

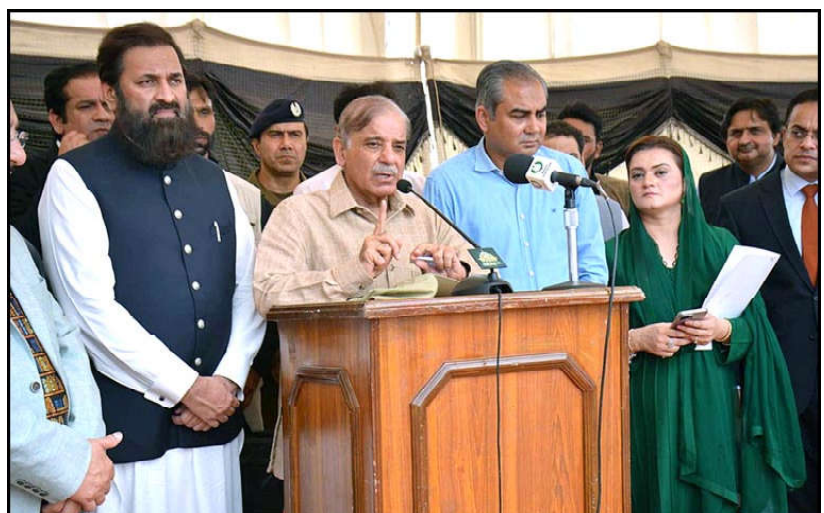
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MULTAN: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif expressing his views after visiting under construction Nishtar II Hospital.

Pakistan gets \$1.2bn from IMF as a first tranche under new deal

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Thursday transferred US\$1.2 billion to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) out of total \$3 billion under the Stand-By Agreement (SBA) that was approved by the IMF board the previous day.

Talking to media persons, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar said that the balance amount of \$1.8 billion would be provided after two reviews that would be held in November 2023 and February 2024.

The finance minister said that the IMF funds would help improve foreign exchange reserves, adding that in total around \$4.2 billion were added to the country's reserves during the week.

These include \$2 billion from Saudi Arabia, \$1 billion from United Arab Emirates and \$1.2 billion from IMF.

The state bank would

issue the exact figures on Friday he said adding that the reserves are expected to reach between \$13 to \$14 billion.

The minister thanked Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif and his economic team for their untiring efforts made during the past eight months in materializing the programme.

The minister said that the agreement was limited to 9 months to enable new elected government to take decisions for future.

He said, Pakistan was going forward in positive direction and highlighted that there was need to consolidate the gains and take the economy to growth trajectory.

It is pertinent to mention here that the IMF Executive Board had approved the Stand-By Agreement (SBA) for US\$ 3 billion for Pakistan.

The staff level agreement on SBA amounting Special Drawing Rights (SDR) 2,250 million (about \$3 billion or 111 percent of

Pakistan's IMF quota) was reached during the last week of June after IMF staff team led by Nathan Porter held in person and virtual meetings with the Pakistani authorities to discuss a new financing engagement for Pakistan under the arrangement.

The new SBA builds on the authorities' efforts under Pakistan's 2019 Extended Fund Facility supported program, which was due to expire in end-June.

According to statement issued by IMF, the arrangement comes at a challenging economic juncture for Pakistan. A difficult external environment, devastating floods, and policy missteps have led to large fiscal and external deficits, rising inflation, and eroded reserve buffers in FY23.

Pakistan's new SBA-supported program will provide a policy anchor for addressing domestic and external imbalances and a framework for financial support from multilateral and bilateral partners.

Will hand over to caretaker govt in August Despite conspiracies, coalition govt brings country out of deep crisis in the shortest period: PM

Says his govt cleaned up four years of economic devastation, sacrificing politics to restore the IMF program; It is now time "stand on our own feet and gain our lost position", urges nation to "break the begging bowl"

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said despite challenges and conspiracies hatched by the political opponents, the coalition government had successfully managed to put the country in the right direction in the shortest period.

The prime minister, in his over 14-minute address to the nation, said the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme agreed by the previous government under the toughest conditions, was the biggest obstacle in the way of the country's economic revival.

The last regime had brought the country to the brink of default by deviating from that agreement, he added.

He said ironically, the political opponents remained busy in hatching conspiracies and creating hurdles while the coalition government was trying to resume the programme.

The incumbent government had to face the biggest challenges and conspiracies in Pakistan's democratic history in the shortest period, and steered it out of the deep crisis, he added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the coalition government was going to end in August on completing its tenure and would hand over the reins to the caretaker set up.

"During the short pe-

riod of one and a quarter years, due to our collective wisdom and prudent policies, we cleared the debris and economic landmines laid by the previous government," he added.

He said the period of his government was a journey of moving from the destruction towards construction, economic stability, helping the flood affected people, providing maximum employment to the jobless and relief to the people hit by inflation, and revival of freedom of speech, media freedom and national integration.

He said the coalition parties sacrificed their politics for saving the country from default by taking the toughest decisions.

"We always remained worried about increasing the foreign exchange reserves instead of thinking about our vote banks."

The prime minister said despite anti-state conspiracies, the government did not lose its heart and succeeded to reach a staff level agreement with the IMF. "Today on behalf of the whole nation, I sincerely thank friendly and brotherly countries China, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, which once again supported Pakistan with sincerity under very difficult situation and that can never be forgotten," he added.

He said the way, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and

UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan played their role in bringing Pakistan out of the crisis, was praiseworthy.

The prime minister also acknowledged the efforts of Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on the diplomatic front. Similarly, he also appreciated Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir for their untiring efforts to help stabilize the economy.

Now, he said, the time had come to regain the country's lost glory by moving forward with collective wisdom and struggle.

For that purpose, he added, a comprehensive national plan of economic revival had been finalized.

operation to further diversify bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

Speaking to the Iranian Ambassador-designate to Pakistan, Dr Reza Amiri Moghaddam, the president highlighted the need to promote economic engagement and mutually beneficial economic exchanges between the two countries through the established institutional mechanisms and private-sector collaborations.

He called for further expanding economic ties by strengthening the existing institutional mechanisms, besides making the Border Sustenance Marketplaces functional.

Talking to the High Commissioner-designate of Rwanda to Pakistan, James Kimonyo, the president emphasized the need to further strengthen trade and economic relations, adding that the business communities of the two countries needed to exchange visits to boost bilateral trade.

President for expanding ties with the Philippines, Iran, Rwanda

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday said that Pakistan wanted to expand bilateral ties with the Philippines, Iran, and Rwanda in the fields of trade, economy, investment, culture, and people-to-people contacts.

The president made these remarks while talking to the Ambassadors-designates of the Republic of the Philippines and the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the non-resident High-Commissioner-designate of the Republic of Rwanda, who presented their diplomatic credentials to the president and made separate calls on him, here at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Talking to the Ambassador-designate of the Philippines, Maria Agnes M. Cervantes, the president said that Pakistan was keen to expand bilateral relations with the Philippines across all areas of cooperation and expressed the need to explore new avenues of co-

operation to further diversify bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

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ISLAMABAD: The newly-appointed envoys of the Philippines, Iran and Rwanda presenting their diplomatic credentials to President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Present govt makes state broadcasters financially viable: Marriyum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Thursday said that the present government during its 14-month rule had taken several steps to transform the Pakistan Television Corporation and the Radio Pakistan into financially viable organizations.

