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Hub

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs the 2nd meeting of Apex Committee of SIFC.

PM urges OIC to put end to 'abominable practice' of desecration of holy books

Condemns Quran's desecration in Sweden; vows to campaign for decisions' reversal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday called upon the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the civilized world to come forward and take steps to put an end to the abominable practice of desecration of the holy books. "The attitudes that incite religious hatred, promote violence and encourage terrorism and militancy, need to be checked," he said in a tweet.

The prime minister said no civilized society would allow the desecration of holy personages, symbols and divine books in the

name of freedom of expression. "The grant of permission to desecrate the Holy Quran, Torah & Bible is part of a sinister, vile and despicable agenda whose sole aim could be to threaten world peace," he said. The prime minister said: "We should not let a handful of Satanic characters undermine our shared values of peace, and tolerance, pluralism."

Meanwhile Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday strongly condemned the desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden and vowed to launch a campaign to seek a

reversal of the decision of allowing the sacrilege of holy books. The prime minister, in a statement, said that from the platform of the Organisations of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the government would help create a common strategy to get rid of evil. He said, "The OIC has to play a historic role in representing the sentiments of the Muslim Ummah and to do away with this evil."

The prime minister said that he would campaign to reverse the decision to allow the desecration of the Torah, the Bible, and the Holy Quran.

He said the permission to desecrate the holy books, persons, and rituals was not the freedom of expression but rather a way to constantly torment the world.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the sequence of events evidenced that this was not a freedom of expression but part of a political and satanic agenda.

"The whole world of Islam and Christianity must collectively stop this conspiracy. Satan's followers are blaspheming the holy book which gave human beings dignity, rights and guidance," he remarked.

Military trials of civilians should not begin without informing SC: CJP

Right of appeal at an independent forum against the decision of a military court was a guarantee of fundamental rights, the chief justice observed; SC adjourns May 9 accused trial cases for indefinite time

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court on Friday adjourned hearing of petitions challenging the trial of accused involved in the May 9 riots in army courts for an indefinite time.

A six-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Sayeed Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi and Justice Ayesha Malik heard the cases.

During the course of proceedings, CJP Bandial questioned that how the May 9 incidents had affected the discipline of army, and whether "creat-

ing a hindrance in the work of an army officer and breaking of discipline" were mentioned in the law. The AGP replied that it was mentioned in the act.

Justice Yahya Afridi asked whether the accused, civilians or army personnel who come under the purview of the Army Act, would not be entitled to basic human rights.

The CJP remarked that the independence of judiciary was the base of justice in the country. The prosecution would decide the case under the Army Act and also hear the appeal, he added.

The right of appeal at an independent forum against the decision of a

military court was a guarantee of fundamental rights, the chief justice observed.

CJP Bandial said as per the Attorney General for Pakistan, the trials of the accused in military courts had not yet started and instructed the AGP to inform the bench before initiating of such trials.

The trial would be conducted in open courts and evidences would be recorded, he added.

The chief justice directed that the arrested accused should not suffer from physical or mental problems. The bench would summon the responsible if its orders were violated even after the tenure of the government ended, he

added. The court could appoint any retired judge as a focal person to meet 102 arrested persons, he said.

The court wanted that they should be given basic facilities and have permission to meet their families, the CJP added.

AGP Mansoor Usman Awan said what happened on May 9, had never happened in the country's history and that could not be allowed in future again. All the accused could be clearly seen in footage of the incidents, he added.

He said that the sections regarding the trial of civilian accused by military courts were included in the Army Act through amend-

ments in 2015. As per the section-II, the civilian accused come in jurisdiction of army act if they created an hindrance in defence measures or tried to damage the discipline of the force. He said the Parliament had the authority for the legislation and that before amendments the Army Act could be applied only on military men.

He said the procedure for trying an accused in military courts was in front of the bench. Firstly a report regarding the certain incident used to be submitted to the military courts and then a commanding officer conducted a complete investigation into it in a court of inquiry.



LARKANA: Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari distributes Land Titles among flood affectedes during the ceremony of Distribution of Land Titles for Flood Affectedes held in Larkana.

PM enquires about health of President

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday telephoned President Dr Arif Alvi and enquired about his health.

The prime minister wished an early recovery to President Alvi, who had received an injury on his right leg during jogging a few days ago.

Shehbaz Sharif prayed to Allah Almighty to grant the best of health to President Alvi.

The president thanked the prime minister for his kind wishes.

Bilawal vows to provide ownership rights to flood-stricken people

LARKANA (INP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Friday vowed to provide ownership rights to the flood-stricken people.

Addressing an event, Bhutto-Zardari expressed his resolve to build two million homes in Sindh during a speech. He continued, "From today, good days have started for the flood-stricken people."

He admitted the masses were facing severe economic hardships. Bhutto-Zardari continued, "That is why we are bringing revolutionary projects for the public."

He pledged to adopt the ideology of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto to

every nook and cranny of the Sindh districts.

Bhutto-Zardari asserted: "By winning the general elections, we will expand the projects."

The foreign minister took a swipe at the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief, saying, "The PTI's doctrine is to make the rich even richer."

On Wednesday, Bhutto-Zardari commended the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA).

Expressing his thoughts in line with the MoFA's attempts for change management reforms, Bhutto-Zardari said, "In order to combat any obstacle, we have to be prepared."



QUETTA: Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar meeting with Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani in Governor House. Speaker Balochistan Assembly, Mir Jan Muhammad Khan Jamali, Member National Assembly Nawabzada Khalid Khan Magsi and Senator Abdul Qadir are also present

Governor Balochistan meets Chairman Senate; discusses politics, law & order situation

Independent Report QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar called on the Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani here at the Governor House on Friday.

During the meeting, also present were the Speaker Balochistan Assembly, Mir Jan Muhammad Jamali, Member National Assembly, Nawabzada Khalid Khan Magsi and Senator Abdul Qadir.

The matters pertaining to the country's overall political situation and law and order situation in Balochistan were discussed. During the course of meeting, the ongoing development process and matters of mutual interests came up for threadbare discussion.

Moreover, both the leaders were agreed upon making the relations between center and provinces further and pleasant.

Action to be taken against PTI Chairman under Article 6: Babar

QUETTA (APP): Spokesperson of Chief Minister Balochistan Babar Yousafzai on Friday said that action should be taken against the chairman of PTI under Article 6 because he tried to mislead the nation by telling lies through the cipher.

He expressed these views while addressing a press conference at the Chief Minister's Secretariat here.

He said that the chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) created a cipher drama based on lies to hide his politics and tried to save his power by misleading the country and the nation, in which he did not face failure.

He said that Chairman PTI was able to become a tech talker but not able to become Prime Minister, the Judiciary Chairman PTI should not be made a ladle.

He said that the situation in Wadh would be controlled soon, the government was aware of the situation in Wadh and we were trying to improve the situation as soon as possible.

