

'US interests will dictate engagement with Islamabad'

WASHINGTON: (News Desk) As Pakistani-American groups step up attempts to engage with the new Congress, it is becoming increasingly clear that Washington's policy towards Islamabad will be dictated by US security and foreign policy interests, rather than anything else.

The Pakistani American Political Action Committee (PAKPAC) organised meetings on Capitol Hill throughout the week, pressing lawmakers to take a stronger stance on democracy and human rights in Pakistan.

Throughout the week, activists met with US senators and representatives,

urging them to address concerns over electoral fairness, freedom of expression, and political repression in Pakistan.

Former president Arif Alvi played a key role in the campaign, holding discussions with nearly a dozen lawmakers and briefing them on the political situation back home.

Pakistani-American pressure group intensifies engagement with Congress; Arif Alvi meets lawmakers on the Hill

Although PAKPAC maintains that its advocacy is not aligned with any political party, they do seem to have a soft spot for Imran Khan and his party.

Several US lawmakers,

who engaged with the campaign during the course of the week, expressed concern over Pakistan's democratic trajectory. Congressman Joe Wilson, after meeting with Secretary of State Marco Rubio, tweeted: "Grateful to meet ... Marco Rubio. He understands the importance of freedom and democracy around the world. I look forward to working with him to restore democracy in Pakistan." Congressman Jack Bergman also voiced support for the movement, even tweeting about his meeting with Dr Alvi and former Imran Khan aide Dr Shahbaz Gill. But while Pakistani Ameri-

cans found some sympathetic ears in Congress, the overall stance from Washington remained focused on US strategic interests. Congressman Brian Mast, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, made it clear that while Washington acknowledged concerns about democracy in Pakistan, US foreign policy would remain centred on national security and economic priorities. At PAKPAC's 5th Annual Bipartisan Congressional Open House, Mast reinforced this position, stating, "We will ensure that every dollar spent is aligned with America's national security and interests."



Former president Arif Alvi gestures as Rep Haley Stevens speaks during an event organised by the Southeast Michigan Pakistani community, over the weekend

Four security men martyred in Balochistan attacks

QUETTA: (News Desk) Four security personnel were martyred and eight others injured in armed attacks on the Frontier Corps and Levies' check posts in Kalat and Kech districts over the past 24 hours.

In a third incident, a police station in Noshki also came under attack. Officials said the Levies check post was targeted in the Togh Chpeer area in the early hours of Sunday. Balochistan government spokesman Shahid Raid said unidentified men opened fire at the post, adding that the Levies personnel retaliated and returned fire. The exchange continued for some time after which the assailants fled.

"As a result of gunfight, one Levies man lost his life while two others were seriously injured," Mr Rind said, adding that after receiving information about the assault Levies forces rushed to the site and shifted the body and the injured to the Kalat district hospital. The martyr was identified as Ali Nawaz Langove while the injured were Ghulam Ali and Mohammad Ayub Langove.

Mob ransacks hospital, blocks GT Road after man-hole deaths



KASUR: (News Desk) Protesters ransacked the Pattoki Tehsil Headquarters Hospital and blocked the GT Road after an elderly woman and a youth died in an open manhole on Sunday.

The protesters said lids of over a dozen manholes were missing in the town but the local admin was doing nothing.

According to police, 60 years old Zainab fell into an open manhole. Passersby Kashif and Asif, both 20, jumped into the hole to rescue the woman. When the two youth did not come out, people called Rescue 1122 that tooksby Kashif and Asif, both 20, jumped into the hole to rescue the woman. When the two youth did not out the body of Zainab and unconscious youth.

Kashif died at the THQ Hospital while Asif was referred to Lahore owing to his serious condition. Residents and relatives of victims ransacked the hospital over the alleged negligence of the tehal admiatration.

Later, they blocked the Multan Road near Malanwala bypass. When a heavy contingent of police reached the national highway, the protesters dispersed.

Multan man throws acid on wife, children in domestic dispute

Multan(News Desk) A man threw acid on his wife and two sons during a domestic dispute on Sunday in Multan's Jalilabad district, according to a first information report (FIR) filed on Monday.