Apprising the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting about the reforms carried out in the state broadcasters, the minister said the former government had planned to auction the national assets, including Radio Pakistan and PTV.

The committee meeting chaired by Javaria Zafar Aahir, was attended by its members Zaib Jafar, Kiran

Imran Dar, Zulfiqar Ali, Naz Baloch, Dr Shazia Sobia Aslam Soomro, Nasir Khan Musazai and Asiya Azeem.

Secretary Information and Broadcasting Sohail Ali Khan, Principal Information Officer Mubasher Hassan, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Chairman Saleem Baig and other officers of the Ministry of Information also attended the meeting.

The minister said now both the Radio Pakistan and the PTV were now on moving path of self-reliance and due to the prudent policies of the present regime, the latter had earned a record profit worth Rs 5.5 billion during the current year. The government, she added, had regularized all

contract employees of the PTV to boost its performance.

She informed the panel that the PTV Peshawar Center had started 24-hour transmission of its programmes in regional languages, including Pashto, while Multan and Karachi centres were airing round-the-clock their programmes in Saraiki and Sindh languages respectively.

All studios of the PTV Lahore had been upgraded, she said, adding a virtual studio was set up in the PTV Islamabad Center.

Marriyum said for the promotion of filmmaking, the PTV Film Division had been established, besides setting up the Film Production Institute at the PTV Academy.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Rana Sana Ullah Khan addressing the foundation stone laying ceremony of Women Police Station.

Rana inaugurates women's police station

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior, Rana Sana Ullah on Thursday inaugurated a Women's Police Station in the federal capital in order to empower and cater needs of women by providing state-of-the-art facilities.

"The government has completed all the demands of Islamabad police by the establishing women's police station, increasing salaries and paying due allowances. Now, it is the responsibility of the police to ensure the safety of the citizen," he said while addressing the inaugural ceremony.

The minister said that Islamabad was the face of the country as a huge diplomatic community lived here and analyzed the social setting of the country through the infrastructure and intuitions of Islamabad.

"Therefore, every institution of the federal capital should be a role model, particularly the police department as it deals the public mostly," he added.

Stressing the need of maintaining discipline in the force, Rana Sanaullah said a well-disciplined police department in the federal capital would help create a positive image of the country across the globe.

He said that the PML-N government under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif left no stone unturned to make the city modern and started different development projects in that regard.

Divulging details of the projects, he said that a total development projects worth Rs150 billion were underway in the capital out of which Rs 100 billion would be completed before elections.

Rival tribes in Parachinar agree on ceasefire

PESHAWAR (APP): The death toll from clashes in Kurram tribal district over a disputed land reached 13 the other day, however, finally the rival tribes have reached a ceasefire agreement following extensive negotiations with a 30-member peace jirga since confrontations started on July 7, last in the Upper Kurram area.

Kurram administration informed on Thursday that the initial outbreak of armed clashes occurred last Friday afternoon when armed tribesmen positioned themselves and engaged in fighting, resulting in five fatalities with at least 23 injured. Initially, the district administration claimed to have brokered a ceasefire through their efforts and the involvement of a local Jirga.

However, clashes reignited during the night in various localities of the Tari Mangal area, known for volatile law and order situations.

Objective of hearing case is ensuring transparency in appointments: CJP

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) has directed to provide to the lawyers of respondents the report filed by registrar Sindh High Court (SHC).

The court issued the orders during the hearing of case against appointment of judges and judicial staff in subordinate courts in Sindh.

A 3-member bench of SC presided over by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial took up the case for hearing Thursday.

The CJP remarked the objective of hearing this case is bringing transparency in appointments. Registrar SHC has sent report of 3-member committee to us.

Counsel for SHC Munir A Malik told the court copy of report has not been received by him so far.

He took the plea before the court I assure on behalf of SHC no negligence will be made in future. Institutional process is there in connection with appointments Khawaja Shams ul Islam, counsel for the petitioner told the court that SC has given observation against the appointments in two court orders related to this case.

The CJP remarked our observation in court's orders is of temporary nature. Committee of 5 judges of SC made appointments of 90 or 100 judges after working for three months.

Raja calls for close cooperation among pillars of the state

ISLAMABAD (Online): Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf called for close cooperation among pillars of the state for the betterment of the country and its citizens. He also highlighted the importance of a robust legal system that upholds justice, fairness, and the rule of law during his meeting with the Attorney General for Pakistan, Mr. Mansoor Usman Awan,

today at Speaker House, Islamabad.

During the meeting, Honorable Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf and Attorney General Mr. Mansoor Usman Awan engaged in a comprehensive dialogue regarding various legal issues affecting Pakistan.

The Speaker remarked "the rule of law is the cornerstone of a just society."



GILGIT: Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah administering oath from Newly Elected Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan at Governor Secretariat.

Haji Gulbar elected as CM GB

GILGIT-BALTISTAN (Online): Haji Gulbar has been elected as Chief Minister (CM) Gilgit-Baltistan (GB).

The GB Assembly on Thursday elected Haji Gulbar as new chief minister of the province.

He has been elected as CM with the support of 19 members of GB assembly.

Speaker GB has announced success of Haji Gulbar as CM GB in the polls. Haji Gulbar enjoyed the support of PPP and PML-N.

Haji Gulbar was elected as member of GB assembly in 2020 on PTI ticket. He remained health minister.

Haji Gulbar had remained health minister in PPP led government in 2009. He belongs to district Diamir of GB.

Pakistan vows to engage with Afghanistan on all aspects of cooperation

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan has reaffirmed its commitment to engage with Afghanistan on all aspects of cooperation and concern including issues relating to terror threats. At her weekly news briefing in Islamabad on Thursday, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch urged the Afghan authorities to fulfill their promises that their soil will not be used for terrorism against Pakistan. She said it is their responsibility to ensure that their land is not used against Pakistan, and Afghan authorities have accepted this responsibility on various occasions.

On the situation in the Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said since 5th August 2019, over seven hundred and eighty

Kashmiri people have been martyred by the Indian occupation forces. She said India's unabated repression over the last seven decades has failed to break the will of Kashmiri people for the right to self-determination. She said Pakistan will continue to support its Kashmiri brothers and sisters in their just struggle against Indian oppression till the realization of their inalienable right to self-determination as enshrined in the UN Security Council Resolutions.

Responding to a question, the spokesperson said Indus Water Treaty is an important document that has served both Pakistan and India. She said Pakistan is committed to its full implementation and hoped India will remain committed to it.



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting, Javaria Zafar Aheer chairing the Committee meeting in Parliament House.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Election time

Has the PDM government formally decided to quit office in the first half of August? It would appear so from the remarks Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif made on Wednesday during a function in the capital where he sought to rectify his earlier slip-up of mentioning Aug 14 as the last day of the current National Assembly.

A day earlier, the premier had held a meeting with the chief of the PDM coalition, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, in which the latter reportedly stressed that elections in the country needed to be held on time.

The prime minister's whirlwind meeting with Mr Rehman had followed a high-level huddle between the senior leadership of the PPP and PML-N in Dubai, to which the JUI-F chief, much to his chagrin, had not been invited.