Interim setup, polls PM makes 5 members negotiation committee

ISLAMABAD (Online): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has made five member negotiation committee over the issue of caretaker setup and upcoming general elections.

Important task given to committee comprised of Pmln seniors leaders.

Sources told that Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Khawaja Asif, Khawaja Saad Rafique, Ahsen Iqbal and Ishaq Dar are included in committee.

Committee will hold talks with Pakistan People Party (PPP), Jamiat Ulema Islam-Fazal (JIUF), Mutahida Qoumi Movement (MQM), and other allies.

Prime Minister also asked allies to make negotiation committee.

Pmln negotiation committee will be in direct contact with their supreme Nawaz Shareef Committee will discuss two important issues, dissolution of National Assembly, and caretaker setup.

SIFC approves projects for attracting investments from friendly countries

PM Shehbaz chairs second apex committee meeting of SIFC; COAS, CMs, federal and provincial ministers attended

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Apex Committee of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) on Friday approved the projects for attracting investments from friendly countries in agricultural, livestock, minerals, mining, information technology, and energy sectors.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, chairing the second meeting of the Apex Committee, directed to extend impeccable facilitation to the investors, interested in undertaking and actualising the projects.

The meeting, which was attended by Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir, chief ministers, federal and provincial Ministers and high-level government officials, reviewed various projects presented by ministries for broaching with investors under the umbrella of SIFC.

The Apex Committee expressed satisfaction on functioning of the SIFC and its strategy to outreach the potential investors through conduct of seminars and project inaugurations.

Presides over meeting on Wadh situation: We want to resolve matters sitting together: Zia

Independent Report QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs, Mir Ziaullah Langove has stated that we want to resolve all the matters sitting together.

He was addressing the meeting held on the tense situation of Wadh area of Khuzdar district on Friday afternoon.

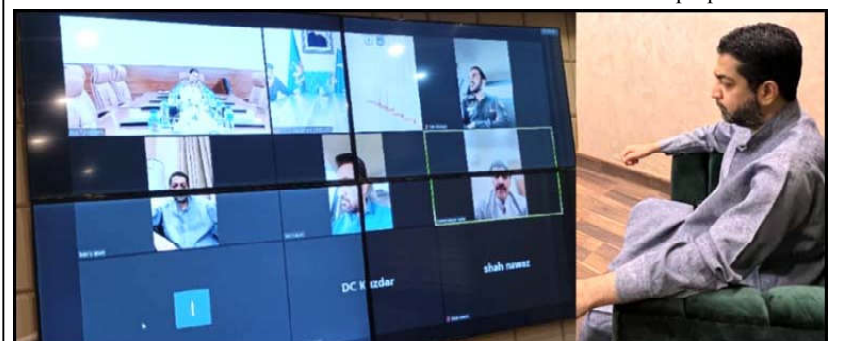
The Minister Home presided over the video link meeting on the Wadh situation from Karachi.

The Commissioner Kalat Division, Dadood Khan Khilji, Secretary Home, Inamul Haq, Colonel Asad from 12 Corps Headquarter, Deputy Commissioner Khuzdar, Captain

(Retd) Jamil Ahmed, Senior Superintendent of Police and other concerned senior officials also participated in the meeting through video link.

The Commissioner Kalat briefed the meeting about the latest situation in Wadh area. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister Home said that law enforcement agencies have taken all necessary measures from the day one.

He said that we want that all matters are resolved sitting together. He, however, on the occasion directed all concerned to maintain law and order situation at every cost.



Provincial Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs, Mir Ziaullah Langove presiding over a video link meeting on the Wadh situation from Karachi

Petroleum dealers defer strike for two days

Monitoring Desk KARACHI: The Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA) on Friday deferred fuel strike across country for two days.

The moves comes as State Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik arrived in Karachi to convince the PPDA to call off the strike. The association would hold another round of negotiations with the government after two days, the PPDA said.

Holy Quran desecration: Fazal demands to recall ambassador from Sweden

ISLAMABAD (INP): Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl) chairman Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Friday demanded Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif to recall Pakistan ambassador to Sweden 'in protest' against the desecration of Holy Quran.

The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) president made this demand during a telephonic conversation with PM Shehbaz Sharif.

During the conversation, Maulana Fazl noted that all Muslim nations, including Pakistan, should recall their ambassadors from Sweden.

The prime minister and JUI-F chairman agreed on 'strict action' from Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), saying that the body should take

notice of the 'heinous and impure act of hurting Muslims' by continuous planning.

He demanded PM Shehbaz Sharif to issue directives to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to recall its ambassador to Sweden.

It is pertinent to mention here that Iraq - a day earlier - expelled the Swedish ambassador in protest at a planned desecration of Holy Quran in Stockholm that had prompted hundreds of protesters to storm and set alight the Swedish embassy. An Iraqi government statement added that Baghdad was also recalling its charge d'affaires in Sweden, and Iraq's state news agency reported that Iraq had suspended the working permit of Sweden's Ericsson on Iraqi soil.



QUETTA: Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court Mr. Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan presiding over meeting of Provincial Justice Committee

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Cipher saga

There is little that can be described as revelatory in the 'confessional statement' being attributed to Azam Khan, principal secretary to former prime minister Imran Khan. It had been widely known, following the 'audio leaks' saga of last year, that he was privy to how the so-called 'Ciphergate' controversy came into being, as well as the PTI leadership's actual motives for giving it air.

Leaked recordings of his conversations with Imran Khan on the matter had already established that the former PM had discussed the prospect of 'playing up' the contents of a diplomatic cable from Washington for political purposes, and it was evident that the move was aimed at building political momentum on PTI's side at a time when the party was facing defeat in the vote of no-confidence brought against its government by the combined opposition.

With elections around the corner, it seems a last-ditch attempt is being made to knock Imran Khan out of the race. The means being adopted to do so are troubling. One of the senior-most officers of the state, Azam Khan remained missing for over a month after he disappeared soon after leaving his house in Islamabad for an appointment on June 15.

Hours after reports surfaced that he had 'exposed' his former boss, he was quietly returned home. His lawyer said he was "in no condition" to comment on the firestorm his alleged confession has kicked off. No one has satisfactorily answered where Azam Khan had been while the state searched for him as a 'missing person'.

Instead, the FIA and interior ministry seem more concerned with nabbing the former PM. A statement made before a magistrate, if duly recorded, does have evidential value, but there are far too many missing pieces in this puzzle. Could this be why the interior minister has sought Imran Khan's trial in a special court under the Official Secrets Act?

In a late-night address a day after Azam Khan's supposed statement, the PTI chief said the cipher he received from Washington had alerted him to a conspiracy to take down his government. To this day, only a handful of people actually know what it said. The public only knows it was problematic enough for it to be termed 'blatant interference' in the country's affairs by the NSC on two separate occasions. Imran Khan believes that a full inquiry into the matter will uncover a conspiracy in which key political leaders and the former army chief will be found involved. Since it has once again dragged the matter into the limelight, perhaps it is time for the state to lay the facts before the public and put the matter to rest. It has already become an international embarrassment for the country.

