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Will not allow army to take any unconstitutional steps: CJP

Says those who abide by Constitution will be successful; Armed forces should be "praised" for not opening fire on civilians on May 9; Hearing adjourned indefinitely:

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Adjourning the hearing of a set of petitions challenging civilian trials in military courts indefinitely on Thursday, CJP Umar Ata Bandial remarked that the Supreme Court will not allow the Pakistan Army from carrying out any unconstitutional act.

"Those who build their case on the Constitution of Pakistan and law will be successful," said CJP Bandial.

The six-member bench led by CJP Bandial and comprising Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Sayed Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi, Justice Ayesha A Malik and Justice Yahya Afridi adjourned the hearing for an indefinite period.

During the hearing, the CJP observed that the incidents of May 9 were of a serious nature. He said it pained him to hear remarks about the Pakistan Army being equipped to open fire on protesters on May 9. The CJP added that the army is meant to serve the country. The Pakistan Army did the correct thing by not resorting to shooting citizens on May 9, he said. Earlier, Attorney General of Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Awan assured the court that the 102 civilian suspects currently under military custody will be fairly treated during ongoing trials.

AGP Awan claimed that his assurance is coming from the military's top

leadership. Concessions are being made for May 9 suspects on the court's insistence, said the AGP.

At one point the AGP also reminded the court that the military is armed. "No efforts are being made to overturn the Constitution of Pakistan... What happened on May 9 is before everyone," said AGP Awan. "Remember one thing - they are the armed forces. If they are attacked, they have weapons to defend themselves."

The AGP further said that the army is equipped to fire bullets. "It is not possible that if they are attacked, they first approach an SHO to lodge a formal complaint."



Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and Iran Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian witnessing signing of memoranda of understanding between Pakistan and Iran in Islamabad.

Over 1200 children to be taught skills of literacy, numeracy through digital program: CM

KARACHI (APP): Over 12,500 children will be taught vital life skills of literacy and numeracy through a digital program that will help underserved primary-level students, all over the province.

This was stated by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah while speaking at Accelerated Digital Learning Program (ADLP) under which Sindh Education Foundation has launched Digital Microschool in collaboration with Teach The World.

In fulfilling the Sindh government's commitment to improving the level of education in Sindh, Shah said that the Sindh Education Foundation was establishing high-quality, scalable projects that will reach a maximum number of students.

The CM said that the project of digital education

was taking us one step closer to eradicating illiteracy. "Keeping this goal in mind, the two-pronged approach is to increase access to education and improve the quality of delivery, which will be tested by digital, adaptive assessments," he said.

Murad Shah said that an initial phase of the Accelerated Digital Learning Program is being launched on Thursday. This is in partnership between Sindh Education Foundation and Teach The World Foundation, he said and added that it would be implemented by TTWF, a nonprofit currently running three digital programs in 21 centers all over Pakistan.

Recognizing the need for immediate solutions in the field of digital learning, the project would run for 18 months and then scale it up incorporating the les-

sons learned during the pilot, the CM said and added that the two MicroSchools under the scheme have been established, starting from the increasingly populous area of Razzakabad in Karachi.

As per program, the CM said that during the next year, 100 MicroSchools along with 25 In-School Digital Classrooms would be completed and then results would be measured for scaling up.

It may be noted that a Micro School maximizes resources by providing 2-hour shifts for students to learn reading, writing, and math through approved curriculum-based games on digital devices. This licensed software is tested for global context, providing self-paced, gamified learning - hence increasing the level of engagement and interest in learning.

Pakistan, Iran chalk out five-year trade plan; target \$5 b trade volume

PM reaffirms commitment to strengthen Pak-Iran relations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Iran on Thursday set a target of \$5 billion for bilateral trade as the two countries chalked out a five-year trade cooperation plan to enhance cooperation.

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, addressing a joint press stakeout with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir Abdollahian, said the five-year trade cooperation plan was aimed at removing impediments in bilateral trade, finalizing the Free Trade Agreement and establishing of institutional linkages between the private sectors of both countries.

"I am confident that

the steps we are taking today, will chart the course for a long-term durable economic partnership between our two countries in the months and years ahead," the foreign minister told the media after the two leaders held a meeting as well as the delegation-level talks.

He said during their meeting, they had agreed to prioritize the operationalization of the five remaining border markets by the end of current year.

Foreign Minister Bilawal said Pakistan and Iran had decided to repatriate all the sentenced prisoners as per provisions of existing agreements between two sides.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ms. Marriyum Aurangzeb and Her Excellency Pang Chunxue, the Charge d'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan cutting ribbon to inaugurate Chinese News Service at APP Headquarters.

Growing financing gap major challenge to Pakistan's Roadmap to 2030 climate resilience: Sherry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Climate Journey here whereas the event aimed to showcase the government's collective efforts and accomplishments in combating climate change over the past year, underscoring the critical importance of ongoing commitment and collaboration in tackling this global challenge.

The event was graced by the presence of the Chief Guest, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, who attended the gathering to exemplify the nation's unwavering dedication to addressing climate issues and building a sustainable future, a news release said.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday said the major challenge to Pakistan's Roadmap to 2030 was the growing financing gap, and the country needed state-of-the-art projection, resources and money to scaffold adaptation and transformational municipal, rural and Agri-water governance for the years of unpredictability ahead.

The Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination successfully organized the National Stocktake on



ISLAMABAD: Principal Information Officer Mobashir Hassan and Executive Director of State Life Insurance Corporation Shahid Iqbal Baloch exchanging documents after signing an agreement for the provision of health insurance to working journalists and media workers associated with the media houses of Pakistan. Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Information Minister Ms Marriyum Aurangzeb witnessing the ceremony.

We all have to take ahead this country: PM

Country's interests sole purpose of meetings held with army chiefs throughout political career; People taunt me, calling me the establishment's man, but this doesn't bother me

ISLAMABAD (Online): Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif has said we have to take ahead this country.

"We have to take forward this country. If we decide with consensus that we have to take ahead this country then we can make progress with consultation, national unity and national consensus. PM said this while addressing a ceremony following inauguration of Bhara Kahu Bypass here Thursday.

"I am taunted that I am man of establishment. Such things don't make any difference to my health. The objective was only this that government and establishment should together take ahead country, he added.

He went on to say "I, you and Marriyum Aurangzeb cannot understand the circumstances of these millions of poor people. Only those people can understand it who are facing this situation.

Govt to take Pakistan to forefront of digital world: Amin ul Haq

KARACHI (INP): Federal Minister for Information Technology Syed Amin-ul-Haq on Thursday expressed his resolve and determination to take Pakistan to the forefront of the digital world with a futuristic vision. The minister, while addressing the graduation ceremony of 8th and 9th Cohorts of National Incubation Centre Karachi (NICK) at NED University of Engineering and Technology, said that multifaceted efforts were required by all

the stakeholders for materializing the Vision 2025.

The federal minister said that dedicated efforts by the Ministry resulted in the surge of Pakistan's IT exports to \$2.6 billion while we were fully determined to enhance the figure to \$15 billion in the coming years.

Following the vision of Digital Pakistan, the IT Ministry has taken multiple steps for the promotion of the sector which resulted in the expansion of internet connectivity.

FM Bilawal Bhutto calls on prime minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Minister and Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Thursday called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here. In the meeting, they held a consultation on the overall political situation in the country.

The foreign minister also apprised the prime minister of the matters pertaining to his ministry.

Zardari, Bilawal to begin consultation on Sindh caretaker set-up today

KARACHI (INP): Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto will begin their consultations for interim setup in Sindh from tomorrow (Friday).

According to sources, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah and senior provincial ministers will share their points of view over Sindh caretaker setup with the People's Party's top leadership.

Sindh government sources said that the government has considered over three names for the caretaker chief minister's office and these names will be presented to the party leadership.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah speaks at ChildLife Foundation program to celebrate the expansion of Telemedicine network to 100 hospitals of every tahsil of the province at Dr. Ruth K. M. Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi, Sindh.

Sindh Minister Sharjeel Memon says: Female drivers to steer 'women-only' pink buses in Sindh

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh government has decided to appoint female drivers for their women-only pink bus service, aiming to enhance a sense of safety and convenience among women during travel. The decision was made during the tenth board meeting of the Sindh Mass Transit Authority in Karachi, chaired by the Sindh Minister for Information and Transport, Sharjeel Memon.

The meeting emphasized the importance of women's empowerment and gender equality and resolved to initiate a comprehensive training program for newly appointed female drivers.

The training will equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to handle the pink buses efficiently and cater to the specific needs of women passengers.

According to Provincial Transport Minister Sharjeel Memon, the first route for the Pink bus service will connect Model Colony to Tower, with plans to expand it to routes 4, 5, 6, and 7 in the near future.

President gives assent to five bills

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday gave his assent to five bills after they were passed by the parliament.

The president signed Defense Housing Authority Islamabad (Amendment) Bill 2023 to amend the Defense Housing Authority Islamabad Act, 2013.

He assented to Petroleum (Amendment) Bill, 2023 aimed at amending the Petroleum Act, 1934.

President Alvi also approved the Pakistan Nursing Council (Amendment) Bill, 2023 which provided for amending the Pakistan Nursing Council Act, 1973.

SBCA chief directs officers to take action against illegal constructions

KARACHI (APP): Director General Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) Muhammad Yasin Shar on Thursday directed the concerned officers to take immediate action on the complaints against illegal constructions, and to resolve the pending cases on the basis of merit. He said this during a surprise visit to the One Window Complaint Cell set up in the SBCA office here.

On this occasion, the concerned officers briefed the DG SBCA regarding the online complaints furnished by the citizens against the illegal constructions.

Govt taking steps to promote cultural, sports activities; Commissioner

KARACHI (APP): Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Iqbal Memon on Thursday said that Karachi was a city of peace, the government was taking steps to promote positive cultural and sports activities to strengthen the peace.

These views were expressed by Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Iqbal Memon in a meeting of the Rotary Club organized by the Rotary Club at a local hotel.

The commissioner said that the Karachi administration was trying to play its role to make these efforts of the government fruitful.

In this regard, the Commissioner's Office had organized various sports tournaments and competitions. As a result of these efforts, Lyari's talented football youth have reached this level of confidence and ability that Pakistan Football Federation had also acknowledged their abilities due to the training given to Lyari's talented football youth under the supervision of Swindon Town Club England Vice Chairman Zavier Austin and Coach Alex Pike, he said.



