 290 (public nuisance) and 291 (continuance of nuisance after injunction to discontinue) of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC).

In the FIR, the complainant said he was performing his duties at the Lahore Press Club where the TLP event was taking place.



Protests Erupt Following Alleged Use of Force and Arrests in Gwadar

Syed Ali Shah, Behram Baloch, Abdullah Lehr:

QUETTA: The Baloch Yekjehti Committee (BYC) has called for widespread protests throughout Balochistan following the arrest of several members in Gwadar and allegations of excessive force by security forces.

Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti addressed the provincial assembly, characterizing the protests as an attempt to undermine the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. He claimed that efforts to destabilize Gwadar had failed and announced that the situation had been brought under control. "We are ready to hold negotiations to find an amicable solution to the protest," Mir Sarfaraz Bugti stated during the assembly session.

"We Are Ready To Hold Negotiations", Sarfaraz Bugti

Dr. Mahrang Baloch, leader of the Baloch Unity Committee, reported a tense situation in Gwadar, with communication networks down. Dr. Baloch, who had converted a rally into a sit-in, expressed concern over the unknown status of those arrested and reports indicating that the bodies of deceased protesters were being held in hospitals without public access.

A key meeting chaired by Balochistan Home Minister Zainul Langove, and attended by officials including DIG Naseerabad Range Ayaz Baloch, ADC Gwadar Sarabland Khosa,

and AC Gwadar Jawad Zehri, concluded with statements asserting that law enforcement had successfully managed the situation, resulting in the arrest of more than 20 individuals.

Sibghatullah Shahji, Sami Deen Baloch, Arrested

The Baloch Solidarity Committee, whose leaders Sibghatullah Shahji, Sami Deen Baloch, and Dr. Saalhi were reportedly detained, has not yet received official updates on their status. Dr. Mahrang Baloch has called for support from human rights organizations against what she termed a "planned action," advocating for a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

During the assembly session, Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) from Gwadar, Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman, called for dialogue with the protesters and condemned all forms of violence. He expressed frustration, stating, "I am an elected MPA from Gwadar, but the government has not bothered to consult me regarding the protest."

Security Tight In Gwadar

Government and law enforcement officials emphasize their openness to negotiations while maintaining their commitment to ensuring national security and public order.

Challenges and Reforms in Balochistan's Higher Education

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NA Body annoyed over non-appointment of MD PBM

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PM Shehbaz orders steps for safety of people amid heavy rains

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Challenges and Reforms in Balochistan's Higher Education

Editor: Asim Khan

Gas Injustice Chronicles: Sui Southern Gas Company Under Scrutiny

Editorial:
As the Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) awaits an impending judgment, it finds itself entangled in allegations that go beyond mere billing discrepancies. Increasing gas meter tampering exposes a systemic problem within the company in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan, prompting this editorial to underscore the urgent need for the SSGC to address these issues, especially in light of allegations linking some officials to major gas thefts.

A court order issued a few months ago forced to light the alarming rate of gas meter tampering, resulting in significant financial losses for the SSGC. These losses, coupled with allegations of illicit connections between certain officials and major gas thieves, unfairly burden the economically vulnerable. Unannounced load shedding, an unfortunate byproduct, exacerbating the challenges faced by consumers already grappling with inadequate gas pressure and exorbitant bills.

SSGC Must Acknowledge The Gravity Of The Situation
The SSGC must acknowledge the gravity of the situation and take immediate steps to rectify its practices. The alleged ties between the company and those involved in gas theft not only raise ethical concerns but also perpetuate a vicious cycle of inequality. These connections, whether direct or indirect, erode public trust and undermine the integrity of the entire energy sector.

The impending judgment marks a pivotal moment for the SSGC, going beyond financial implications for the company. This case will set a precedent for accountability within the energy sector, emphasizing the need for the SSGC to prioritize the welfare of its consumers and work towards restoring public trust in its operations.