Quran in our lives



Nikhat Sattar

Many Muslims propagate the belief that the Quran is a practical handbook on how to live one's life. There are two ways this belief can be implemented. One is to take the Quran as an instruction manual, assembling life as something to be put together according to specific steps, often using selective shortcuts. The other is to delve into the context, rationale and purpose of Quranic verses and extract principles, rather than rules by which to live. The former is the easier route and perhaps the reason for the widespread tendency to follow the form and not the substance of religion.

Following a principle means thinking of the 'whys' and then changing our attitudes and intentions. This requires acceptance of the fact that we have a choice and are accountable for how we spend our lives and why and which decisions we take. If the Quran could be understood as a guide to enhance the purity of our soul and inculcate moral values within us, many illnesses that beset the Muslim world could be overcome. The Quran itself suggests several roles that it has been revealed for and that it can play if we let it. It is to be used as an overall guide and for assessment of right and wrong. Is a man who remarries while his wife lives because he believes the Quran allows him four wives on the right moral compass? Is a woman right when she accepts domestic abuse in the belief that the hus-

band is superior? Are people who perform daily prayers and give much in charity on the right path even if they tell lies? People park their vehicles outside mosques blocking roads and consider this a righteous act. Are they entitled?

In each of these examples, has the individual been fair and just, truthful, kind and considerate to others, including to themselves? Above all, has the person avoided hypocrisy, which is much derided in the Quran?

All previous scriptures mentioned in the Quran were sent for moral guidance, as a balance and scale to steer humans towards establishing justice within and among His creations (57:25). Verse 3:3 mentions the Quran as a criterion (between what is good and bad). How many Muslims judge themselves according to this criterion and recalibrate their moral scale regularly?

The Quran is a reminder (73:19) to the straight path to the Lord: a reminder, it says elsewhere, to the virtues ingrained in our fitrah (human nature) that we tend to ignore because of temptations and desires. It is the light that shows us that path (5:15) and that dispels the darkness of evil. The Quran is an adviser and mentor (3:138) for those who are pious. It is both a mercy for humanity and asks its followers to be merciful. Many Muslims don the cloak of piety and religiosity, often without the necessary mercy and kindness. Millions of women and men obey religious instructions, pray, recite Quranic verses, fast, and all the while they oppress those they perceive to be weak: whether animals, women, children, even members of other sects or faiths.

Take a simple example. We take children to the mosque to perform five daily prayers. We

frown if they want to play in the mosque. We make our religion seem harsh, stern and rigid, whereas the Quran is a softener of hardened hearts. Wearing religion on our sleeves, we cast disapproving eyes upon others whom we believe to have gone astray. The Quran, on the other hand, wants us to focus upon our own shortcomings.

Among the most significant roles that the Quran plays are those of "a healing, for the (diseases) in your hearts" (10:57), "a mercy to any such who believe" (12:111) and "glad tidings for those who believe" (2:97). The human soul is possessed of a wide range of ailments — greed, lust, jealousy, anger etc. In every sickness of the soul, the Quran comes to its rescue. It soothes, provides balm and bids the afflictee to be patient and keep faith in the Lord. The harbinger of good news, the Quran brings calm and peace to a disturbed heart, provided the latter is ready to wait.

Many Muslims take it upon themselves to demand blind obedience to rituals and belief without questioning. God only asks humans to give thought: "... that you may explain clearly to men what is sent down to them, and that they may give thought" (16:44). According to Quran scholar Dr Farhad Shafti, among all scriptures he has read, there is none except the Quran that emphasises rationality and deliberation as much. Thinking is the quality that distinguishes humans from other species, and this is required for every action we take, every word that we utter, every decision we are called upon to exercise. Do we think? The human soul yearns for beauty. This longing can be satisfied by the Quran. If we look for this satisfaction, we are likely to find it. -- Courtesy Dawn

Planet of slums



Aasim Sajjad Akhtar

In the shadows of relentless real estate advertising and other glitzy money-making shenanigans, a not-so-silent class war is being waged against the working masses of Pakistan's cities. With each passing day, unaccountable administrators plan and construct more and more roads, plazas and other supposedly urgently needed infrastructure, whilst also facilitating the land grabs and unrestrained profiteering of militarised housing developers.

The cost is borne by teeming millions who build, feed, clothe and clean the city. They are dispossessed without alternative and cast out to rot.

In 1998, Islamabad's population was barely 800,000; 25 years later it is approximately 2.5 million. Karachi and Lahore are now megacities that compare with the world's biggest, boasting populations of 25m and 15m people respectively. Pakistan on the whole is the most urbanised country in South Asia; of a total population of 240m, about half live in towns and cities.

Like so many matters of genuine concern, the incessant rural-urban migration that is shaping the cityscape is completely ignored by the political and intellectual mainstream. The urban explosion is intensifying each day, millions of young people flocking out of their rural abodes in the hope that their futures will be as bright as the neon lights of the metropolis.

But there are no jobs. Casual labour is the norm. If you are better educated and have some economic and cultural capital, you might hope for good returns on a business venture, including startups. For the working masses, the options are limited to driving a taxi, street vending, and daily wage work in the construction sector and domestic service.

Even such casual labour is barely tolerated by the ruling class. The Capital Development Authority in Islamabad, for instance, is now in the business of putting the poor out of business entirely.

Barely a day goes by without rehri-wallahs and roadside hotels being targeted by violent eviction campaigns. All of it happens, according to the CDA — and in the case of Empress Market in Karachi, the Supreme Court — to ensure sanctity of the rule of law. The same law mandates brutal demolitions of working people's homes. As the city expands into the rural hinterland, villages and goths are literally swallowed up whole. The most prominent example is that of Malir in Karachi, where an historic ecosystem and indigenous human populations are rapidly being consigned to the dustbin of history by the monstrosity that is Bahria Town Karachi.

This process is also proceeding apace in Islamabad, where the CDA is now on a mission to take possession of lands on the city's outskirts, which it claims were legally acquired when the federal capital came into being in the late 1950s. However accurate these claims may be, what is ignored is that these lands are currently occupied by real people, the vast majority of them working-class migrants who have made Islamabad their home.

Some have rented their shanties, others even 'purchasing' land on the proverbial stamp paper.

The CDA couldn't care less. It brands these working-class homes as 'illegal', issues hollow slogans against the 'land mafia', and bulldozes them to the ground at will.

If newly emergent katchi abadis on the outskirts are major targets in eviction drives, decades-old squatter settlements in the city centre are also vulnerable to the violent modalities of administrators. Sometimes the slogan of 'beautification' is raised, but in most cases there is no attempt to hide the fact that katchi abadis are bulldozed to facilitate profitable ventures of the usual suspects. And what of legal injunctions against summary evictions? The Supreme Court stayed such evictions in 2015 following the brutal demolition of a 25,000-strong katchi abadi in Sector I-11 of the federal capital. Punjab and Sindh have laws in operation that mandate regularisation for katchi abadis and re-settlement in cases that they must be removed. But behind slogans about the rule of law, there is a de facto law that is designed to keep the rich and powerful in place.