The FIR was filed on Monday morning by Farhan Ikhlq, the brother of the victim, Khadija Bano, at the Jalilabad Police Station.

Ikhlq said in the FIR that he was at his residence in Multan's Jalilabad district at 8:45pm when his grandson informed him that someone had thrown acid on his sister Khadija Bano and her two sons.

He rushed to his sister's house along with his brother, Nasir Iqbal. Upon reaching there, he saw that her face was burning and smoke was emitting from her hair because of the acid. The room was also filled with fumes.

A woman accompanying Khadija was pouring water on her, and both the women were in pain, the FIR said, adding that the woman helped change Khadija's clothes, while Ikhlq and his brother poured water on Khadija's sons and changed their clothes.

The two sons told Ikhlq that their stepfather, Mu-

hammad Majid, threw acid on the three of them and fled the house. Ikhlq called the police and Rescue 1122, who reached the site of the incident and transported the victims to the hospital for treatment.

"The accused often fought with my sister; he wants to go back to his first wife and wants to divorce my sister," the FIR quoted Ikhlq as saying. "That is why he threw acid on Khadija and her sons and committed this injustice. Legal action should be taken against him." Meanwhile, Rescue 1122 confirmed receiving a call at the control

room about the incident, which took place near the Daulat Gate Imambargah. The Rescue 1122 Control Room dispatched rescue teams from nearby stations to the site of the incident. "Parts of the woman's face and head were affected by the attack," Rescue 1122 said in a statement. "Rescue personnel reached the spot and provided first aid to the woman and then shifted her to Nishtar Hospital." According to the Pulitzer Centre, acid attacks in Pakistan have been a significant concern, predominantly affecting women.



Political parties should foster an environment among their ranks that allows women to thrive and ensure their presence on key posts.

Top Nepra officials hike salaries without cabinet nod

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Top officials of the National Electric and Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) have significantly increased their remunerations, without mandatory approval by the federal cabinet, sources told.

The increase has come at a time when the power sector is facing massive technical, commercial and distribution losses.

The chairperson and members of all the regula-

tory bodies are normally entitled to a maximum Position (MP) scale I with basic pay of Rs629,000 to Rs772,780 per month. Other perks — Rs146,000 to 206,000 for house rent and Rs35,000 for utilities — take their total pay to Rs800,000 to Rs1 million.

Remuneration for chairperson, members increased four times in violation of law. The Nepra officials have approved al-

most a three times hike in their remunerations. The regulatory body was sent a detailed questionnaire on Feb 10 seeking comment on the salary revisions and whether the government's approval was sought, but no response was received, despite multiple reminders. The total gross salary of the Nepra chairperson has increased to almost Rs3.25m and of its officials to around Rs2.95m. The revised remuneration pack-

age includes a basic pay of Rs700,000 to Rs773,000. In addition, the Nepra officials have approved Rs631,000 to 700,000 per month 'regulatory allowance' for themselves on the pattern of judicial allowance for judges. They have also secured an ad hoc relief for 2024 of Rs587,000 to Rs650,000. On top of that, they have also become eligible for ad hoc relief for 2023 at the rate of Rs544,000 to Rs600,000.

PTI to move IHC over curbs on meeting Imran

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The PTI will approach the Islamabad High Court today (Monday) against curbs on its parliamentary leaders to meet party founder Imran Khan in Adiala jail.

Faisal Chaudhry, the PTI lawyer who has access to Mr Khan, told Dawn that the leaders of the parliamentary party have not been allowed to meet Imran Khan for almost five months.

"According to the standard operating procedures (SOP), Mr Khan meets his family members

and lawyers on Tuesday and the party leaders on Thursday.

He also shares the names of six leaders for the meeting, but for the last five months, the jail administration has not allowed them to meet him," claimed the lawyer. He said, "We have been left with no option but to file a petition in the IHC. A case will be filed on Monday (today)."

When recalled that the government recently arranged multiple meetings between Imran Khan and the negotiation commit-

tee besides Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur who meets him frequently, Faisal Chaudhry said that the negotiating committee meeting was arranged by the government.