Recent Protests In Quetta Underscore Urgency Of Situation
Recent protests in Quetta against overbilling and gas load shedding underscore the urgency of the situation. Allegations of disproportionate billing, variations in charges between regions, and inflated bills in Balochistan demand a thorough and transparent investigation. The company must demonstrate a commitment to fair and transparent billing for all consumers, regardless of their geographical location. Failure to address these issues not only harms the company's reputation but also deepens the existing trust deficit between the SSGC and its consumers.

Company Must Take Steps To Ensure Justice For Consumers
In conclusion, the Sui Southern Gas Company cannot afford to delay corrective measures any longer. The pursuit of gas justice necessitates immediate action, rectification of billing practices, and a commitment to transparency. Addressing these issues head-on is the only way for the SSGC to rebuild public trust and fulfill its responsibility to provide a reliable and equitable gas supply to all consumers.

The company must act swiftly to prevent further harm to its reputation and, more importantly, to ensure justice for its consumers.

Economic revival

By Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry:

IN 1992, Bill Clinton ran his campaign for US presidency on three slogans, one of which was "It's the economy, stupid!" It's the economy, stupid! In the backdrop of the economic downturn of the early 1990s, Clinton's focus on economic revival resonated well with his voters, and within three years, economic growth picked up. Ever since, the phrase "It's the economy, stupid!" has been used extensively to emphasize the pivotal role of economic management in a nation's prosperity.

In Pakistan today, the imperative of economic revival can hardly be overemphasised. For decades, we have been living beyond our means, collecting mountains of debt along the way. Interest payments consume the bulk of our revenues, and persistent loans are sought to run the government. Effectively, that means much of what the government takes in goes to service the debt, leaving little for development. Pursuant to the agreement with the IMF, the government plans to take the retail sector as part of its efforts to document the informal economy. This would certainly help broaden

the tax base. Opposite my house is a supermarket frequented by so many customers that I have rarely seen a cashier desk without a queue before it. Yet, when it comes to paying taxes, this shop, like many retailers, is reluctant to enter the tax net. We have yet to see our people need to realise that the roads we travel on, the public services we avail of, and the higher quality of life we desire can only be available if we pay taxes. An argument often made in response to the topic of increasing the tax net is that the revenue collected from the common man's taxes is used by high officials of the government to finance their over-extended lifestyles. When the energy sector, important but while broadening the tax base, the government must make an equally important contribution to cut wasteful public expense. However, we have yet to see any concrete proof of belt-tightening.

In a related issue, the NFC award adopted in 2010 increased the share of provinces from the net proceeds of divisible pool taxes to 57 per cent (2011-12 onwards). As debt obligations have continued to rise, the central government now finds itself severely constrained, and is left with no choice but to borrow or print more money.

Ghulam Ali Baloch:

In the landscape of Balochistan's higher education, several challenges have emerged, posing the educational prospects of its youth. These challenges, if not addressed promptly, could impede the region's progress and development. Here's an exploration of some pressing issues and potential avenues for reform:

1. Imbalance in Staffing Ratio: Investigations into the staffing levels across the 18th amendment reveal a concerning ratio of non-teaching staff to faculty members. The purported ratio of 0.8 non-teaching staff for every teaching faculty member is highly undesirable and warrants immediate attention.

2. Disbalance In Budget Allocation: The proliferation of new departments and the consequent budgetary strain has led to a disbalance in budget allocation, with higher education sector receiving a disproportionately smaller share. Funds earmarked for teaching and infrastructure development are not proportionately allocated, leading to inefficiencies.

3. Lack of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Funds: Contrary to global best practices, there is a notable absence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund management for sponsorships and higher education initiatives in Balochistan. Major investors and entities have made negligible contributions towards the advancement of higher education, posing a significant setback to educational progress.

4. Inadequate Resource Management: Internal dialogue and collaboration are essential for optimizing resource allocation and decision-making processes.

5. Absence of Internal Consultation: Lack of internal consultation exacerbates the mismanagement of resources. Outdated practices, such as the establishment of new campuses and departments without adequate consultation and decision-making processes.