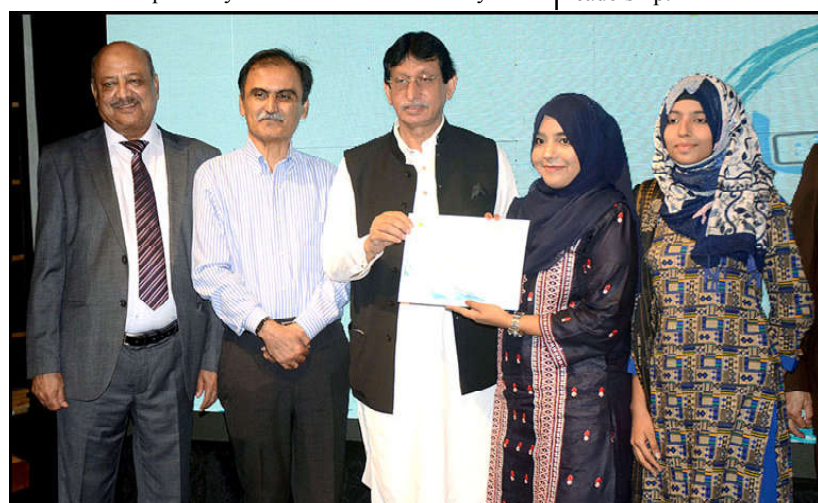
KARACHI: Needy people are gather in a queue for getting rations provided by Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori among family members of martyred and orphans due to price hiking in country, at Governor House in Karachi.

With a total enrollment of 3.94 m 12,809 private schools operating in Sindh

With the accurate data, government will plan to bring out of school children back to school. Syed Sardar Ali Shah

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of Education and Culture, Sindh, Syed Sardar Ali Shah, said that the identification of issues and formulation of policies require a data mechanism. Unfortunately, due to the absence of an effective data system, we face many difficulties in understanding problems and finding their solutions. Building accurate

data can be helpful. He expressed these views during the unveiling ceremony of the "Student Census" report of private schools organized at the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi here on Thursday. Present at the event were Secretary School Education Sindh, Ghulam Akbar Laghari, Special Secretary Ghulam Ali Barhamani.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for IT & Telecom Syed Amin-ul-Haq presents Certificate of Graduation during Graduation Ceremony of 8th & 9th COHORTS at National Incubation Center NED University.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

A terrible law

The National Assembly — a forum elected, empowered and entrusted by the nation to safeguard the public interest — has once again capitulated to unelected powers to pass legislation that gravely undermines civil rights.

The amendments to the Official Secrets Act passed by the Lower House on Tuesday read like an autocrat's wish list: sweeping powers to search and detain; to brand anyone an 'enemy' of the state on mere suspicion; to pry into citizens' personal affairs without a court-issued warrant; to freely use force against suspects who resist such intrusions; and to treat anyone as guilty until they are proven innocent.

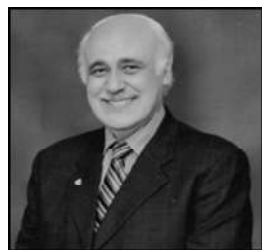
It is deeply troubling that whoever had this law drafted clearly not only felt that such extreme measures were 'appropriate' against citizens of this country, but that they should also be given sanction. Thankfully, the Senate has refused to abdicate its responsibility. Facing stiff opposition from both government and opposition benches, the Senate chairman has referred the NA-passed bill to the relevant Senate committee for further debate.

It is unfortunate that so few legislators are speaking out while Pakistani democracy is being frogmarched into the shambles by their own hands. A law which empowers the state to consider anyone an 'enemy' — even if they have unintentionally interacted with any person or entity deemed to be working against the country — not only runs counter to the established principles of justice, it is dangerous in the hands of a state that routinely brands its own citizens, including elected prime ministers, 'traitors'. Likewise, any law that gives intelligence agencies carte blanche to "enter and search any person or place, without a warrant, and if necessary, by use of force, and seize any document, sketch, or like nature, or anything which is or can be evidence" on the basis of mere suspicion is excessive and will only serve to create a climate of perpetual fear. The same bill also pushes for all materials collected by intelligence agencies during their investigations to be considered admissible as evidence, even when they may not have been collected by legal means. This would include secretly taped conversations or video recordings done without a warrant from a court of law.

Do our lawmakers really want to give intelligence agencies complete impunity to conduct surveillance operations against anyone, which would include themselves, and conveniently justify their intrusive activities later by calling them part of an ongoing investigation?

Even in the worst period of oppression in Pakistan's history, such a brazen attempt to jettison civil liberties would have prompted an outcry from the thinking segments of society. When the implications are this serious, it is critical that this law is debated further — not just in parliament, but by civil society too. The Senate, meanwhile, must do its duty.

Our cloudy future



F.S. Aijazuddin

Every thinking person should watch Christopher Nolan's film *Oppenheimer*. Tickets are expensive but they are cheaper than ignorance about the implications of our nuclear prowess. The film is a disturbing narrative of the career of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the man who headed the US Manhattan project which developed and detonated the first atomic bomb 'Trinity' in 1945. Like Alfred Nobel who invented dynamite, Oppenheimer suffered postpartum qualms about the demon he spawned: "Death — the Destroyer of Worlds".