The Dubai huddle, aimed at deciding candidates for the caretaker set-up and a possible seat adjustment formula for the upcoming elections, failed to achieve "anything final", according to PPP leaders.

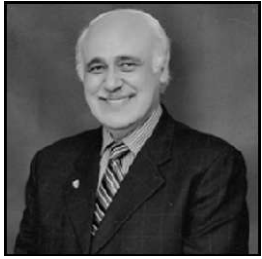
Nonetheless, the PML-N has now indicated when their coalition arrangement is due to expire. This clears up some of the uncertainty about the path forward: the PDM government, at least, will not overstay its welcome.

It is intriguing, however, that the prime minister desisted from providing even a rough timeline for when the next general elections could be held, leaving the matter to the Election Commission of Pakistan.

Technically, the ECP is the relevant authority empowered to announce the election schedule, but its conduct with respect to the elections to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab assemblies — repeatedly delayed in violation of the Constitution — gives rise to justified fears that the path to the next polls may not be straight forward at all. It is now up to the ECP to clear the air completely. There have been rumours that whatever caretaker set-up is brought in to take the reins from the PDM government may stay on for longer than two or three months, much like the KP and Punjab interim governments, which have continued in office long after their respective tenures expired.

If something like this transpires, it would be antithetical to the entire raison d'être of the ECP. The law minister recently argued during a television show that no power on earth could compel the ECP to set a date for any election, even if the ECP is clearly in violation of the law of the land. Does his twisted logic betray the true intentions of the state? One hopes that the country will not be taken along on another misadventure. The country desperately needs an empowered government formed after a free and fair election to take it forward. Any move to thwart this will only be seen as another blatant subversion of its constitutional order.

Vacuous governance



F.S. Aijazuddin

Are Pakistanis justified in regarding Islamabad as superfluous to their governance?

Do they need a president? The present incumbent perches in a gilded cage, his wings clipped by the 18th Amendment. Even his power to stall approval to legislation has been circumscribed by the government. It waited until he went on Hajj and then got an acting president to sign off in his stead.

Do they need such an obese cabinet? At the last count (March 2023), it comprised "34 federal ministers, seven ministers of state, four advisers to the prime minister and 39 special assistants to the prime minister", making it perhaps the largest mute chorus since independence.

Save for some notable ministers to whom publicity is akin to oxygen, what do all these personages do except act as a paid claque whenever the lead tenor sings his solos at cabinet meetings? When was the last time the public heard from their ministers of Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety, or National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination, or National Food Security and Research, or Science and Technology, or Inter-Provincial Coordination? Their vow of silence would be better served in a Trappist monastery.

Does the country need 342 MNAs and 100 senators when, like the pope, they have no legions to enforce their writ? Nothing could illustrate the degree of parliament's emasculation better than the recent exchange between the

Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

Conventionally, the PAC is headed by the Leader of the Opposition. Technically, it should function as a watchdog and occasionally the bloodhound of our national finances. Its bite should be more fearful than its bark.

Similarly, the State Bank is autonomous, charged with overseeing the nation's financial sector. It has formidable punitive powers. Instead, it has become an apologist for well-connected borrowers.

According to a report of the PAC/SBP meeting on July 5, "it was disclosed that during the PTI government's tenure, textile, cement, tyre and auto industries took \$3 billion [in rupee equivalent] in loans under the refinancing scheme at a five per cent interest rate".

The PAC asked the governor SBP for details of the 620 people who had taken loans on such "sweetheart" terms. It was told that private banks had provided almost 85pc of the financing, the textile sector at 42pc being the major beneficiary.

When pressed to disclose the names of specific borrowers, the governor SBP replied that while he had the list of borrowers, the details of the loans were "confidential between the banks and customers". He added that "instead of making the list of borrowers public, it would be appropriate to hold an in-camera briefing of the committee". The PAC obligingly agreed.

Whose interests, one may ask, are the SBP and PAC safeguarding? Those of innocent depositors, or of the 620 borrowers too shy to have their names made public? The amount lent to these 620 borrowers is equal in dollar terms to the \$3bn stand-by facility made miraculously available by the IMF.

Understandably, the local IMF staff — before taking the matter to their board — sought assurances from the major political parties that this facility had their broadest ownership, since some will form the next government and the rest carp from the opposition.

This unprecedented initiative by the IMF flies in the face of its declared neutrality, "not to favour any political party but to negotiate with whichever party forms the next government". Hitherto, governments have complained that IMF's insistence on political stability as a quasi-condition amounted "to interference in the country's internal affairs". Today, the government is silent on the IMF's novel outreach to its impatient opponents.

Has anyone in the IMF, though, considered whether these "summer promises" are binding. Will they be honoured after the post-election winter sets in, and by whom? While no one would fault the IMF or other lenders (the Saudis, the UAE and the Chinese) for wanting to protect their money, surely what matters is not who today promises to repay, but if elected how and when? Remember, elections can be tricky, unpredictable things. Winston Churchill won World War II for the Brits in 1945, then lost the general election months later. Will the next parliament try to assert its sovereignty and demand a say in the IMF deal? Some believe that Pakistan forfeited that sovereignty decades ago when, in 1955, it agreed to join the US-led Baghdad Pact (later Cento). Others believe the erosion of its sovereignty, like global warming, will remain an ongoing process.

When \$3bn equivalent can be lent by local banks to 620 faceless borrowers, and \$3bn is having to be borrowed by the state from the IMF, Pakistanis deserve something better than vacuous governance from Islamabad. -- Courtesy Dawn

Unemployment crisis: Balochistan's educated youth struggle for opportunities



By Hamza Shahzad

Balochistan's educated youth are increasingly feeling exasperated and desperate, as years of university education are no assurance of acquiring a job. With mounting inflation, this catastrophe is also distressing their mental health.

Of the 25,000 students who graduated from different universities in Balochistan in 2021, only 2,000 were able to secure a job. According to the Pakistan Labor Force Study 2021, Balochistan has the highest redundancy rate in the country. Despite its latent status, Balochistan has always lagged behind other provinces across most development-related metrics.

In recent times, the status of the province has deteriorated because of a rising death and youth unemployment rate, with the latter currently standing at 4.3 per cent. The foremost motives for youth unemployment in Balochistan are negligence of resources, a lack of digital or technical skills, and a lack of job opportunities and business programs.

In Balochistan, most governmental vacancies have been kept unfilled for years, and in recent times, the number of these vacancies has only in-

creased. Given the incapacitating youth unemployment rates, these jobs have created anxiety and anger. An average of 6,000 applicants appear every year for a single government job opening. Recently, there has been a rise in the number of reported suicides in Balochistan. According to an NGO that supervises human rights in Balochistan, 56 people were reported to have committed suicide in 2022 alone.

To tackle the hazard of joblessness and to provide opportunities for these sophisticated young men and women to flourish fiscally and also safeguard their peace of mind, the Balochistan government has arranged 3,000 internships in numerous sections out of 8,000 in the Prime Minister's Empowered Youth Program.

Apart from this, Google has also increased scholarships for the youth of Balochistan from 1,000 to 3,000, empowering them to support themselves. So far, 961 students, including 462 males and 279 females, have joined the package.

Recently, 60,000 paid internships for fresh graduates were announced by the Government of Balochistan in Provincial Departments.