6. Irrational Construction Projects: The Highways Department's inclination towards constructing large buildings for Research Centers (BRCs) and Cadet Colleges at exorbitant costs further strains the funds allocated for higher education. These expenditures compete with essential agricultural lands under the sector's overall progress.

7. Need for Institutional Re-alignment: Several institutions under the Higher Education Department require re-alignment to improve the quality of both school and college education. Outdated practices, such as the establishment of Intermediate Colleges, need to be re-evaluated in favor of modern educational structures that align with contemporary needs.

8. Modernization of Curriculum and Institutions: Many colleges struggle to adapt to the new curriculum introduced under the BS program, leading to redundancy and inefficiency. Transforming these colleges into centers for skill development or upgrading them to universities could better serve the educational needs of Balochistan's youth.

In conclusion, Balochistan's higher education sector faces multifaceted challenges that demand immediate attention and reform. By addressing staffing issues, reallocating budgets effectively, fostering corporate partnerships, enhancing resource management, promoting internal collaboration, rationalizing construction projects, realigning institutions, and modernizing curriculum and institutions, Balochistan can pave the way for a brighter educational future for its youth.

The author is a senior bureaucrat introduced under the BS program, leading to redundancy and inefficiency.

Targeting Chinese nationals

By Muhammad Amir Rana:

THE Shingla terrorist attack on the Chinese engineers' vehicle is having consequences. Chinese companies have suspended work on at least three critical hydro-power projects: the Diamer dam, the Diamer-Basha dam, and the Tarbela 5th Extension.

The attack has caused significant alarm. This apart from disrupting these vital infrastructure projects, it has shaken the confidence of Chinese nationals working in Pakistan. Reports indicate some are considering leaving the country due to safety concerns.

The Pakistani government has repeatedly pledged to bring the perpetrators to justice. However, the recent incident has eroded trust. Chinese social media reflects growing anxiety, with calls for stricter security measures to protect Chinese lives.

Whenever a major terrorist incident occurs in the country, the media, security experts, and even state institutions start to swing sweeping generalisations about the event, the culprits, their motives, and the terrorist groups that could have been involved in such incidents.

The first and most well-known excuse cited is foreign involvement in the attacks, especially those targeting Chinese nationals or CPEC-related projects. Three names of terrorist groups vying to mine Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Balochistan Liberation Army, and the Islamic State-Khorasan. They guess a specific group's involvement de-

pend on the region; these three groups have specific operational bases. The same is the case for the recent Shingla attack. The names of all three groups pop up immediately after the attack. The TTP has been projected as the prime suspect, as the commander-in-chief was declared the mastermind behind a similar attack on the Chinese in Karachi in 2017. The names of a few TTP commanders who may have orchestrated the attack are circulating in the media. Quickly jumping to conclusions distracts investigations and impacts the state's ability to tackle the security situation comprehensively.

The state's history of frequent terrorist incidents has emboldened them. Pakistan's militant groups are too complex but is diverse. Ideologies, sociopolitical factors, and local context and lower Kohistan, and Battagram districts of the Hazara region in KP and the Dera Ismail Khan district in Gilgit-Baltistan share religious, social, tribal, ethnic, and cultural codes. The region has been frequently in the news due to 'honour' killings, burning of girls' schools, and the killing of Shia travellers. Recently, it has gained notoriety for attacks on Chinese workers involved in development projects in the area.

The Deobandi school is dominant in the region and blends with conservative social traditions — and an end to women's sporting activities in GB for the minister's release. They tried to modernise the road because the state failed to honour a 2019 agreement, and issued a 60-day ultimatum for the government to meet their demands.

Although a prominent militant actor, it is not the only one in the region. The MGB and other local militant groups reportedly maintain close links with the TTP and sectarian outfits based in Punjab. These external groups appear to support local militants, as evidenced by the TTP's involvement in the 2022 Babasar Pass blockade. The state's history of compromise with militant groups has emboldened them. For instance, in the kidnapping incident, the administration agreed to ban girls' sports in the region. Similarly, a 2019 agreement had reportedly allowed for implementation of some Islamic laws to resolve them through local jirgas and by involving religious scholars. This can result in leniency towards criminals, with many extremists suggesting taking the law into their own hands.