The atomic bombs dropped by the US on first Hiroshima and then Nagasaki in 1945 killed or permanently maimed 200,000 humans. They were followed between 1945 and 1980 by atmospheric nuclear tests conducted by powerful countries across the globe. The impact has been the direct cause of cancer in about 2.4 million people.

Nolan spared his audience graphic images of the effect of the atom weapons on human beings — peeling flesh, blindness, loss of hair, leukemia, incurable tumours. He avoided mention of the irreversible impact on the world's atmosphere, contaminated water resources and genetic mutations.

The film concentrated instead on the political aftermath following the birth of Oppenheimer's brainchild. Like Frankenstein's monster, it destroyed its creator.

The US and USSR, having fought as allies against Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy and Hirohito's Japan, turned on

each other after the war ended in 1945. Their arms race continues even today. Oppenheimer, as a member of the US Atomic Energy Commission, lobbied to minimise nuclear proliferation and advocated against an arms race with the Soviet Union. He opposed the development of the hydrogen bomb, alienating the US government and its military. Dr Oppenheimer's security clearance was withdrawn and he found himself ostracised on suspicion of being a closet communist. Eventually, in 2022, (55 years after his death), the US "ordered that the 1954 decision to revoke Oppenheimer's security clearance be vacated".

Had Oppenheimer been born in India, he would have been feted like his scientific counterparts the polymath Dr Homi Bhabha, Dr Vikram Sarabhai, and Dr Abdul Kalam who became India's president.

Had Oppenheimer been a Pakistani, he would have shared the indignity suffered by the self-styled father of our bomb, Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan (a claim contested by his nemesis Dr Munir Ahmad Khan).

Since Oppenheimer's time, many countries have amassed large nuclear arsenals, ostensibly to deter their enemies. None has been foolhardy enough to deploy them in combat. Neither the US, nor Russia, China, Israel, North Korea, India nor Pakistan. Prohibitively costly to produce, nuclear weapons are too dangerous to be used (even with a limited objective) without endangering the rest of humanity. They have become the ultimate status symbol, like some gold-plated skeleton — a macabre talking point.

Earlier this year, Pakistan celebrated the 25th anniversary of its first nuclear tests. At a seminar organised by the Institute of Strategic Studies, adviser to the National Command Authority, retired Lt-Gen

War in tea leaves



Shahzad Sharjeel

Can one nation's freedom become a millstone around another's neck? That too across oceans and over mountains as mightily as the Himalayas? The answer, unfortunately, is, yes.

The Brits and their cousins in America had to have their tea. The Chinese would only sell it for silver dollars. The American War of Independence scuttled silver mining. Jack Beeching has meticulously documented in *The Chinese Opium Wars* how by 1781 no silver remittances had reached India for two years. To make matters worse for the East India Company and its patrons in London, opium production of two years from Patna remained unsold. The quadrangle of tea-silver-opium-war came together.

Boston was not just the scene of the Tea Party but also home to clans called Boston Brahmins. These traders — some in their teens — monopolised America's opium trade with China. Amit Ghosh, author of *Smoke and Ashes*, holds that almost all merchant communities in East and West India had their initial capital accumulation through opium. The generally peaceable and philanthropic Parsis were no exception. Rustomjee Cowasjee's clippers 'Sylph' and 'Cowasjee Family' were considered the fastest vessels in the opium trade. In fact, philanthropy is the common hallmark of opium fortunes from India to Holland and from Britain to the US.

Things have a way of coming full circle. After decades of trying to stem the

tide of foreign drugs like heroin, cocaine, ice, etc, the US faces a 'made in America' opioid pandemic. Powerful family names have been tarnished, skeletons are tumbling out of cupboards, and foundation plaques have been removed as university and museum links to opium come to the fore. Poppies are, after all, not just flowers.

The name Abbot, avarice and Americans it appears are destined to be intertwined. The most wanted man on earth was discovered in Abbottabad. Abiel Abbot Low, progenitor of the leading family of entrepreneurs and philanthropists after whom Columbia University's Low Library is named, made his fortune in opium.

Assuming you are hooked by now, let's tell the tale from the beginning. The vernacular term 'posti' (lethargic) is derived from 'post', Persian for the poppy bulb. Another term used for these substance abusers is 'afyonchi', which reflects the drugs' antecedents more closely and precisely. Afyon is a region in Turkey that was famous for its poppy crop in the olden days. Opium's medicinal use is miraculous, especially for pain management amongst the chronically ill, and has been employed for millennia. Opium forms the basis for most other, non-chemical illicit drugs and has posed a major problem for governments for well over a century. Poppy and its main derivative morphine are essential for pharmaceutical purposes, and preventing them from falling into the wrong hands has proved near impossible; the profit margins are just mind-boggling. No other nation knows the debilitating effects of opium dependence like our Chinese friends. No other nation has so brazenly forced it upon a hapless people as the British did from their

colonial perch in India. Two major wars were imposed on China between 1839 to 1860 to force it to not just open its ports for the British ships carrying opium, but making it mandatory for the Chinese to buy this agent of destruction and allow its free use across the land. China lost the Nanking Treaty through which China had to cede Hong Kong.