If one lived under a rock and paid attention only to the billboards advertising gated housing communities, it might feel like all homes in our cities resemble a pristine corner plot in Bahria Town. But thankfully many of us do not live under a rock. Whatever I have written here has been said and repeated over many years. It is not rocket science that the urban planning paradigm is completely elitist. Until it changes, those who are able must continue to resist evictions with all their might. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired a meeting on the establishment of Pakistan Sovereign Wealth Fund (PSWF), at Finance Division in Islamabad.

PCJCCI for Pak-China Women's Development Employment Initiative

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki has said that there is a dire need to establish Pak-China Women's Development Employment Initiative to empower the women of Pakistan and China at broader level.

In a meeting with Fang Yulong, Senior Vice President PCJCCI, Ghurki said, "We should start such projects under BRI for the growth of young Pakistani businesswomen to instill a significant impact on the gender equality and women empowerment."

China to explore more 5G use scenarios

ISLAMABAD (APP): China will explore more use scenarios for 5G technology in a wide range of sectors including industry, mineral mining and ports operation, with more than 3,000 enterprises expected to build 5G-wired factories in 2023, said a senior government official.

Zhao Zhiguo, chief engineer of China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology

Rupee sheds Rs1.67 against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Friday witnessed Rs1.67 devaluation against the US Dollar in the interbank trading as it closed at Rs286.81 against the previous day's closing of Rs285.14.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market stood at Rs289.5 and Rs292.5 respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 53 paise to close at Rs 319.13 against the last day's closing of Rs 319.66, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

PSX witnesses bullish trend as index gains 522 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Friday, gaining 522.42 points, a positive change of 1.15 percent, closing at 45,920.73 points against 45,398.31 points the previous trading day. A total of 504,550,463 shares were traded during the day as compared to 464,226,100 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 12,012 billion against Rs 10,104 billion on the last trading day.

Khawaja Saad says: PIA has a debt of Rs. 742 billion

ISLAMABAD (Online): Federal Minister for Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique has said that has debt of RS 742 billion.

PIA will stand closed in one and a half years if restructuring is not done. Due to the careless statement of Ghulam Sarwar, there has been a loss of 70 billion rupees. PIA has expensive stations.

The flights of British Airlines will be restored very soon. He expressed these views in meeting of National Assembly on Friday.

SECP takes Actuarial Advisor on board for Insurance Division

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), in line with its focus on strengthening its insurance sector regulatory responsibilities, is pleased to announce appointment of Mr. Falak Sher Soomro as Advisor to the Commission on Insurance. Mr. Soomro is an Associate of Institute of Actuaries, UK. He is a risk and insurance professional with over 15 years of experience in General & Medical insurance across

Forex reserves reach highest position since October 2022: Dar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar here on Friday said that the foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) were at their highest position now since October 2022.

In a tweet, the federal minister said the total liquid foreign reserves stood at \$14.6 billion.

"Total liquid foreign reserves at \$14.6 billion, SBP's reserve position highest since October 2022," he tweeted.

It is pertinent to mention that the total liquid for-

eign reserves rose to US\$ 14,065.3 million while reserves held by the central bank reached \$8,727.2 million owing to inflows from Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The central bank in a statement issued the previous day informed that SBP received US\$ 2.0 billion from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, US\$1.2 billion from International Monetary Fund, and US\$ 1.0 billion from the United Arab Emirates.

Consequently, SBP reserves increased by US\$

4,203 million to US\$ 8,727.2 million during the week ended on July 14, 2023.

Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at US\$ 5,338.1 million, it added.

In the previous week ending on July 07, total liquid foreign reserves held by the country was US\$ 9,838.5 million.

Among them, foreign reserves held by the central bank were US\$ 4,524 million while net foreign reserves held by commercial banks were US\$ 5,314.5 million.



ISLAMABAD: A view of rush on petrol pump after Pakistan fuel pump operator association calls national strike for July 22.

Weekly inflation falls by 0.07 pc

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed nominal decrease of 0.07 per cent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on July 20, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 258.45 points as compared to 258.63 points during the past week, according to the PBS data.

As compared to the corresponding week of last

year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 29.16 per cent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 = 100 is covering 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732, increased by 0.51 per cent and went up to 267.24 points from last week's 265.88 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs 17,732-22,888, Rs 22,889-29,517 and Rs 29,518-44,175;

however increased by 0.35 percent, 0.20 percent and 0.03 percent respectively while it declined by 0.28 percent for consumption group above Rs 44,175. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 30 (58.82%) items increased, 09 (17.65%) items decreased and 12 (23.53%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW), included onions (10.29%), chicken (8.57%), bananas (8.34%), wheat flour (0.98%).

KP CM inaugurates Phase-I of Rashakai Special Economic Zone

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Azam Khan inaugurated Phase-I of the Rashakai Special Economic Zone, marking a significant milestone in China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) here on Friday.

The Rashakai Special Economic Zone, strategically located at the nexus of economic growth, stands as a testament to the strong partnership between Pakistan and China. CPEC has become a symbol of friendship between the countries and a model for cooperation between developing countries.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister appreciated the exceptional efforts and unwavering commitment of China Road

and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development & Management Company (KPEZDMC) for successfully completing Phase-I of the project six months before the completion date.

The chief minister thanked the government of China, the companies involved and public sector entities for their unflinching support to the project and all those who contributed to the completion Phase-I Rashakai SEZ.

Encompassing 247 acres of modern facilities designed to attract domestic and foreign investors, Phase I of the Rashakai SEZ promises to spur economic growth and job creation, further strengthening Paki-

stan-China cooperation and bilateral relations under the umbrella of CPEC. Presently, Phase-I houses 18 zone enterprises, with 07 under construction; mobilizing an estimated investment of Rs. 85 billion.

As the Rashakai SEZ takes its place on the path to becoming a catalyst for regional prosperity, creating employment opportunities for the local population, and attracting foreign direct investment, plans are already underway for the subsequent phase.

These forthcoming endeavors will focus on expanding infrastructure, streamlining business processes, and attracting key industries, unlocking the SEZ's full potential, as part of the ongoing decade of CPEC.



Federal Minister for overseas Pakistani & HRD Mr. Sajid Husain Turi is inaugurating the residential flats for project of worker welfare Board at Peshawar.

IGP appreciates role of scholars in promoting peace, inter-faith harmony, unity among Muslims

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police Punjab (IGP) Dr. Usman Anwar, while appreciating the role of Ulama in promoting peace, inter-faith harmony, and unity among Muslims said that the Ulama who propagate peace are champions of character as well as speech.

He said this while meeting the delegation of Ulama, and Scholars led by

Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khair Azad, the Chairman of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee at the Central Police Office here on Friday. In a delegation led by Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khair Azad eminent scholars from all the schools of thought visited the Central Police Office and met IGP Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar.