The Mujahideen Gilgit-Baltistan and Kohistan (MGB) are a prime example. The group claimed responsibility for several incidents in Kohistan and Diamer districts.

In October 2022, it held a GB minister hostage. They demanded the release of terrorists — some of them had been involved in the 2013 terrorist attack on the Nanga Parbat base camp targeting foreign climbers — and an end to women's sporting activities in GB for the minister's release. They tried to modernise the road because the state failed to honour a 2019 agreement, and issued a 60-day ultimatum for the government to meet their demands.

While anti-development sentiments are not that high in the area, and wider roads will trigger urbanisation, women's emancipation, and modernisation, which they perceive as threats to their religion and culture. The dominant opinion suggests that most people are happy with the compensation money and employment prospects.

However, this doesn't diminish the level of religious extremism present. Some residents may sympathise with the Uighur community in Xinjiang, and others may dislike the presence of foreigners on their land. These factors could be nurturing negative perceptions about Chinese nationals in the region.

One possible explanation for the local dynamics is seen in the blasphemy accusation against a Chinese official that led to the killing of the incident highlighted that tensions could erupt.

While local groups may lack the capability to carry out large-scale attacks independently, the presence of religious scholars for mediation in crises can be problematic. Local accounts suggest some scholars may be sympathetic to the militants' demands, leading to partial concessions that create a perception of a 'win-win' scenario for militants and religious figures. This dynamic is not unique to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The government's strategy of outsourcing the means of order to local and external religious figures needs to be revised to address these sentiments. A more comprehensive approach is needed to calm tensions.

Sustainability of digital trade

By Hassan Nawaz Sheikh:

PAKISTAN'S ailing economy is undergoing a process of revival. The economic wizards have placed a lot of bets on IT in the hope that the enormous potential of this sector can help alleviate our economic woes. There have been claims by former federal IT ministers that Pakistan's exports would reach between \$10 billion to \$20bn from the existing mark of \$2.6bn within the next few years. The premise on which these claims are being made is that the IT sector has been recording consistent upward growth since the last few years.

The IT industry has gained further focus when it was picked up by the newly christened Special Investment Facilitation Council as one

of the five core areas on which Pakistan's economic revival is predicated. Under the auspices of SIFC, investment opportunities are available for setting up special technology zones (STZs) at seven prime locations including Lahore, Peshawar, Swat, Abbottabad, Haripur, Islamabad and Karachi. The Ministry of Information Technology & Tele-communication has also approved the establishment of 25 software technology parks (STPs) through Pakistan's Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) for public/private/owned/di-

plomatized or non-operational office buildings/start-ups would be provided IT-enabled/office spaces to IT and ITES companies at affordable rates. Digital Technology Zones Authority has also been set up under the Special Technology Zones Authority Act, 2021 that provides incentives for IT enterprises and zone developers for 10 years. These incentives include tax exemptions under the Income Tax Ordinance, 1990. Capital goods imports are exempt from taxes. There are no proprietary obligations. Most importantly, investment/repatriation freedom is granted. There's no doubt that the development of STZs/STPs is important to catalyse the emergence of digital and IT-related trade as more and more businesses and start-ups would be tempted to move their offices within these zones to avail tax benefits. However, these are just infrastructural develop-

ments at best, whereby, a conducive environment for setting up businesses is being provided. The term 'digital trade' has no clear definition, yet it is believed to refer to 'commerce and services' by electronic means in both goods and services'. The Digital Trade Principles, as agreed upon by 127 countries, cover five areas: (1) open digital markets; (2) data free flow with trust; (3) safety and security; (4) consumer, and business; (5) digital trading systems, and (6) far-reaching digital trade governance. While there is no clear measurement of this sector, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development estimates it to constitute approximately 10 per cent of the entire world trade. How-