Availability of illicit drugs and the challenges of managing Pakistan's more than 2600-kilometre-long border with Afghanistan across which all sorts of troubles move back and forth hogs so much of our attention that the lack of sufficient regulation and the res-urgent abuse of over-the-counter opioids is hardly ever mentioned. Visit any pharmacy across the country, diddle about for a while, and start counting the number of people who ask for 'relaxants' but fail to produce any prescription. What makes dozens of medicines open to abuse, unfortunately, is also found, albeit in lower volume, in something that does not require a doctor's prescription, ie, cough syrup.

Drugs, wars, civil unrest and politics go hand in hand. Those calling for a cap, and rightly so, on the range of punishments that can be meted out by military courts, must also think about how various types and quantities of drugs inexplicably show up in the possession of political opponents. Planting 20 kilograms of heroin on a member of the opposition is as bad as ensuring capital punishment, military courts or not. One hopes that our jails become rehab centres for all prisoners, present and future. No one begrudges an occasional mattress, a fan, or a home-cooked meal, but a red line must be drawn against white lines behind bars. - Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

PM urges

Pak-US businessmen to benefit from investment opportunities; highlights SIFC 1-window facility

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday, highlighting the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) as a one-window facility for investors, urged the Pakistani-American businessmen to benefit from the numerous investment opportunities available in Pakistan.

prominent Pakistani-American businessmen and entrepreneurs, who are currently visiting Pakistan, called on him.

He lauded the contributions being made by the successful and vibrant Pakistani-American community.

He said they were contributing to the socio-economic development of their motherland as well as their adopted country but

also serving as a bridge of friendship between Pakistan and the United States. Highlighting Pakistan's geo-economic potential, its strategic location, vast mineral wealth, and population dividend, Prime Minister Shehbaz briefed the delegation about Pakistan's economic recovery plan under the newly constituted SIFC through a whole-of-the-government

approach. He said under the SIFC framework, the government was working on a comprehensive plan to attract investment in the five select fields of agriculture, information technology, mine and minerals, energy, and defence production.

He said the purpose of establishing the SIFC was to provide a one-window facility to the potential investors.



ISLAMABAD: A group of prominent Pakistani-American businessmen and entrepreneurs call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.



KARACHI: Regional Chairman FPCCI Muhammad Nadeem Qureshi presenting shield to nominated Pakistan Ambassador to Iran Muhammad Mudassar Tipu during his visit to FPCCI.

Commissioner vows to achieve cotton production target

MULTAN (APP): Cotton Commissioner, ministry of national food security and research, Dr. Zahid Mahmood said on Thursday that Pakistan is expected to meet national cotton production target of 12.65 million bales in 2023-24 pleading that weather conditions were favourable for cotton crop compared to last year.

released by Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA), putting the arrivals figure at more than 1.4 million bales, was encouraging, according to a release issued by CCRI Multan spokesman.

He further stated that total 368 cotton ginning factories were operational in Pakistan, 70 more than the previous fortnight, meaning thereby there was steady arrival of seed cotton (Phutti) necessities of increased number of factories. This, he added, brought a ray of hope for farmers.

Pakistan's total foreign reserves reach at \$ 13.46b

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$ 13,463.7 million while reserves held by the central bank reached \$ 8,153.8 million.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that SBP's reserves decreased by \$ 32 million to \$ 8,153.8 million on account of debt repayments during the week ending on July 27, 2023.

Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at US\$ 5,309.9 million, it added.

In the previous week ending on July 21, 2023, total liquid foreign reserves held by the country was US\$ 13,534.1 million.

Saudi extends 1m bpd oil output cut: Ministry

RIYADH (AFP/APP): Saudi Arabia announced Thursday it is extending a voluntary oil production cut of one million barrels per day for another month, keeping up its campaign to prop up prices.

"Saudi Arabia will extend the voluntary cut of one million barrels per day... for another month to include the month of September," the energy ministry said in a statement.

The cut, which first took effect in July, could be further prolonged or even deepened, the energy ministry added. The move

leaves daily production by Saudi world's biggest crude exporter at approximately nine million bpd.

The "voluntary cut comes to reinforce the precautionary efforts made by OPEC Plus countries with the aim of supporting the stability and balance of oil markets," the energy ministry said.

Announcing the cut following a June meeting of the 23-nation OPEC+ alliance, which also includes Russia, Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman noted that it was potentially "extendable".

Services' trade deficit narrows by 87% in FY2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): The services' trade deficit shrank by 87.68 percent during the fiscal year 2022-23 as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics reported.

The services trade deficit was recorded at \$719.45 million during July-June (2022-23) against the deficit of \$5,840.11 million during

July-June (2021-22). The exports of services during the period increased by 2.78 percent going up from \$7,102.35 million in 2021-22 to \$7,300.13 million during fiscal year 2022-23, according to PBS data.

On the other hand, the imports declined from \$8,192.46 million to \$8,019.58 million in FY2023, showing negative growth of 38.04 percent.