Google, in collaboration with District Administration Keach, has announced 500 Career certificate scholarships solely for the esteemed Youth of Keach.

The government is the major employer, providing employment to hundreds of thousands of people at di-

verse levels. Presently, there are 295,000 staff in different government branches. The Education department has the highest number of employees with 67,732, followed by 49,000 in the Police department and 32,987 in the Health department. These 60,000 announced internship opportunities are the prime hope for the hundreds of thousands of jobless, educated youth in Balochistan.

The Chief Minister of Balochistan, The Chief Secretary, and the secretaries of the concerned departments should be praised for their keen interest in resolving this concern of the youth. Such steps will not only create a sense of ownership in the youth but also keep them away from negative activities. Along with these internship opportunities, the government should introduce

Basic restructuring at the necessary level in all levels of institutions, mostly at the bachelor's level, to cultivate and enable our youth to realize market prospects. Beside this, the education institutes should also introduce and involve the students in various skill growth programs to intensify their skill set.

Likewise, self-employment through freelancing and entrepreneurship, which offers an extensive variety of job opportunities, should be stimulated at the district level by the local government by introducing various training and skill development programs to extend the visualization of youth and instantly solve the problem of unemployment.

Commerce News

IT Ministry signs agreement to enhance connectivity in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Information Technology has embarked on two significant projects worth Rs. 69.8 billion to bolster connectivity in Balochistan province.

Federal Minister for Information Technology Syed Amin-ul-Haque and Minister for Science and Technology Agha Hassan Baloch here on Thursday jointly initiated the execution of these projects.

The agreements were

signed by USF CEO Haaris Chaudhary and Ufone's Chief Executive Officer Hatem Bamtraf.

The projects, funded through the Universal Service Fund via Ufone, aim to provide the fastest connectivity to commuters and residents along the motorway.

The first project will involve an investment of Rs. 47.82 billion in laying 478 kilometers of optical fiber cable, linking Gwadar, Quetta, Awaran, Khuzdar, Jhal Magsi, Qambar

Shahdadkot, and Larkana. The second project, costing Rs. 19.6 billion, will offer broadband services to 34,000 individuals in 47 villages surrounding Sabi.

On the occasion, Amin-ul-Haque said, the projects will be completed in 18 months with funding from the Universal Service Fund through Ufone.

The minister said, the project aims to provide the fastest connectivity to commuters and populations residing along

the motorway. He highlighted that in the past four years, 83 broadband projects worth Rs. 77 billion were initiated nationwide.

These initiatives reflect the government's commitment to expanding broadband infrastructure in Balochistan, with numerous projects already underway across the province. Moreover, 21 broadband projects worth Rs. 27.12 billion have been launched in 30 districts of Balochistan.



MULTAN: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif distributes cheques among the successful candidates who received loans under Prime Minister's Youth Loan Scheme.



LAHORE: Women participating in the Dastkar Mela organized by Punjab Small Industry at the local hotel.

China major export market for Pakistani products: Moin Haque

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan Ambassador to China, Moin ul Haque said that China is a major export market for Pakistani products, and we are working together to further enhance the access of Pakistani products to the untapped sectors of the Chinese markets," he said while talking to The Nation and Nawa-i-Waqt dailies.

The ambassador said Pakistan takes pride in its special friendship with China which is time-tested and timeless. "Our

largest trading partner, China is a major export market for Pakistani products, and we are working together to further enhance the access of Pakistani products to the untapped sectors of the Chinese markets," he said while talking to The Nation and Nawa-i-Waqt dailies.

The ambassador said Pakistan takes pride in its special friendship with China which is time-tested and timeless. "Our

relations with China are based on strong political support, strategic trust and practical cooperation.

A heart-to-heart relationship between our two peoples enjoying support across the political spectrum. No wonder, this friendship remains the cornerstone of our foreign policy."

Ambassador said that China has recently lifted its Covid-related travel restrictions and opened up international travel.

WCCI organizes women handicraft bazaar

HYDERABAD (APP): The Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WCCI) Hyderabad Division has organized a two-day women's handicraft bazaar here on the premises of Public School Latifabad.

The objective of organizing the handicraft bazaar from July 11 to 12, 2023 was to promote the talent of women artisans of rural parts of Sindh including Hyderabad, Badin, Mirpurkhas, Tharparkar, Hala and Jamhoro, the founder President WCCI Hyderabad Division Beenish Ifthikhar Qadri on

Thursday said in a press release. She said over 40 stalls of various items including furniture, crockery and art work were displayed in the two-day handicraft bazaar which was highly appreciated by the visitors. On the directives of President Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Adeel Siddiqui, a delegation of HCCI led by Senior Vice President Najamuddin Qureshio visited the handicraft bazaar and appreciated the efforts of the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Hyderabad Division for promoting the talent.

FCCI delegation calls on Punjab governor

LAHORE (APP): A delegation from the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI), led by President Dr. Khuram Tariq, called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at the Governor's House, here on Thursday.

The governor, speaking on the occasion, said that the country's economy is improving due to the prudent policies of the government and foreign

investment is also increasing. The governor said traders and industrialists are backbone of a country's economy, adding that the PML-N government has always taken steps to facilitate business community and solved their problems on priority basis. Governor Punjab said that the government is taking all possible measures for the development of trade and industry.

Rupee gains Rs1.98 against dollar after IMF approves \$3bn deal

KARACHI (INP): The rupee grew stronger Thursday against the US dollar during early trading on the back of approval given by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to the stand-by arrangement (SBA).

Soon after the inter-bank trading started at 9:30am, the local currency gained Rs2.50 against the greenback but later settled to a Rs1.98 increase by the time this report was filed at 10:15am.

Thus, the US dollar was available for Rs275.50 against the Wednesday's closing value of Rs277.48 as the previous session too had witnessed the local currency going up by 91 paise. The gains made by the Pakistani rupee come as a bruised dollar in Asia on Thursday after traders took surprisingly slow US inflation as a signal US interest rate rises will be all but finished by month's end. The dollar had its worst session in five months overnight, falling more than 1 per cent against the euro to its lowest in more than a year and notching even larger losses elsewhere.

Bilal Azhar says: \$4.2 billion credited to Pakistan in 3 days

ISLAMABAD (INP): Coordinator to Prime Minister on Economy and Energy Bilal Azhar Kayani on Thursday said that \$4.2 billion have been credited to Pakistan in last 3 days from Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Giving breakup figures, the coordinator tweeted that \$2 billion were received from Saudi

Arabia, \$1 billion from UAE and \$1.2 billion from IMF.

He said that Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar has shared that State Bank of Pakistan has received US \$1.2 billion from IMF, following the approval of the US\$3 billion Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) by the IMF Executive Board the previous day.

IMF agreement to help boosting Pakistan's economy: President KATI

KARACHI (APP): President of the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), Faraz-ur-Rehman on Thursday said that agreement with International Monetary Fund (IMF) would bring stability to the economy and enhance fiscal capacity of the government.

President KATI, in a statement issued here, highlighted the positive impact of receiving immediate financial assistance, including \$1.2 billion from the IMF

and \$2 billion from Saudi Arabia and said that it helped stabilise Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves. He emphasized that the IMF agreement had successfully averted the risk of default, providing a much-needed boost to the country's economy while the aid package of over \$8 billion from various other countries would further bolster Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves and strengthen value of the national currency.