ever, given how quickly this sector is expanding, the domestic regulatory environment will become increasingly restrictive, making it more difficult for consumers and businesses to seize some new and emerging opportunities. How are these problems to be tackled? How would a more advanced form of free trade agreements not be hampered by such problems? How will our domestic businesses meet new and emerging regulatory requirements as violations thereof might restrict their ability to compete with their customers? For all these key problems and other related issues, the government needs to have a robust and dynamic digital trade policy for sustainable growth in this sector. Digital economy trade agree-

ments: While digital trade policy would bring a holistic and competitive edge to our IT entrepreneurs so that they're able to compete at the international stage, digital trade agreements could be either bilateral and preferential market access. DTAs are just a niche market in the traditional free trade agreements. Whilst Pakistan is struggling to gain benefit from the European Union's trade policy, the developed world is moving swiftly towards the advanced form of economies — through the medium of DTAs — then we can keep our hopes high that sustainable and continued business will come our way and that would then justify our near-negligible growth of STZs.

Pakistan Army rescues six more foreign climbers from K2

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Army has rescued six more foreign mountaineers after they got sick while attempting to summit the towering K2 mountain, lies in Karakorum Range.

K2, the world's second-highest peak which stands at 8,611 meters, lies in Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region. It is nicknamed "the savage mountain" by high-altitude climbers who often encounter great difficulty in summiting it.

The Pakistani Army carried out three heli sorties to rescue American, Chilean, Macedonian and Nepali climbers, who were present in the K2 base camp.

They were suffering from high-altitude sickness while trying to summit the K2 mountain. They contacted the Pakistan

Army for their rescue which was promptly responded.

The Army saved the mountaineers and then shifted them to a hospital in Skardu.

It may be mentioned here that on Wednesday last Pakistan Army had also rescued three foreign climbers after they encountered difficulties while attempting to mount the K2.

The mountaineers, who hailed from Singapore, the Netherlands and Ecuador, were rescued by a Pakistan Army helicopter after they fell ill while climbing the mountain.

"I'm Kim and I am from Holland. I had a big fall from a glacier and now the Pakistan Army is rescuing me from the glacier," she said while sitting in the army's helicopter.

Another climber from

Singapore, who did not mention her name, said she suffered from flu while attempting to summit the mountain. "I got really, really sick," she said. "Thank you to the Pakistan Army for rescuing me."

The third foreign climber from Ecuador had his arm in a sling, saying he had fractured it while climbing the mountain.

Home to some of the tallest peaks and stunning landscapes, Pakistan attracts foreign mountaineers and tourists from around the world in every mountain-climbing season, making it a premier destination for adventure enthusiasts.

According to official figures, over 8,900 foreigners visited Gilgit-Baltistan in 2023 where the summer climbing season runs from early June to late August.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb in a meeting with Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan.

Flood warning as Pakistan braces for heavy monsoon spell in next 48 hours

ISLAMABAD (INP): Different areas of north and north-east Punjab received light to heavy rain on Monday morning that brought relief to the people from hot and humid weather, while the Met Office, on the other hand, said that more monsoon rains were expected, especially in Punjab, Sindh and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) during the next two days.

Attock and its adjoining areas received thundershowers that offered locals a respite from heat and mugginess.

Similarly, it also rained in Shakargarh and Narowal, bringing smiles on people's faces fed up with extreme humidity.

It drizzled in different parts of Lahore, including Jail Road, Canal Road, Garhi Shahu, Abbot Road, Lakshmi Chowk and surrounding areas, while cool winds made the weather pleasant.

Rain was also reported from twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

On the other hand, the weather department forecast that heavy rains in AJK and north-east Punjab on Monday and Tuesday would result in deluge in local streams and nullahs.

It said rain, accompanied by strong winds, was also expected

in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, while heavy rain was likely at a few places in Islamabad and adjoining areas during the aforementioned period.

Similarly, it predicted thundershowers for different parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) namely Dir, Swat, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Haripur, Buner, Malakand, Bajaur, Mardan, Swabi, Nowshera, Peshawar, Mohmand, Kohat, Khyber, Kurram, Karak, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Dera Ismail Khan and Waziristan.