Chambers' presidents call for cut in govt expenses, imports with strategy to increase exports

MULTAN (APP): Presidents of Lahore and Multan Chambers of Commerce and Industry on Thursday stressed reducing government expenses, cut in imports and practical steps to increase exports to bring the national economy on the right track.

They expressed these views during a ceremony at the Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) organized in honour of a delegation from the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry

(LCCI) led by its president Kashif Noor.

The delegates visited different stalls showcasing products developed by craftsmen at MCCI. They appreciated the craftsmen's work but added that their skill level

could be upgraded through training to match present-day advancements and their access to lucrative international markets be made easy. LCCI president Kashif Noor said on the occasion that the country's economy-related troubles

could compound further in case of no cuts in expenses and imports, and also stressed on withdrawal of free gas, electricity and other privileges saying these initial steps were imperative for a stronger economy.

"We must take initiatives to increase exports," he said adding that the country was facing a shortage of dollars and export earnings would not only improve reserves position but would also strengthen Rupee.

Gold rates dip by Rs2,800 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs2,800 and was sold at Rs.220,200 on Thursday against its sale at Rs.223,000 on the previous day. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also decreased by Rs2,401 to Rs 188,786 from Rs191,187 whereas the price of 10 gram 22 karat gold dipped to Rs173,054 from Rs. 175,254.

Over 1.4m bales of cotton arrival recorded at ginneries till Aug 1 in Pakistan

MULTAN (APP): Seed Cotton (Phutti) equivalent to over 1.4 million (1,428,638) bales have reached ginning factories across Pakistan till Aug 1, 2023 with major contribution of over one million bales recorded from Sindh owing to early picking and its Sanghar district alone attracting more than half of the total arrivals so far.

According to a fortnightly report of Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) issued to media on Thursday, Punjab ginning factories recorded cotton arrival figure of 388,568 bales while arrivals to ginneries in Sindh recorded at one million plus (1,040,070) bales including 721,149 reaching ginneries in Sanghar district alone.

Caretaker CM inspects Mozang, Civil Lines police stations

Independent Report
LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi conducted thorough inspection of Mozang and Civil Lines police stations on Thursday. He was accompanied by Provincial Information Minister Amir Mir.

He was disheartened to find that both police stations were in a state of disarray, with poor cleanliness and dysfunctional front desks. The staff's inability to provide satisfactory responses to the chief minister's queries further highlighted the issues at hand. What made matters

even more distressing were the grievances expressed by people at the police stations. One particular incident involved a young motorcyclist, who shared a troubling experience with the caretaker CM. The boy narrated how he was unjustly detained by the police while on an errand to buy daily-use items. The police demanded bribe from him and he was only released after succumbing to their extortion demand.

Taking immediate action, the chief minister took the boy to the front desk to thoroughly investigate the matter. Testimonies from other

staff members confirmed that Constable Naveed was involved in extorting money from him. Incensed by this revelation, CM Mohsin Naqvi ordered immediate arrest of the corrupt constable and ensured that the bribe money was returned to the hapless boy. Furthermore, the CM issued instructions for departmental action against the accused constable. Expressing his deep displeasure at the deplorable state of the two police stations, he promptly directed the IG police to implement necessary improvements within three days.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali presenting relief cheque to Senator Abdul Rasheed and Deputy Commissioner Bajaur for blast victims of Bajaur.

North Waziristan delegation calls on Governor Punjab

LAHORE (APP): A delegation from North Waziristan led by Member National Assembly (MNA) Nazir Khan met Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman and discussed varied affairs including current political situation in the country during a meeting at the Governor's House here on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that speedy work on CPEC projects, establishment of Special Economic Zones and inauguration of various development projects are a practical example of the

government's determination to stabilize the country economically.

The Governor Punjab said whenever Pakistan started to get stronger economically, anti state elements became active to derail the process of development. He strongly condemned the Bajaur blast, extended condolences to the bereaved families, and prayed for the elevation of ranks of those who lost their lives in the blast.

He said that the nation and security forces made lasting sacrifices in the war against terrorism and eradicated the scourge of terrorism.

76th I-Day to be celebrated with national zeal

BAHAWALPUR (APP): A meeting was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Bahawalpur Zaheer Anwar Jappa in the committee room of his office to review the arrangements related to Pakistan Independence Day celebrations.

On this occasion, President Bahawalpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chaudhry Zulfiqar Maan, Additional Deputy Commissioner Headquarters Sumera Rabbani, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Naem Sadiq Cheema, and officers of relevant departments attended the meeting.

KP CM chairs meeting to take detail review of census 2023

PESHAWAR (APP): An important meeting was held here with caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan in the chair to take a detailed review of the Census, 2023 to the extent of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Advisor to Chief Minister for Finance Himayatullah Khan, Additional Chief Secretary Zubair Asghar Qureshi, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Amjad Ali Khan, Administrative Secretaries of the concerned departments, Provincial Census Commissioner, Director Bureau of Statistics Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other relevant officials attended the meeting.

The participants

were briefed in detail about the mechanism and methodology adopted for the Census, 2023 and other related matters.