During the meeting, IGP Punjab said that the

miscreants who are spreading hatred and anarchy on social media will be dealt with iron hands.

He said that police focal persons have been appointed for coordination among stakeholders during Ashura Muharram. Control rooms have been established for the monitoring of security of Muharram programs in all regions and districts including CPO office.

Dr. Javed says: Efforts being made to ensure best medical facilities to masses

MULTAN (APP): Punjab Caretaker Health Minister Dr Javed Akram said on Friday that the provincial government ensuring all possible efforts to provide the best medical facilities to masses across the province.

After participating in the 13th syndicate meeting of Nishtar Medical University, the caretaker minister said that as per directives of the Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, all possible measures were being taken for bringing improvement in the performance of the health department and service delivery.

He said that the officers concerned have been directed to set up a model pharmacy in Nishtar Hospital, adding a screening of school kids would be made at educational institutes.

He said that a health screening certificate would be made compulsory for participating in the examination of the 9th class. He said that special focus was being paid on research work in medical institutes of the province. Earlier, the committee gave approval to different initiatives including the construction of the statue of Nishtar Medical University.



HYDERABAD: Security officials are standing high alert to avoid untoward incident during the Shiite Muslims mourning procession in connection of 2nd Muharram-ul-Haram, at Qadam Gha Mola Ali (R.A) in Hyderabad.



HYDERABAD: Impounded vehicles are ruining outside Hatri Bypass Police Station, showing the negligence of concerned authorities, in Hyderabad.

May-9 cases: LHC withdraws stay order issued to Imran

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday withdrew a stay order issued to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan against coercive measures in May-9 cases, wherein he was not nominated.

The single bench comprising Justice Aalia Neelum heard the petition filed by the PTI chairman for consolidation of all cases of May-9 riots against him.

A junior counsel informed the court that senior counsel Sardar Latif Khosa was busy before the Apex court and requested to adjourn the proceedings. He also requested the court not to withdraw the stay order issued on the last hearing.

However, the court adjourned further proceedings for an indefinite time but did not extend the stay order.

JUI-S chief advocates for peaceful observance of Muharram

AKORA, KHATTAK (APP): Chairman of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (S) Maulana Hamidul Haq Haqqani, on Friday urged the scholars and leaders nationwide to maintain a peaceful atmosphere throughout Muharram-ul-Haram.

Addressing a gathering at Jamia Darul Uloom Haqqania, he emphasized the essence of Islam as a religion of peace and harmony, advocating for moderation and tolerance.

He drew inspiration from the historical martyrdom of Imam Hussain (RA), highlighting its profound message of standing against injustice. The events of Karbala, Maulana Haqqani stressed, offer invaluable lessons of patience and resilience. With these principles in mind, he passionately appealed to all religious scholars and leaders to ensure that congregations and processions during Muharram remain free from discussions.

GB Tourism – Enjoy nature but not on others cost

GILGIT-BALTISTAN (APP): Gilgit Baltistan, known for its stunning landscapes, snow-covered peaks and rich cultural heritage has always been an enchanting attraction for tourists with the region receiving staggering 10,000 tourists daily.

This influx of visitors brings economic prosperity to local people by flourishing their hotels, guesthouses, and resorts business and generating employment opportunities for local people especially youth running trekking, rental equipment, handicrafts, driving, and local delicacies businesses.

Although the breathtaking landscapes and adventurous opportunities leave indelible imprints on the minds of tourists, yet there are challenges like environmental degradation and careless driving, resulting in the loss of precious lives.

Popular tourist spots like Naltar, Fairy Meadows, Rama Astore, and Hunza once to be pristine, are now grappling with litter and pollution. Plastic waste, in particular, has become a major environmental hazard, threatening the health of wildlife and ecosystems. Unregulated camping

and trekking activities have also led to habitat disturbance that may have far-reaching consequences on biodiversity.

"Growing tourism is a blessing for our hotel business. We receive marvelous responses every year. It grows our business and generates employment opportunities for local people," said Qaiser Abbas a hotel owner from Naltar Bala, Gilgit.

"However, it exerts extra pressure on local habitats and the environment which direly needs to align business operations with sustainable practices for environmental protection."

"Tourism industry makes us earn bread for our children. But it should not be at the cost of environmental degradation," he said. "We can encourage responsible tourism by educating our guests and local people to use eco-friendly amenities, reduce plastic waste and protect habitat to ensure the region's ecological balance."

Therefore, conservation efforts need to be intensified to protect the beauty of GB by striking a balance between tourism and environmental protection to ensure long-term sustainability and leave behind an asset for future generations.

"Improper waste generation especially plastic waste due to rising tourists' influx poses serious threats to the region's ecosystem and wildlife," said Abul Rehman Bukhari an environmental activist.

"Moreover, unregulated trekking and camping activities also cause habitat degradation in some areas." He suggested awareness campaigns, workshops, and seminars to educate tourists about the harmful impact on the environment by their irresponsible behavior towards nature.

International News

Putin tells Poland any aggression against Belarus is attack on Russia

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin on Friday accused NATO member Poland of having territorial ambitions in the former Soviet Union, and said any aggression against Russia's neighbour and close ally Belarus would be considered an attack on Russia.

Moscow would react to any aggression against Belarus, which forms a loose "Union State" with Russia, "with all the means at our disposal", Putin told a meeting of his Security Council in televised remarks.

Warsaw's Security Committee decided on Wednesday to move mili-

tary units to eastern Poland after members of the Russian Wagner mercenary force arrived in Belarus, the state-run news agency PAP quoted its secretary as saying on Friday.

On Wednesday, Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin was shown in a video welcoming his fighters to Belarus, telling them they would take no further part for now in the war in Ukraine but ordering them to gather strength for Wagner's operations in Africa while they trained the Belarusian army.

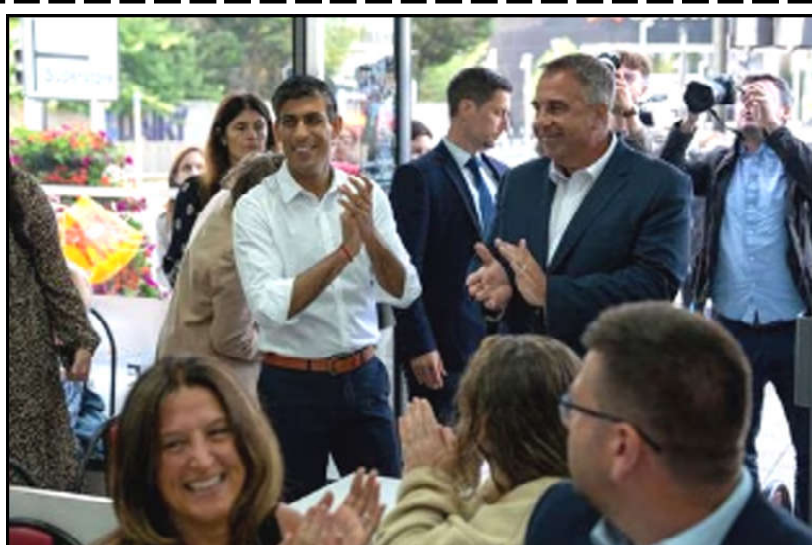
Prigozhin says Wagner, which led the conquest of the Ukrainian city of Bakhmut, is Russia's

most effective fighting force. But his frequent clashes with the Moscow defence establishment led him to stage an armed mutiny four weeks ago.