The Met Office said that torrential rains were expected at a few places in the upper parts of KP.

It forecast heavy rains, accompanied by strong winds, in different areas of Punjab namely Stralokot, Narowal, Mandi Bahaudin, Murree, Galyat, Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Sargodha, Mianwali, Gujrat, Khushab, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Lahore, Sheikhupura, Kasur, Okara, Faisalabad, Chiniot, Jhang, Pakpattan, Sahiwal, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Dera Ghazi Khan, Bhakkar, Layyah, Multan, Khanewal, Muzaffargarh, Kot Addu, Taunsa, Rajanpur and Rahim Yar Khan.

The weather department predicted heavy rains at a few places in north-east Punjab and south

Punjab.

Likewise, it forecast rains for parts of Balochistan namely Zhoib, Sherani, Musakhel, Barkhan, Kohlu, Loralai, Sibbi, Harnai, Ziarat, Quetta, Nasserabad, Dera Bugti, Jaafarabad, Kalat, Khuzdar, Lasbela, Awaran, Kech and Panjgur.

Heavy rains were expected at a few places in these areas, the Met Office said.

The weather department also predicted heavy rains, accompanied by strong winds, for different parts of Sindh namely Tharparkar, Umarkot, Sanghar, Mirpurkhas, Mithi, Thatta, Badin, Sajawal, Karachi, Jamshoro, Tando Muhammad Khan, Hyderabad, Shuhed Benazirabad, Sukkur, Shikarpur, Khairpur, Kashmore, Larkana, Jacobabad and Dadu. It said that torrential rains were likely at a few places in these districts.

The Met Office forecast rains, heavy at isolated places, for different parts of AJK.

PDMA issues an alert

On the other hand, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) issued an alert for all concerned departments in Punjab in order to deal with any situation, arising out of heavy rains especially in north-eastern districts of the province.

Some people in PTI fold not sincere to party: Hamid Khan

ISLAMABAD (INP): PTI Senator Hamid Khan has said everyone who meets the party leader in jail gives his own interpretation of matters.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Hamid Khan in an exclusive interview with a private TV Channel said that every visitor gives own version for their personal publicity. "There are some persons who have not been sincere to the party and harming it. Some of them exposed, which included Sher Afzal

Marwat, who had his own agenda in the party," PTI senator

said. "There are some other cases of similar nature, who are creating differences to harm the party," Hamid Khan said.

He said the PTI's founder has clear stance that once a person quit the party should not be allowed entry again. "Those who addressed press conferences, made their own party and joined another party, could not return back," Senator Hamid Khan said.

He said, "Fawad Chaudhry joined the Isteahkam Party, was sitting there covering his face with hands," he said. "Inran Ismail,

Fawad and Amir Kiani were among those who made the Isteahkam party. Fawad was a planted person in the party for always," Hamid Khan said.

"Even now what Fawad is doing, he is doing to harm the party from within," Barrister Hamid said.

"According to us, it was a mistake to resign from the assemblies at the time of the no-trust motion," he said. "Shah Mahmood and Pervaiz Elahi told that Fawad and Shaikh Rashid had forced PTI's founder to tender resignations," he said.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti is talking to Provincial Assembly member Zarik Khan Mandokhail during the assembly session.

PM Shehbaz orders steps for safety of people amid heavy rains

ISLAMABAD (INP) Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to take immediate measures for the protection of lives and properties of the people in view of the torrential rains across the country, reported 24NewsHD TV channel.

In a statement issued in Islamabad on Monday, Shehbaz Sharif directed the NDMA to support the four provincial governments as well as Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan in dealing with the emergency situations.

The PM instructed the

Islamabad administration to take measures for drainage of water and facilitation of the public.

Emphasizing greater coordination amongst the departments, Shehbaz Sharif called for continuous monitoring of the situation, saying timely evacuation of people from low-lying areas and drainage of water should be ensured.

In this regard, he instructed to ensure supply of water pumps and other machinery. In addition, he directed to ensure timely provision of medical treatment to those in need.