PM gets briefing on Nishtar-II hospital, commends Naqvi, team

MULTAN (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Thursday visited the site of Nishtar-II hospital to check the status of mega tertiary healthcare project worth Rs 9450 million and praise Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi and his team for their untiring efforts that made the OPD operational and formal completion in sight, by September 30, 2023.

Soon after his arrival at Multan International airport, the prime minister reached the Nishtar-II hospital site where he received briefing from CEO Infrastructure Development Authority of Punjab (IDAP) and was informed that the project was initiated on December 29, 2019 carrying a cost of Rs 9450 million at a spacious 456

Kanal area and so far Rs 7430 million funding had been utilized, about 79 per cent of the total cost. PM Shehbaz Sharif commended the health secretary Punjab Ali Jan Khan, Commissioner Multan engineer Amir Khatak, IDAP CEO and all relevant department who did hard work to make another most advanced tertiary healthcare facility that would benefit people of Multan, rest of south Punjab besides nearby districts of Sindh and Balochistan.

The prime minister said, the machinery had arrived and expressed his desire for completion of the project as per the schedule. Shehbaz Sharif later told media persons that a lot space was available around the project site and added that he would talk

to the chief minister to develop a medical city there. After the briefing, the prime minister accompanying CM Naqvi visited the Nishtar-II OPD where he talked to some patients and enquired after their health and the level of facilities being provided.

MNA Ahmad Hussain Dehar, on this occasion, thanked the prime minister for providing Nishtar-II facility and described it as a gift for Multanites. "We had lost hope that project would see the light of the day. But with your support, this project will complete soon," he added. Earlier before the arrival of the prime minister, Mohsin Naqvi visited the Nishtar-II, visited its different sections and reviewed the pace of progress.



MULTAN: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif visits the under-construction Nishtar II Hospital.

Minister inaugurates 'Dastkar Mela'

Independent Report
LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Information and Local Government Amir Mir has emphasized the potential of promoting handicrafts at the international fora to generate foreign exchange for the country.

He acknowledged the remarkable craftsmanship of artisans from Pakistan, Iran, Turkiye and Afghanistan whose products were cherished worldwide. Pakistani artisans create awe-inspiring items ranging from Ajrak to carpets, salt, and clay crafts. The Dastkar Mela provides a platform for artisans and craftsmen to showcase the essence of their art.

Addressing the opening ceremony of Dastkar Mela 2023 organized by the Punjab Small Industries Corporation at a local hotel on Wednesday, the minister commended the event and felicitated MD PSIC and the organizers.

He highlighted the significance of promoting talented artisans, noting that the government and the chief minister attach great importance to the artisan fair.

Australian High Commissioner calls on KPCM

PESHAWAR (APP): Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Neil Hawkins on Thursday called on Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan here at the CM house.

Both sides discussed issues of mutual interest and agreed to extend cooperation in various sectors.

Speaking on the occasion the KP CM said that the provincial government wanted foreign investment in health, education, tourism, industry and other sectors and gave several incentives to the foreign investors in this regard.

CM discusses proposal to develop urban park

Independent Report
LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi chaired a meeting at his office to assess the progress of restoring 12 historic gates and to discuss the proposal of developing an urban park, similar to Greater Iqbal Park, near the mausoleums of Noor Jahan and Jahangir in the city.

DG Walled City of Lahore Authority gave a briefing on the restoration of historic buildings. Instructing the WCLA, the CM emphasized the importance of setting a timeline for the restoration of the historic gates. He stressed the need to initiate the work promptly to restore the gates to their original condition and eliminate encroachments. He directed to contact LESCO to lay underground electricity cables.

The CM issued orders for the immediate removal of wall chalking and banners from the historic buildings and instructed the restoration of the Mariam Zamani Begum Mosque, located opposite Lahore Fort. Under a phased program, the experts from WCLA will finalize the restoration plans for Lahore's historic gates, including Taxali, Lohari, Shah Alami, Mochi, Akbari, Delhi, Yaki, Roshnai, Sheranwala, Masti Gate, and others.



GILGIT: Secretary Finance Gilgit-Baltistan Faisal Pirzada presenting copy of Budget 2023-2024 to Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah at Governor Secretariat.

Consultative conference held for LEAs

LAHORE (APP): A consultative conference was held for law enforcement agencies on strategic planning for HIV-affected persons with the support of UNDP.

In the conference, the challenges for prevention of HIV infection, care and rehabilitation of infected persons, obstacles and recent initiatives were discussed.

IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar was the chief guest of the concluding session of the conference.

In the concluding session, the need to adopt a common strategy for prevention of AIDS, discouraging hateful attitudes towards the affected persons and treatment was emphasized.

Health screening of personnel has been done, vaccination and modern treatment of hepatitis C and B police personnel are ongoing, said IG Punjab. He added that steps have been taken to protect the cops from HIV infection.

He said that Tahaffuz centers have been established to provide protection to transgender and women victims of exploitation. Over 7200 complaints of citizens, including transgender, have been resolved in 37 Tahaffuz centers, said Dr. Usman Anwar.



PESHAWAR: Monks from different countries visit Peshawar Museum to see the remains of Buddha's.

Establishment of FATA University gift for tribal youth: JUIF leader

PESHAWAR (APP): The central leader of Jamiat Ulema Islam (F) and Member of the National Assembly James Iqbal on Thursday welcome the establishment of FATA University by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and termed it a gift for the young generation of tribal areas.

In his statement issued here, he said that the Prime Minister has adorned the tribal youth with the jewel of education, adding that the step would ensure peace, development, and prosperity in the tribal districts. James Iqbal who was also President of Parliamentarians Forum Pakistan, demanded the government to immediately change the name of FATA University in consultation with the tribal elders.

One killed three injured in police shooting

PESHAWAR (APP): A man died and three critically injured in a police shooting on a vehicle here on ring road.

According to police, the vehicle was signaled to stop at a police picket but the driver sped up the car in a bid to escape.

The police personnel on duty opened fire at the car, as a result of which one of the four passengers in the vehicle belonging to Dara Adam Khel was killed. The other three persons on board received critical bullet injuries and shifted to Lady Reading Hospital (LRH). The condition of one of the injured was also reported critical, the police informed, adding that the identity of the four persons was being ascertained.

Maulana Azad for promoting peace during Moharram-ul-Haram

BAHAWALPUR (INP): Chairman Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Maulana Syed Abdul Khabeer Azad has said that maintaining peace during Moharram-ul-Haram was the collective responsibility of Ulema from all sects. He said that the promotion of Pakistan's ideology and Ittehad Bain-ul-Muslimeen was the need of the hour. The Ulema of Pakistan stand with Pakistan's Armed forces for the prosperity and peace of Pakistan, he said while addressing a gathering of Ulema from various schools of thoughts who visited Bahawalpur under the leadership of Maulana Abdul Khabeer Azad for promoting peace and harmony during Moharram-ul-Haram. He said that Ulema should stick to their sect and avoid criticizing other sects. He said that Ulema strongly condemned the Israeli resolution against Pakistan in Geneva.

Commissioner Bahawalpur Zaeer Anwar Jappa, Deputy Commissioner Bahawalpur Khan Shakeel Ahmed Bhatti, Assistant Commissioners, Police Officers, officers from Awqaf Department.