It was noted that for the first time in the history of Pakistan, modern technology was used in the Census. It was further informed that the entire Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was divided into more than 28000 blocks for the purpose of census adding that the final statistics of the census would be presented in the Council of Common Interest (CCI) for approval. It was decided in the meeting to form a committee headed by the Home Secretary with the purpose to examine and check the results of the census with ground realities.

Allocation of Rs 471bln for BISP shows govt sincerity: Minister

SARGODHA (APP): State Minister for Production and Industries Tasneem Ahmed Qureshi has said that the coalition government allocated huge funds for the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) in the recent budget 2023-2024 which showed its sincerity to end poverty in the country.

Talking to APP here on Thursday, he said Pakistan People's Party (PPP) had played crucial role for increasing the BISP allocations. He said the PPP had a vision for

development of the poor since its formation by former premier Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

He said the BISP Board, under the supervision of Federal Minister Shazia Marri, approved the huge amount for financial year 2023-2024. Out of total allocation, Rs 361.5 million would be spent on 9.3 million families under the Benazir Kifalat Programme, whereas 1.5 million beneficiaries would get Rs 32.27 billion under the BISP growth programme.

8 dead, 1,195 injured in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least eight persons were killed and 1,195 others injured in 1,107 road traffic crashes (RTCs) in Punjab during the last 24 hours.

As many as 607 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 588 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams.

The analysis showed that 601 drivers, 46 underage drivers, 136 pedestrians, and 466 passengers were among the victims of the road traffic crashes.

Iranian CG shows interest as CPEC partner

PESHAWAR (APP): Iranian Consul General in Peshawar, Ali Banafsha Khawa, while reaffirming Iran's unwavering commitment to regional peace and stability, has emphasized Iran's keen interest in becoming an active participant in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, underscoring the importance of cooperation among regional nations for mutual progress and prosperity.

The Iranian Consul General expressed these views during a conversation with media persons during his visit to Peshawar Press Club on Thursday. During

the visit, the Iranian diplomat participated in a Meet the Press event alongside esteemed members of the PPC. The gathering facilitated open discussions on various subjects, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Iran-Pakistan trade relations, and fostering people-to-people contact between the two neighboring nations.

During the event, the Consul General while responding to different questions on the Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline project stated that Iran had completed its part of the pipeline and now it was incumbent on Pakistan.

Three people die in separate incidents

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Three people were killed in two separate incidents that took place here Thursday.

In the first incident, two laborers died after receiving electric shocks at a private colony when a lift in which they were taking up construction materials to a rooftop of an under-construction house touched with electricity wires. In the second incident, the Rescue 1122 spokesman said a man who was identified as Shah Nawaz died when unknown persons opened fire at him at Drabon Chugi.

PFA DG inaugurates Model Food Carts, distributes food kits

LAHORE: Punjab Food Authority (PFA) Director General Raja Jahangir Anwar inaugurated Model Food Carts (MFC) and distributed free of cost food kits and disposable

to ensure food hygiene. He said that training sessions will also be arranged for small food points including tandoor, roadsides carts and food pedlars. He said that the purpose of the training is



vessels among 291 food peddlers on Thursday.

On the occasion, he has directed food business operators (FBOs) to ensure the hygiene principles at roadside carts, 'dhabas' and food points because a large number of people visited these sites to beat hunger on a daily basis.

He further said that a continuous checking process will be continued

to be aware food handlers regarding personal hygiene and safe food preparation.

The director general said that the purpose of the PFA is to bring reforms in food industry. All resources will be utilized to ensure the availability of safe, quality and standard food to the people. Despite the awareness, strict action will be taken against those FBO who sell substandard food, he added.



LAHORE: A delegation led by Member National Assembly from North Waziristan, Nazir Khan, meeting with Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House.

International News

China hints leaders started annual seaside vacation in flood-hit province

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping's chief of staff met with experts holidaying at Beidaihe on Thursday, a signal that typically means top leaders have started their vacation at the seaside resort, even as large areas of northern China remain flooded.

The summer retreat comes as questions continue to swirl around the unexplained removal as foreign minister of Qin Gang, a former rising star under Xi's patronage, the abrupt replacement of the top brass at the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force, and as the leadership struggles to find the right tools to stimulate the economy.

Beidaihe has traditionally provided a relaxed setting for retired Chinese Communist Party leaders to interact and raise concerns with the current leadership.

But as Xi has consolidated power over the past decade, the scope for elders to speak their minds has shrunk, said a Chinese scholar who declined to be named as he is not authorized to speak to foreign media.

Cai Qi, who is Xi's chief of staff, met with 57 technology experts on vacation at Beidaihe and urged them to do more to make China technologically self-reliant, state news agency Xinhua reported.

China does not announce when leaders go on holiday but typically indicates the start of their vacation with an announcement about meeting experts.

Leaders then disappear from public view for about two weeks.

It is unclear if Qin, who would be qualified to holiday at Beidaihe with the leadership since he retains the title of state councillor, will turn up. Qin has not been seen in public since June 25.

One of Xi's last tasks before going on vacation was to instruct emergency responders to work harder at rescuing those affected by floods battering northern China as a result of Typhoon Doksuri.



Rescue workers from Shanxi province evacuate people through floodwaters with a boat after the rains and floods brought by remnants of Typhoon Doksuri, in Zhuozhou, Hebei province, China.