About CM Gandapur, he said his name was not provided by the party founder, adding that Mr Khan should be allowed to meet six parliamentary leaders, whose names were provided by him, every week.

Imran takes exception to judge's remarks. In a post shared on 'X', the

former premier criticised Supreme Court Justice Musarrat Hilali over her comments in which she said that the PTI had also supported the military courts and they were established.

The judges should refrain from making any decisions or remarks before hearing both sides, he said, pointing out that a commission to probe the May 9 incidents had not been formed and even the CCTV footage had disappeared.

He announced the PTI will formulate a plan in



collaboration with all opposition parties to launch a nationwide protest movement after Ramadan. He said he had also instructed his negotiation committee to boost efforts for the "restoration of the

Constitution and democracy". He alleged that all the institutions of the country were under the control of invisible forces. He alleged that even the Adiala jail was being controlled by a 'colonel'.

Judges cannot hold court officials in contempt for 'dereliction': IHC

ISLAMABAD: (News desk) A larger bench of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) quashed contempt proceedings against the registrar and deputy registrar of the high court, ruling that judges cannot initiate contempt proceedings against court officials if disciplinary proceedings can be started. The larger bench, comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq, Justice Mohammad Azam Khan and Justice Inaam Ameen Minhas, decided the appeal filed by Registrar Sardar Tahir Sabir and Deputy Registrar Mohammad Awais ul Hassan Khan against their indictment in a contempt case initiated by Justice Babar Sattar. The bench ruled that "where the disciplinary proceedings can be initiated against the employees, the more appropriate way is to proceed with initiation of such and not the contempt proceedings."

Rawalpindi's Raja Bazaar becomes pedestrian zone much to traders' chagrin

RAWALPINDI: (News Desk) Raja Bazaar has been turned into a vehicle-free zone from Fawara Chowk to Hamilton Road, commonly known as Dingi Khoi, and a beautification plan is being prepared to enhance the beauty of the area and provide better facilities to the citizens. A survey will be launched today for moving electricity, telephone, and other utility lines underground on the 350-meter road. The beautification plan would be launched after the wires were moved underground. Commissioner Amir Khattak chaired a meeting in this regard and directed all departments to strengthen coordination to complete the project in a stipulated period. Commissioner Khattak said that underground wiring would save the citizens from the risks of any incident and also restore beauty. Senior officials of district administration and the Rawalpindi Municipal Corporation and Iesco, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited, Wasa, and the PTCL attended the meeting held at the Commissioner's office. During the meeting, the RMC officials briefed the commissioner about the progress of the project. He said that the utility lines were being moved underground from Fawara Chowk to Hamilton Road. Under this scheme.

Wave of flu patients 'overwhelms' Karachi hospitals; caution advised

KARACHI: (News Desk) Amid an alarming rise of flu cases across Karachi, the provincial health department has issued an alert, directing all officials concerned to take effective measures for the disease management, its monitoring and containment, it emerged on Sunday. Sources said while influenza outbreaks were reported almost every year with the onset of winter, this season, the viral illness, identified as H1N1 (previously called swine flu) in many cases, seemed to be "more intense" in terms of its scale.

"Flu situation this season has been worst in comparison with recent years. I have been daily examining 30 to 40 patients for at least six weeks while a significant number of them are coming with fever, shortness of breath, cough and body aches," shared Dr Altaf Husain Khatri, senior general physician practicing in the old city area. He added that the viral illness was highly contagious, affecting the whole family in many cases. According to Dr Khatri, also representing the Pakistan Medical Association and the College of Family Medicine Pakistan, health facilities in Karachi have been 'overwhelmed' by these patients for weeks. "We are constantly in touch with our colleagues who are experiencing a similar situation at clinics and hospitals," he said, while urging the public to use facemask to contain virus transmission. Meanwhile, the health department has sent a letter to district health officers, medical superintendents of public hospitals, and relevant authorities, outlining immediate actions to be taken to tackle the rising cases of H1N1.