3 killed in road accident

FAISALABAD (APP): Three persons were killed in different road accidents in Faisalabad during the past 12 hours.

A spokesperson for Rescue-1122 said here on Thursday that 40-year-old Mumtaz Ahmad of People's Colony was crossing the road near Khrurananwala Chowk on Faisalabad Road when a speeding van hit and killed him. Also, 50-year-old Saifur-Rehman of Kot Addu was killed when his car collided with a trailer in its rear due to over-speeding near Samundri Interchange on Lahore-Multan Motorway (M-3).

International News

West offers security assurances to frustrated Ukraine

Monitoring Desk
VILNIUS: The United States and global allies unveiled new security assurances for Ukraine at a Nato summit, designed to bolster the country's defences against Russia over the long haul while Kyiv strives for membership in the alliance.

Members of the world's most powerful military bloc offered the prospect of long-term protection a day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky decried as "absurd" a refusal to offer an invitation or timetable for Ukraine's entry into Nato.

Instead, a declaration by the G7 group of the world's most industrialised countries launched a framework for bilateral negotiations to provide military and financial support, intelligence sharing and a promise of immediate steps if Russia should attack again.

"Our support will last long into the future. It's a powerful statement of our commitment to Ukraine," President Joe Biden said alongside Zelensky and leaders of the G7, which is made up of the US, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan. "We're going to be there as long as that takes."

Swallowing his disappointment over the lack of a membership timetable, Zelensky called the out-

come a "meaningful success" following a flurry of announcements of military aid for Kyiv. "Today there are security guarantees for Ukraine on the way to Nato," he said. "The Ukraine delegation is bringing home a significant security victory for Ukraine."

Zelensky said he would raise Ukraine's need for long-range weapons at a meeting with Biden at the summit. At a bilateral meeting, Biden promised Zelensky the US was doing everything it could to meet Ukraine's needs and acknowledged Zelensky's frustration about the scale and speed at which he was receiving support.

"Your resilience and your resolve has been a model for the whole world to see," Biden said. "I look forward to the day when we're having the meeting celebrating your official, official membership in Nato. The bad news for you is, we're not going anywhere. You're stuck with us," Biden joked, prompting laughter from Zelensky.

Asked by a reporter how soon after the war he would like Ukraine to join Nato, Biden responded "an hour and 20 minutes". US national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Biden would offer Zelensky long-range missiles when they met.



US President Joe Biden, Japan's PM Fumio Kishida, British PM Rishi Sunak, Canadian PM Justin Trudeau, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Italian PM Giorgia Meloni, France's President Emmanuel Macron, President of the European Council Charles Michel, European Commission President Ursula von Leyen and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy pose for a family photo, as they attend an event with G7 leaders as the NATO summit is held in Vilnius, Lithuania.



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi is welcomed by Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa, at Harare airport in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Iranian president arrives in Zimbabwe to anti-West songs for the last stop on a rare Africa trip

Monitoring Desk
HARARE: Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi was welcomed in Zimbabwe on Thursday by people singing songs criticizing the West as he arrived on what's expected to be the last stop of his three-nation Africa trip.

Raisi was greeted at Harare's international airport by Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa, who thanked the Iranian leader for showing "solidarity."

Both countries are under U.S. sanctions and Raisi's trip to Africa, which has already included stops in Kenya and Uganda, highlights Iran's efforts to build new partnerships in a bid to soften the impact of those heavy economic punishments.

Iran and Zimbabwe already have a joint permanent commission on political and trade relations.

EU helping UN, Turkey in bid to extend Black Sea grain deal

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: The European Commission is helping the United Nations and Turkey try to extend a deal allowing the Black Sea export of Ukraine grain - that could expire on Monday - and is open to "explore all solutions," a European Union spokesperson said on Thursday.

The EU is considering connecting a subsidiary of the Russian Agricultural Bank (Rosselkhozbank) to the international payment network SWIFT to allow for grain and fertilizer transactions, sources familiar with discussions told Reuters on Wednesday. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres proposed in a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday that Moscow allow the Black Sea grain deal to continue for several months to give the EU time to connect a Rosselkhozbank subsidiary to SWIFT, two of those sources familiar with discussions told Reuters.

Russia issues nuclear threat, hits Kyiv as Nato vows support for Ukraine

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russia responded strongly after members of the Nato alliance pledged support for Kyiv against Moscow's aggression on the country, striking several cities, while threatening to "send F-16 fighter jets capable of carrying nuclear bombs".

According to Kyiv, Moscow conducted an aerial assault on Ukraine, resulting in the destruction of 20 Russian attack drones and two cruise missiles.

The capital witnessed major destruction, with four people injured as confirmed by the city's mayor.

Expressing its displeasure for Western support, Russia declared that it would view the F-16 fighter jets sent to Ukraine as a "nuclear" threat due to their capability to carry atomic bombs.

In a sign of its anger at Western backing for Kyiv, Moscow said it would regard F-16 fighter jets sent to Ukraine as a "nuclear" threat because of their capacity to carry atomic bombs. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov emphasised that Russia could not overlook the potential nuclear capabilities of these aircraft, dismissing any assurances provided by the West.

Taking the lead in a coalition of 11 nations, the Netherlands and Denmark have initiated a plan to train Ukrainian pilots in operating the US fighter jets, following authorisation from Washington. Since the Russian special military operation against Ukraine in February 2022, such threats have been earlier made. President Biden's visit to Helsinki followed the G7 countries' commitment to support Ukraine until it defeats Russia. During his visit, the 80-year-old president is to meet with Finnish President Sauli Niinisto, whose country shares a 1,300-kilometer (800-mile) border with Russia and abandoned its historical military non-alignment after Russia entered Ukraine.

In addition to Niinisto and Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo, Biden will also discuss issues regarding security, environment, and technology with leaders from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland to explore cooperation between the Nordic countries and the US. This visit was the first time a US president has visited Helsinki since Donald Trump's summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin five years ago. During the Cold War time alliance summit, members apparently disappointed President Volodymyr Zelensky by not providing a clear timeline for Ukraine's membership in the group, stating that an invitation would only be extended when "certain conditions are met".

Instead, the G7 nations offered Ukraine a package of long-term security commitments through bilateral agreements with Kyiv and the world's rich nations.

While speaking at the Nato summit, Joe Biden aimed to display resolve to Putin after his meeting with Zelensky, stating, "we will not waver." He emphasised that Putin's doubts about the determination and unity of the US and its allies were misguided and that their conviction would remain steadfast.

ASEAN struggles for unity on Myanmar conflict

Monitoring Desk
JAKARTA: Finding unity over how to deal with Myanmar's junta continued to be a challenge for Southeast Asian nations on Thursday, as foreign ministers meeting in Jakarta struggled to agree on a communique that would include a reference to their neighbour's internal strife.

Gathered in the Indonesian capital for their annual meeting, foreign ministers for the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) had been expected to issue a joint communique on Wednesday, but by late afternoon on Thursday there was still no sign of it. The cause of the delay was unclear but an ASEAN official said a communique was being finalised and would be released soon.

ASEAN, which includes Myanmar among its 10 members, has pushed, without success, for the implementation of a five-point peace plan agreed with the junta shortly after a coup in early 2021.