The insurrection ended with an agreement that Wagner fighters - many recruited from prison - could move to Belarus if they wished.

On Thursday, Minsk said Wagner mercenaries had started to train Belarusian special forces at a military range just a few miles from the Polish border.

Russia has in recent weeks begun stationing tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus for the first time.



UXBRIDGE: Prime Minister Rishi Sunak visits Uxbridge to congratulate Conservative Party candidate, Steve Tuckwell, after he won the Uxbridge and South Ruislip by-election in Uxbridge, Britain.

Russia hits grain terminals in southern Ukraine - governor

KYIV: Russian missiles hit grain terminals at an agricultural enterprise in the Odesa region in a fourth successive night of air strikes on southern Ukraine, the regional governor said on Friday.

But Russia's attacks appeared less intense than on the three previous nights, when missiles and drones struck southern cities and ports after Moscow quit a U.N.-brokered deal allowing safe shipments of Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea.

Odesa's regional gov-

ernor, Oleh Kiper, said two people had been hurt in the attack on an agricultural enterprise but did not say where in the region the enterprise was located.

"Unfortunately, the grain terminals of an agricultural enterprise in Odesa region were hit. The enemy destroyed 100 tons of peas and 20 tons of barley," he said on the Telegram messaging app.

Kiper said Russia had attacked with Kalibr cruise missiles that were fired from the Black Sea at low altitude to bypass air defence systems.

He said two missiles hit the grain storage facilities, causing a fire. Another missile struck the same enterprise as the blaze was being extinguished, damaging agricultural and rescue equipment. Photographs from the scene showed a fire burning among crumpled metal buildings that appeared to be storehouses, and a badly damaged fire-fighting vehicle.

Moscow says it has been carrying out "retaliatory strikes" this week after quitting the Black Sea grain export deal and accusing Ukraine of being behind blasts on Monday.

Erdogan says Putin talks could lead to restoring Black Sea grain deal - media

ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said his planned talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin could lead to restoration of the Black Sea grain initiative, and called on Western countries to consider Russia's demands, Turkish broadcasters reported on Friday.

"The termination of the Black Sea grain deal will have a series of consequences, ranging from the increase in global food prices to scarcity in certain regions and, potentially, leading to new waves of migration," Erdogan told reporters on a flight returning from a trip to Gulf coun-

tries and northern Cyprus. "I believe that by thoroughly discussing the matter with President Putin, we can ensure the continuation of this humanitarian effort," Erdogan added.

Russia this week quit a deal - brokered by the United Nations and Turkey - that allowed the safe Black Sea export of Ukraine grain for the past year, and revoked guarantees of safe navigation. Since then, no ships have sailed from Ukrainian ports.

Moscow says it will return to the deal only if its demands are met for easier access for its own food and fertiliser exports to world markets.



Hun Manet, son of Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen, attends the final Cambodian People's Party (CPP) election campaign for the upcoming general election in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

US plans second summit with Pacific island leaders in September

WASHINGTON: U.S. President Joe Biden will host a second summit with leaders of Pacific island nations in September, Joseph Yun, the U.S. official responsible to negotiations with three key Pacific island states said on Thursday. U.S. officials have said the summit is expected to take place around the time of the U.N. General Assembly meetings in New York in September.

Biden's national security adviser, Jake

Sullivan, said in May Biden would arrange another summit of Pacific island leaders this year after the disappointment caused by his cancellation of a visit to Papua New Guinea due to the domestic debt ceiling crisis. Biden hosted a first summit with the leaders last year.

"He has committed (to) holding a second summit in September this year," Yun told an event hosted by the Heritage Foundation think tank.

British Prime Minister Sunak narrowly avoids wipeout in local polls

LONDON: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's governing Conservatives lost two strategically important parliamentary seats on Friday but unexpectedly retained former leader Boris Johnson's old constituency in a setback for the opposition Labour Party.

The Conservatives' narrow victory in Uxbridge and South Ruislip gave Sunak some breathing space to try to narrow Labour's large lead in the polls by tackling inflation and a cost-

of-living crisis before a national vote expected next year. Sunak said the win showed that upcoming election was not a "done deal". In a cafe in the constituency, he told reporters: "The message I take away is that we have to double down, stick to our plan and deliver for people."

But the scale of the challenge was highlighted by the loss of the once safe Conservative parliamentary seat of Selby and Ainsty in northern England.



Members of the Assam Pradesh Mahila Congress (Assam PMC) shout slogans as they take part in a demonstration against ongoing ethnic violence in India's north-eastern state of Manipur, in Guwahati.

Turkiye urges Sweden to act over terrorism for NATO membership support

ISTANBUL: Turkey will act to ratify Sweden's NATO membership bid in conjunction with cooperation from Stockholm in the fight against terrorism, President Tayyip Erdogan was quoted on Friday as saying. Sweden and Finland applied for NATO membership last year in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, abandoning policies of military non-alignment that had lasted through the Cold War. Their applications must be approved by all members of the alliance.

Having held up ratification of Sweden's NATO bid for more than a year, Erdogan unexpectedly agreed after the alliance's summit in Lithuania this month to forward it to Turkey's parliament when the legislature reconvenes in October. "Turkish parliament's working schedule will determine the process of Sweden's NATO membership (ratification)."

Iran denies oil on tanker seized by Indonesia belongs to Tehran

DUBAI: Iran's oil ministry said the oil cargo of an Iranian-flagged supertanker seized by Indonesia last week does not belong to Tehran, Iranian state media reported on Friday.

An oil ministry statement, reported by the country's state media, did not identify the owner of the cargo of MT Arman 114, an Iranian-flagged supertanker suspected of involvement in the illegal

transshipment of crude oil, which Indonesia's coast guard said on July 11 it had seized. "Published news linking the cargo of this ship to ... Iran have no validity and this is done with the aim of creating a negative atmosphere against our country," the oil ministry statement said, without elaborating.

Tensions between Tehran and Washington have been rising after Iran tried to seize the Richmond Voyager tanker.

Largest ever Australia-US joint military exercise gets underway

SYDNEY: Australia and the US began two weeks of war games involving more than 30,000 troops and participants from 11 other countries on Friday, in a show of force and unity at a time when China has emerged as an increasingly assertive power in the Indo-Pacific.

Held every two years, the first Talisman Sabre joint military exercises were conducted in 2005.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the concluding ceremony of the Global Rehabilitation Leadership Institute Course.