Interior Minister Mohsin

Naqvi has directed CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa to take effectiveness measures to the drainage of water amid heavy monsoon rains in the federal capital.

He directed the CDA chairman to activate officers and teams in the field. All resources should be utilized to deal with the emergency situations, he said and added additional staff and machinery should be deployed to monitor the nullahs, highways and water channels.

The interior minister also called for ensuring drainage of rainwater from underpasses and other low-lying areas.

KP govt to give reserved seats to families of May 9 martyrs

PESHAWAR (INP): In a bid to solidify its stance on May 9, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Monday decided to allot the reserved seats to the families of the martyrs of May 9.

According to sources, seats reserved for women will be given to the widows of the martyrs of May 9. The widows of Javed Akkheel, Sikandar, Muhammad Bilal, Abar Ahmad and Javed Gill would be granted reserved seats.

Sources said that decision was taken on the instructions of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Inran Khan.

It must be remembered that the Supreme Court of Pakistan had tipped the scales in PTI's favour by granting reserved seats to the PTI by 8-5 verdict earlier this month.

Going against the grain of its previous decisions regarding the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in the run-up to Feb 8 election, the apex court on Fri-

day overturned the Peshawar High Court's verdict of depriving the PTI of the reserved seats of non-Muslim and women candidates in assemblies.

The apex court, in its majority 8-5 decision, announced that the conduct of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) regarding reserved seats was 'unconstitutional', adding that the PTI would remain intact as a political party even without being assigned an election symbol. The verdict was authored by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah.

Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Ayesha Malik, Justice Irfan Saadat, Justice Shahid Waheed, Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Ali Mazhar have decided in favour of the PTI to be allotted reserved seats while Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, Justice Jamal Mandokhail, Justice Naem Af Khan and Justice Aminuddin Khan voted against the PTI.

Besides, Justice Yahya

Afriidi wrote a dissenting note.

The SC accepted the PTI as a political party and rejected the SIC's appeals. It has been said in the SC verdict that the PTI could give list of the candidates of the reserved seats, adding that those 41 candidates could present their certificates to prove that they were members of the party.

It is noteworthy that the full court bench had also deliberated on the PTI's reserved seats for almost two hours in a meeting of a day before the announcement of the verdict.

Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afriidi, Justice Aminuddin Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Ayesha A. Malik, Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Shahid Waheed, Justice Irfan Saadat Khan and Justice Naem Af Khan attended the meeting presided over by the CJP.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with Chinese Counsel General Zhao Shiren.

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar reaffirms commitment to commonwealth partnership

ISLAMABAD (INP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast commitment to its partnership with the Commonwealth.

Addressing a news conference along with Commonwealth Secretary General Patricia Scotland in Islamabad, he said Pakistan attaches great importance to the commonwealth and its institutions saying it is an important platform for forging consensus and developing partnerships in the face of unprecedented global challenges.

Ishaq Dar said the Commonwealth should call for the resolution of outstanding disputes among member states

with greater urgency and press for the respect of international law and implementation of UN Security Council resolutions.

The Foreign Minister said Pakistan's vision of regional connectivity and trade matches with the Commonwealth's connectivity agenda.

He said Pakistan sees vast opportunities for collaboration with the Commonwealth in realizing development goals particularly in education, skill development, youth and women empowerment, health and environmental preservation.

He said Pakistan supports the commonwealth target of increasing intra Commonwealth trade to two trillion dollars by 2030. He said this will

not only provide job opportunities to the youth but also create conditions for win-win cooperation amongst the member states.

Ishaq Dar said he briefed the Commonwealth Secretary General about Pakistan's policies to combat climate change. He said Pakistan will work with the Commonwealth in developing resilience against climate induced disasters.

Speaking on the occasion, the Commonwealth Secretary General was appreciative of the resilience and determination exhibited by Pakistan in the wake of 2022 floods. She said the commonwealth stood in solidarity with the Pakistani people during those difficult times.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar holds meeting with Secretary General of the Commonwealth Patricia Scotland at Minister of Foreign Affairs, INP.