Thailand's Pita defeated in parliament in bid for PM

Monitoring Desk
BANGKOK: Thailand's Pita Limjaroenrat failed on Thursday in his initial bid to become Thailand's next prime minister, after he was thwarted in a high-stakes parliamentary vote that included a host of no-shows and nearly 200 abstentions.

The leader of election winners Move Forward was unopposed in the contest but struggled to muster the required support of more than half of 749-member.

FIA confirms Over 400,000 social media accounts exposed for spreading blasphemy in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony on Thursday emphasized the urgent need for awareness among all sections of society, particularly religious scholars, professors, journalists, lawyers, traders, political and social leaders, and institutions in the country in an effort to prevent the misuse of social media platforms for spreading derogatory and inappropriate content.

It called upon them to play their responsible role in the campaign to curb offensive material and, in every circumstance, to utilize legal avenues to combat such content by reporting it to the relevant cyber crime authorities and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), it said.

According to details released by the Ministry, nefarious elements have been actively using social media to launch a well-organized campaign aimed at undermining the ethics, behavior, and beliefs of our youth for several years.

The negative and harmful effects of social media on society have become a matter of great concern. While indecency itself is intolerable, the situation has escalated to the point of blasphemy, which is an extremely grave offense.

As per the Ministry's statement, highly organized campaigns on social media

platforms are being conducted to spread extremely blasphemous material against the most revered figures, including Allah Almighty (God), the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), the Ahl al-Bayt (Prophet's family), the Mothers of the Believers, the Companions of the Prophet, the Holy Quran, and the national flag. Such offensive content is being shared through images and videos on specific applications and groups.

The Cyber Crimes wing of the FIA has apprehended individuals involved in these crimes, including doctors, professors, engineers, chartered accountants, lawyers, and people from various walks of life.

According to the Ministry, the report filed by the FIA Cyber Crime and the investigation conducted by the Legal Commission in the Rawalpindi Bench of the Lahore High Court revealed that more than four hundred thousand accounts in Pakistan are involved in disseminating such severe blasphemy.

The proliferation of indecency through social media is promoting the degradation of our society and dragging the new generation into the quagmire of blasphemy. Currently, over 100 million people in the country use social media, which demonstrates the rapid spread of this evil.



ISLAMABAD: Law Minister, Senator Azam Nazir Tarrar chairing a meeting with Chairperson Special Committee and National Commission on the Rights of Child, Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq, the committee's focal person and Deputy Advisor Ministry of Law and Justice Usama Malik and Section Officer J.R Sultan.

President calls for prevention, early diagnosis of life threatening diseases

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi Thursday called for prevention and early diagnosis of diseases like breast cancer and water borne ailments to give people a chance to live longer healthy lives. Speaking virtually at an awareness programme arranged by Siemens Healthineers, he underlined the need for improvements in the health and education sectors of Pakistan.

Despite the limited resources a developing country like Pakistan should give priority to health and education of the people, he stressed.

The president said preventive measures and widespread awareness were vital to prepare the people against the onslaught of life threatening diseases.

He said Pakistan had an experience of effectively and successfully tackling Covid-19 as compared to the neighbouring country where the death rate was higher. Spreading of awareness among the people was critical to keep Covid under control, he said, urging the people followed the advice of the government to wear masks, keep distance and take preventive measures helping the country

eventually overcome the challenge. The president urged the people to ensure cleanliness to stop the spread of communicable diseases. Religious scholars could play an important role by teaching the significance of hygiene during their sermons in mosques, he continued.

He appreciated the efforts of Begum Samina Alvi in raising awareness about the threats posed by breast cancer to the health of women. Citing reasons for late diagnosis of breast cancer, he said the women in Pakistan were hesitant to share information about

any unusual signs which was the cause of delay in screening for the deadly disease. He said those who go for early screening their chance of survival from breast cancer was 99 percent and women should undergo screening when they feel a lump in their chests.

He pointed to the brain drain in Pakistan, saying a large percentage of women who get higher education either prefer to stay at home or leave for better opportunities abroad which resulted in lack of availability of professionals in different fields.

IDB president assures PM of continued support to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): President of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Dr Sulaiman Al Jasser on Thursday assured Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of continued financial support to Pakistan.

The IDB president, in a telephonic conversation with PM Shehbaz, termed Pakistan a brotherly country and vowed to cooperate with it, the PM Office said.

The prime minister thanked the IDB president IDB for giving one billion dollars to Pakistan and said the received amount also played an important role in finalizing the standby agreement with the International

Monetary Fund (IMF). He said without the IDB's support, the IMF's deal with Pakistan's was difficult to materialize.

The prime minister said the Islamic Development Bank was an important partner of Pakistan, which helped it in difficult times.

He recalled his meeting with Sulaiman Jasser in France, and said Pakistan was keen to further strengthen its partnership with the IDB.

He apprised the IDB president of the recently established Special Investment Facilitation Council for the promotion of investment in the country.

Law minister chairs meeting to finalize rules for Sex Offender Register

ISLAMABAD (APP): A crucial meeting was convened on Thursday at the Law Ministry to discuss and finalize the rules pertaining to the establishment of a comprehensive Sex Offender Register. The meeting was chaired by Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazir Tarrar, and attended by the Chairperson of the Special Committee and National Commission on the Rights of Child, Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq, the committee's focal person and Deputy Advisor Ministry of Law and Justice Usama Malik, and Section Officer J.R Sultan. The purpose of the meeting was to present an update on the progress made so far.

During the meeting, the participants engaged in in-depth discussions re-

garding the framework and implementation of the Sex Offender Register. The Chairperson of the Special Committee expressed gratitude for the opportunity to present the progress made by the committee in developing robust rules and regulations for the register. Section Officer J.R Sultan elaborated on the intricate legal aspects that need to be considered while formulating a comprehensive and effective system.

The committee's focal person, Usama Malik provided valuable insights into the technical aspects of maintaining and managing the register.

The subject rules shall be finalised once approved by the special committee under the Anti Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Syed Amin Ul Haque and Federal Minister for Science and Technology Agha Hassan Baloch witnessing contract signing of High Speed Mobile Broadband Projects for Balochistan.

Around 7.2 million families received Benazir Kafaalat payments: Kundi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Faisal Karim Kundi Thursday said that around 7.2 million families received their quarterly payments under the Benazir Kafaalat programme till today.

Addressing a press conference, the SAPM said that the Benazir Education stipends were also being disbursed among the beneficiaries along with the Kafaalat payments.

He advised the beneficiaries of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) to only follow the messages which was sent through

BISP official number 8171 and ignore the fake messages from other numbers.

The SAPM said that around 0.3 million cards of the beneficiaries, earlier blocked during the previous government tenure, had been reactivated to provide relief to the poor while the remaining cards would be reactivated soon after completing the necessary requirements.

To a question, Faisal Kundi said that beneficiaries of BISP would be able to open their accounts in any bank available near to them instead of only two banks which were designated for this purpose in the past.

Expressing his concern over the Parachinar issue,

Faisal Kundi urged the political parties and ulemas (Religious Scholars) from all school of thoughts to intervene for resolving the issue of Parachinar.

"There is need to resolve the issue immediately to ensure peace as Muharram is near", Faisal Kundi said.

Land occupation was still a major issue in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf led government did nothing for resolving such issues, he said.