Pakistan, US should invest more in bringing two peoples closer: Masood

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Masood Khan says Pakistan and United States should invest more in bringing the two peoples closer.

Addressing the concluding session of a day-long 'Conference on Diplomacy for Development' at Houston, Texas, he urged the Pakistani diaspora to play its role for promotion of positive image of Pakistan in United States.

The Ambassador said American Centers in the past, and now the Lincoln Centers in Pakistan are effectively contributing to-

wards creating a better understanding about the United States. Masood Khan added we need to have similar centres in the United States to promote awareness about Pak-US relations and to pass on this legacy to our coming generations.

He said Pakistan Chairs in leading Universities of the United States would play a critical role in creating better understanding of the country, its people and the region. The Ambassador urged the Pakistani diaspora to have complete confidence in Pakistan and its ability to rise as the leading economy.

PM says: Pakistan has all ingredients to tap IT exports worth \$25 bln

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said that Pakistan had all the ingredients to increase its Information Technology (IT) exports to the tune of \$25 billion in two to three years.

"Investment in the IT sector can fetch quick rewards and dividends and go a long way in addressing our unemployment problem," he said on his tweet handle account.

The PM, who a day earlier attended the national seminar on untapping the IT potential of Pakistan, said the event held under the banner of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was a reflection

of our collective resolve to make Pakistan an IT hub.

"The seminar, attended by all stakeholders from the public & private sectors, laid the groundwork for an IT revolution that the country so desperately needs," he said.

He said, "The SIFC, which represents the whole-of-the-government approach, will ensure the provision of policy continuity and predictability in the IT, agriculture, mines and minerals, and defense production sectors."

"Governments may come and go but the economic revival plan will be implemented with the same energy and passion" he said.

Pakistan succeeds in creating a roadmap for energy conservation at national level: Agha Hassan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Agha Hassan Baloch Friday said that Pakistan had succeeded in creating a roadmap for energy conservation at the national level that directly impacted the country's foreign exchange. He was addressing the National Stakeholders Consultation 2023 on Energy Efficiency and Conservation in Pakistan held at a local hotel.

The federal minister stated, "The country can conserve more energy through reducing dependence on imported energy and crude oil."

Agha Hassan Baloch said, "The sustainable economic and industrial development of any country in modern times depends largely on the supply of uninterrupted, constant quality and alternative sources of energy."

Addressing the participants, which included representatives of the industrial sector and senior officials, the federal minister stated, "The present coalition government has approved the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Policy 2023 for which the valuable opinion of all the stakeholders will serve as a catalyst for making this policy more viable."

Agha Hassan Baloch said, "His ministry has succeeded in making energy conservation building codes in Pakistan in a very short period of time, as per the instructions of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif."

"In view of increased electricity consumption in the month of summer, energy conservation building codes are very important to ensure that the construction of houses and buildings is done in a way that electricity consumption is reduced and there is proper arrangement of light and air."

He said, "It is very important to introduce global energy standards in the industrial sector and, in this regard, the government has not only banned the manufacturing of substandard bulbs but also increased the duty on the import of its raw materials." The federal minister said, "In this short period of time, the regulations of electrical appliances used in homes have been approved.

President urges society, family role to address disability, rehabilitation issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi on Friday emphasized that society and the family system would have to play their due role to facilitate the lives of disabled persons as well as those needing rehabilitative care.

The president, addressing the concluding ceremony of a course held by the Global Rehabilitation Leadership Institute, said the community welfare had been the basis for all religions including Islam, Christianity and Judaism, citing the examples of holy prophets, Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

He said at a time when the world lacked morality and humanism in its affairs, it was the society that would have to play its part, particularly for the welfare of persons with disabilities and those who could benefit from rehabilitation.

Citing a research study, the president told the gathering that around 24 percent of Pakistan's population suffered mental stress including 60-70 percent of the students.

He said the situation could not be addressed at a time when the country had just 600 psychiatrists and 1200 psychologists. In such a case, the family system could prove to be a good anchor to extend its support in the form of group therapy and stress sharing.

President Alvi said without depending on the state, the family system would have to come up to play its part as in Islamic societies where the communities always promulgated laws.

He stressed the need for the Pakistani society to show compassion towards the persons with disabilities as generally, their attitude towards them was not welcoming.

He said all the deprived segments of society including women and 27 million out-of-school children required due attention for redressal of their woes.

He said the enrollment of 27 million out-of-school children could take decades if left up to the state while Pakistani society could address the issue far earlier by utilising the already available infrastructure of mosques.

The president said children with physical disabilities should be enrolled in regular schools as it would sensitise other children towards their challenges.

Besides, he said more than a state, the society would have to make efforts to ease the movement of visually impaired people.

The president thanked the World Health Organisation (WHO) for extending support to Pakistan to address the issues of disability and rehabilitation.

He urged the countrymen to respect their legacy of love towards humanity, the environment and nature to bring a change just by investing the intellect, not money.

Earlier, WHO Representative in Pakistan Palitha Mahipala spoke highly of the "incredible" leadership and role played by President Alvi towards the issues of disabilities and rehabilitation.

Similarly, he also lauded the contribution and efforts by First Lady Samina Alvi on the issues including her traveling and interactions with the people on multiple health-related issues.

BAP to contest election on performance, vows Langove Independent Report

QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs, Mir Ziaullah Langove has categorically stated that the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) would contest next general elections on the basis of its performance.

In a statement issued here on Friday, the Minister Home said that we would succeed in the elections on the basis of public service. He said that we have always served the masses and would continue to do so in future, he maintained.

Dar refutes rumors of imposition new taxes on agri, real estate

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Friday firmly denied media reports claiming the imposition of additional taxes on agriculture and real estate sectors to meet the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) requirements.

"I am categorically announcing on the floor of the house that there will be no new taxes on agriculture and real estate. We have faced numerous hardships due to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) requirements, and we have diligently met all the prior actions," the finance minister said while speaking at the National Assembly.

The minister further emphasized that the news was entirely baseless and lacked truth, clarifying that all fiscal decisions made by the government were aimed at fulfilling IMF's requirements and commitments.

Senator Ishaq Dar also offered his readiness to provide detailed information on these specific issues to any one seeking clarification.

Discussing the economic situation, the finance minister mentioned that if the government continued its present policies, the inflation rate was expected to decrease to 7 per cent, based on the working of the State Bank. Attributing the country's economic hardships to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's backtracking from commitments, Senator Dar proudly stated that with the government's efforts, Pakistan had successfully reached an agreement of \$3 billion with the IMF.

As a result, the State Bank of Pakistan received the first tranche of \$1.2 billion to stabilize the economy. Speaking on the current foreign exchange reserves, he informed that the reserves had reached their highest position since October 2022. The total liquid foreign reserves were reported to be US\$ 14,065.3 million, with the central bank holding \$8,727.2 million, thanks to inflows from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the IMF.



ISLAMABAD: Activists of Muslim Talba Mahaz shouting slogans during protest at Aabpara Chowk, against the burning of the Quran in Sweden.

Zamarak Khan Achakzai maintains: No dearth of talent; need to provide opportunities to youth to prove mettle

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Provincial Minister for Finance and Food and Chairman, Balochistan Food Authority (BFA), Engineer Zamarak Khan Achakzai has stated that there is no dearth of talent in the province, what's needed is to provide resources and opportunities to the youth to prove their mettle.

The Provincial Minister was speaking on occasion of the distribution of recruitment orders at the BFA office here on Friday.

He said that our youth have proved in different eras that if they get opportunities then they can play important role in development of the province and country.

In this regard, the present government is encouraging educated youngsters and providing them the necessary opportunities of livelihood in the province.

He said that the process of recruitments on the (temporary) vacant posts of the Food Authority has been kept transparent. The deserving youngsters have been recruited on the posts of food safety officers, lab technologists, food safety supervisors, he added.

Referring the unsafe food, the Minister Food expressed concern over the deaths of people due to the substandard food while hundreds of thousands are affected due to the unsafe and unhygienic food.

The Secretary Food, Mujeebur Rehman Panezai and Director General BFA, Muhammad Naeem Bazi and officers of the BFA were present on the occasion. He insisted that we have to ensure provision of quality food to reduce the burden on the hospitals and health sector so as to save the lives of people.

He exhorted the newly recruited officers and staff to play their effective role in better healthcare of the people. The Secretary Food and Director General BFA also addressed the ceremony.

Later, the Minister Food distributed recruitment orders among the newly appointed food safety officers, lab technologists, food safety supervisors and interns.



QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Quetta Shehak Baloch presides over the meeting of Balochistan Shia Conference, Anjuman-e-Tajirun regarding Muharram ur Haram

Abdullah Khan says PWD making efforts to improve reproductive health services in

QUETTA: Secretary Population Welfare Department Government of Balochistan Mr. Abdullah Khan expressed a renewed commitment of making the contraceptives available to all the eligible couples for ensuring small family norms through proper child spacing.

The seminar attracted a large number of participants, mainly women with Secretary Population Welfare Department Abdullah Khan in chair. Director General PWD Ghulam Mustafa, District Officer Ayub Kakar, Deputy Director Noor Ullah Tareen, Deputy Director Shahmir Mandokhail and others were also present on the occasion.

Mr. Khan further said that the purpose of such seminars was solely creating awareness regarding reproductive health and the choice of the number of children was the sole decision of the couples themselves.

Welfare Office Quetta in connection with World Population Day. The purpose of the seminar was to sensitize people regarding the family planning as a fundamental human right, child spacing, personal hygiene and small family norms.

The seminar attracted a large number of participants, mainly women with Secretary Population Welfare Department Abdullah Khan in chair. Director General PWD Ghulam



NASERABAD: Participants are solving paper during examination for various vacant posts of Revenue Department Naserabad Division.

Coordinated efforts related to hygiene of women yield encouraging results: Tahira

QUETTA (APP): Chairperson of MHM Secretariat Quetta and Director Health Department Dr. Tahira Kamal Baloch said that coordinated efforts related to the hygiene of women in Balochistan were yielding encouraging results.

She expressed these views while addressing a day-long training workshop organized to create awareness about MHM held at a local hotel here Friday.

The program was also attended by the representatives of GIZ, UNICEF, Qatar Charity and members of the civil society.

Media expert and lead facilitator, Shafaqat Aziz, on the occasion, highlighted various aspects of reporting on women's reproductive health.

Dr. Tahira Kamal Baloch while addressing the participants of the workshop, said that the formation of MHM Technical Working Group was implemented in 2020. Before its implementation, it was difficult to talk about the reproductive health of women in Balochistan, but it is a welcome thing that now it is openly expressed and measures are proposed to solve the problems, she told.

She underlined the need for taking joint efforts and said "Women and girls are facing serious problems, keeping in mind the traditions.

Samina Zehri condemns persistent Islamophobia incidents in Sweden

QUETTA (APP): Senator Samina Zehri on Friday condemned the persistent incidents of Islamophobia in Sweden saying desecration of Holy Quran with the support of government was an intolerable act.

Expressing deep anger over the recent incident of Quran burning in Sweden, she in a news statement said persons involved in the incident and their backers should be brought to justice.

It is very disgusting, reprehensible and intolerable as such incidents have hurt the feelings of Muslims, said Senator and called upon countries including the Islamic world to raise voices to prevent such incidents in future.

She urged Muslim countries to call a conference to devise an effective strategy and action plan in that regard by severing relations from all countries, including Sweden, where incidents like Islamophobia were taking place.



AZAD KASHMIR: Director General Balochistan Civil Services Academy, Dr. Hafeez Jamali presenting Academy's commemorative shield to Brigadier Amir, Commander IAK Brigade during visit of officers currently attending Midcareer Management Course (MCMC) at Balochistan Civil Services Academy to Line of Control Cakothi and Ori crossing in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Emergency declared during Muharram in all hospitals of Quetta

QUETTA: An emergency has been declared during the month of Muharram in all hospitals of Quetta city.

All the doctors, medical staff and other concerned employees have been directed to remain on duty at their respective duty places to deal with any medical emergency during the month.

The decision to this effect was made in a meeting of the District Health Committee held with the Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Quetta, Muhammad Anwar Kakar in DC office the other day.

The meeting took different decisions in view of the emergent situation during the Muharramul Haram.

In this regard, it was decided to set up a separate emergency ward in all hospitals. During the meeting, directives were issued to all the doctors and other staff of the hospitals to remain present at their respective duties as their leaves have been cancelled.

The emergency would also remain enforced in Trauma Center. It was also decided that at least 10 ambulances would remain alert in different points in the city. Moreover, the ambulances of Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) would also remain on high alert. Camps would also be set up on Alamdar road, Bacha Khan and different other places in the metropolises.

The meeting laid emphasis on putting all close circuit TV cameras installed in the city in order.

"Hassle-free": Govt introduces online passport renewal facility

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a significant development aimed at easing the burden on citizens, Federal Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah has announced that passports can now be renewed online without the need to visit any government office.

The new initiative is set to revolutionize the passport renewal process and alleviate the longstanding grievances of citizens who were once plagued by long queues and waiting times. The announcement was made via a tweet on the official social networking account of Federal Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah. "The hassle-free-passport facility is now available, so passports can be renewed online from anywhere without visiting the office," the tweet read. With the introduction of the e-passport renewal facility,

Mariyum grieved over demise of Sanaullah's brother

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mariyum Aurangzeb on Friday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the death of the brother of senior journalist Sanaullah Khan.

In a condolence message, the minister expressed her heartfelt condolences to Sanaullah and his bereaved family.



QUETTA: Chairman BRA Noorul Haq Baloch briefed Secretary Finance Zahid Saleem.