Criticizing the attack on the military installations on May 09 by rioters, Faisal Kundi said those involved in the incident must be punished.

Pakistan among first countries to recognize Algerian govt after revolution: Brahim Romani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Algerian Ambassador to Pakistan Dr Brahim Romani on Thursday said Pakistan was among the first countries to recognize the interim government of the Algerian Revolution, declared on September 19, 1958 and opened its representative office in the capital, Karachi, at that time.

Pakistan, he said, also granted diplomatic passports to some leaders of the revolution, including Ahmed Ben Bella, who became the first President of the Algerian Republic from 1962 to 1965, after the regaining of independence.

Pakistan also supported the positions of the Algerian Revolution in the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement since its establishment in 1955 in Bandung, Indonesia, he remarked.

He was speaking at a function hosted by Pervez Hoodbhoy to honour Dr. Eqbal Ahmad, a renowned thinker, researcher, journalist, poet, and supporter of the Algerian Revolution.

The ambassador said the Algerian government established the 'International Association Friends of the Algerian Revolution to honour those, including Dr Eqbal Ahmad, who had fought, sacrificed, extended solidarity and supported the Algerian Revolution of 1954-1962 in all forms of assistance.

He said the founding General Assembly of the association was held under the patronage of President Abdelmadjid Tebboune on July 3, on the occasion of the celebration of the 61st anniversary of the national independence.

Professor Pervez Hoodbhoy, a nuclear physicist scientist and close family member of Dr Eqbal Ahmad, who passed away in 1999, participated in the founding assembly and received the award presented by the Ministry of Mujahideen Affairs of Algeria on behalf of Dr Eqbal Ahmad.



ISLAMABAD: NDMA and Save the Children sign an MoU to enhance cooperation in field of Disaster Risk Reduction. Chairman NDMA Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik witnessed the ceremony.

MD PBM commits to fighting poverty

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM), a national social welfare organization, led by Managing Director Amir Fida Paracha, is dedicated to combating poverty and uplifting marginalized communities in Pakistan.

The MD PBM in a statement highlighted the establishment of 46 Sweet Homes across the country, providing care for orphaned children. Additionally, PBM has set up 163 Women Empowerment Centers, promoting skill-based education for women, and 159 Child Labor Welfare Schools. Furthermore, 18 Shelter Homes have been established, and the "Roti Sab Kay Liye" program has been introduced, which offers meals through 20 food trucks.

Irfan calls for judiciary to deliver 'easy and speedy' justice for all

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Irfan Siddiqui Thursday said that his leadership firmly believed in the supremacy of the constitution and stressed the need to simplify laws for the general public to provide speedy and easy justice for all.

"Law should be treated equally for everyone and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) should be

The organization has successfully implemented the Orphan and Widows Support Program (OWSP) in ten districts, extending financial assistance to widows and orphans.

He appreciated the support provided to individuals with disabilities, senior citizens, and the needy, through medical treatments and educational opportunities. These programs have had a positive impact on the lives of deserving citizens.

He expressed the organization's commitment to enhancing the effectiveness of its programs by fostering public-private partnerships. By engaging local and international donors, PBM has gained increased resources and efficiency.

Amir Muqam, Awais Leghari call on PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Adviser to the Prime Minister Engineer Amir Muqam called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and discussed with him overall political situation in the country.

Amir Muqam praised the prime minister for his recent announcement to establish a university for the people of the erstwhile tribal areas.

He expressed confidence that the university would help the youth of the area to excel in educational and professional fields.

Separately, President of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Punjab chapter and former parliamentarian Awais Leghari called on the prime minister and discussed with him the political situation in country.

Maryam Nawaz likely to return to Pakistan on July 17 or 18

LAHORE (Online): Maryam Nawaz senior vice president of PML-N is likely to return to Pakistan on July 17 or 18. According to sources Maryam Nawaz will give final shape to her schedule of public meetings and rallies in connection with her mass contact campaign on her return to Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Irfan Siddiqui calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Chairman WAPDA reviews construction activities on Mohmand Dam

ISLAMABAD (APP): WAPDA Chairman Engr Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (Retd) on Thursday visited Mohmand Dam Project's all key sites, including diversion scheme of the project, which will be completed during the upcoming low-flow season to divert River Swat.

The chairman had a detailed review of construction activities - concrete works on upper stilling basin of the spillway, excavation and support of inlet portal and concrete lining in the diversion tunnels in particular.

The chairman directed the project management to double their efforts for the diversion of River Swat in the upcoming low-flow season as planned.

He also urged upon the contractors to take all precautionary measures for securing the critical construction sites, particu-

larly the diversion tunnels in high-flow season to prevent any adverse impact of floods on the project.

Activities on part of the contractors relating to availability and stock piling of rock-fill material for the main dam need to be expedited as well, the Chairman further directed. He urged the project team to squeeze the timelines for completion of the project.

The multipurpose Mohmand Dam Project is being constructed by WAPDA across River Swat in Mohmand District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The main objectives of the project include water storage for agriculture, flood control, water supply to Peshawar for urban use and green, clean and economically affordable hydel power generation.



ISLAMABAD: German Ambassador to Pakistan Alfred Grannas and Austrian Ambassador to Pakistan Andrea Wicke cuts the ribbon to inaugurate the event entitled "Celebrating 70 Years of the First Ascent of Nanga Parbat by a German-Austrian Expedition 1953" at Austrian residence, in Federal Capital.

Islamabad Police bolster security measures for Muharram processions

ISLAMABAD (APP): In preparation for the upcoming religious observance of Muharram-ul-Haram, the Islamabad police have vowed to implement stringent security arrangements.

A high-level meeting, chaired by SSP (Operations) Malik Jameel Zafar and attended by senior police officials, was held to review the security mea-

sures. The authorities emphasized the utilization of advanced technologies such as safe city cameras, smart cars, surveillance cameras, and drone cameras to maintain high vigilance and ensure the safety of processions. Stringent directives were issued to organizers, emphasizing the cooperation between law enforcement agencies.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Republic of Belarus H.E. Andrei Metelitsa calls on the Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Ehsan ur Rehman Mazari.

DG health stresses Media awareness to utilize 'Humraaz app' to improve mental health

ISLAMABAD (Online): Director General Health Ministry of Health, Dr Baseer Khan Achakzai Thursday stressed media and youth's active role in spreading awareness for utilizing 24 hours available government "Humraaz app" to improve the mental health of the public.

Talking to the PTV news channel, he called for joint efforts by stakeholders, including media and provincial governments, the community, students in medical universities, and health professionals to work for the prevention and treatment of mental health disorders.

To support people's health, the government has launched a revolutionary program in the field of health and introduced a free mobile application "Humraaz" and a free helpline "1166" on which people can share their problems and issues with experts.

He said there is a need to develop positive behavior at a young age to prevent people from falling prey to mental health issues at a later stage in life, adding, around 3 million population need mental health treatment which need more awareness through media.

Sherry says: Citizens to remain watchful amid new monsoon spell start

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday urged the citizens and authorities concerned to remain watchful amid start of new spell of monsoon.

The federal minister took to Twitter to share the update as the new spell of monsoon season had commenced.

Senator Rehman said that rains with thunder-showers were likely in different areas of Islamabad, Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir. "This new wave of monsoon is likely to continue till July 17. In the meantime,