Dozens of states to pledge to combat use of food as weapon of war

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: More than 75 countries will "commit to take action to end the use of food as a weapon of war and the starvation of civilians as a tactic of warfare" by backing a U.S.-drafted communique at the United Nations on Thursday, senior U.S. officials said.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will release the communique on Thursday when he

chairs a U.N. Security Council meeting on famine and food insecurity caused by conflict. A senior U.S. official said more countries were expected to sign.

Blinken will also announce some \$362 million in new U.S. funding to "tackle the drivers of food insecurity and enhance resilience" in nearly a dozen African countries and Haiti, said a second senior U.S. official.

At least 15 thought to be dead after bus crash in Mexico, officials say

Monitoring Desk
MEXICO CITY: At least 15 people are thought to have died and 21 more injured in a bus crash in the Mexican state of Nayarit in the early hours of Thursday, state officials said.

Local media had earlier reported that as many as 24 could have died when the passenger bus crashed off the highway into a ravine in western Mexico.



Mongolian Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene Luvsannamsrai gestures in front of Mongolia's flag and a portrait of the country's national hero Genghis Khan while speaking to Reuters correspondent Simon Lewis in an interview at the Mongolian embassy in Washington, U.S.

UN given green light to monitor peace deal between Colombia's government and its largest rebel group

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: The Security Council on Wednesday unanimously authorized the U.N. political mission in Colombia to help verify implementation of a cease-fire agreement between the government and the country's largest remaining guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army.

The council also expressed willingness to do

the same if a cease-fire is reached with another armed group, the Estado Mayor Central.

The U.N. has been monitoring a 2016 peace accord between the government and Colombia's then largest rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC. It ended more than 50 years of war in which over 220,000 people died and nearly 6 million people

were displaced.

More than 14,000 FARC fighters gave up their weapons under that agreement, but violence between some rebel groups has grown in parts of Colombia.

Colombia's government asked the council to extend the U.N. mission's verification mandate to include the June cease-fire deal with the National Liberation Army.

Ukraine accuses Russia of damaging 40,000 tonnes of grain

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Russia damaged almost 40,000 tonnes of grain in an overnight strike on southern Ukrainian ports near the Danube river, Kyiv's infrastructure minister said on Wednesday.

"The Russians attacked warehouses and grain elevators — almost 40,000 tonnes of grain were damaged," Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said in an English-language post on social media.

Kubrakov added that the grain was destined for some African countries, China and Israel, and accused Russia of using Iranian drones to carry out the

attack. "These are the very ports that have become the foundation of global food security today," he said.

The port, across the river from Nato-member Romania, is the main alternative route out of Ukraine for grain exports, since Russia's blockade halted traffic at Ukraine's Black Sea ports in mid-July. Video released by the Ukrainian authorities showed firefighters on ladders battling a huge blaze several stories high in a building covered with broken windows. Several other large buildings were in ruins, and grain spilled out of at least two wrecked silos.



Greenpeace activists hold a banner while others cover British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's £2m manor house in oil-black fabric in protest of his backing for a major expansion of North Sea oil and gas drilling amidst a summer of escalating climate impacts, in Yorkshire, Britain.

Trudeau and wife announce separation after 18 years

Monitoring Desk
OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his wife Sophie said on Wednesday they were separating in an unexpected announcement that appeared to mark the end of the couple's 18-year high-profile marriage.

Trudeau, 51, and Sophie Gregoire-Trudeau, 48, were married in late May 2005. They have three children.

"Sophie and I would like to share the fact that

after many meaningful and difficult conversations, we have made the decision to separate," Trudeau said on Instagram. Sophie posted an almost identical message on her own Instagram account.

Trudeau's office said the two had signed a legal agreement.

"They have worked to ensure that all legal and ethical steps with regards to their decision to separate have been taken, and will continue to do so moving forward," it said.

Russia adds Norway to list of countries 'unfriendly' to its diplomats

Monitoring Desk
NEW YORK: Russia has added Norway to its list of foreign states that have committed so-called "unfriendly" acts against Russian diplomatic missions, news agencies reported on Thursday.

Countries on the list are limited in the number of local staff they can hire in Russia, with Norway restricted to 27, state news agency RIA Novosti said.

Four Nigerians, rescued in Brazil, survived 14 days on a ship's rudder

Monitoring Desk
SAO PAULO: On their tenth day at sea, the four Nigerian stowaways crossing the Atlantic in a tiny space above the rudder of a cargo ship ran out of food and drink.

They survived another four days, according to their account, by drinking the sea water crashing just meters below them, before being rescued by Brazilian federal police in the southeastern port of Vitoria.

Their remarkable, death-defying journey across some 5,600 kilometers (3,500 miles) of ocean underlines the risks some migrants are prepared to take for a shot at a better life.

"It was a terrible experience for me," said 38-year-old Thankgod Opemipo Matthew Yeye, one of the four Nigerians, in an interview at a Sao Paulo church shelter. "On board it is not easy. I was shaking, so scared. But I'm here."

President for enhancing ties with UK, South Korea, Malawi

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday said that Pakistan wanted to enhance its relations with the United Kingdom (UK), the Republic of Korea, and Malawi in the fields of trade, economy, and culture.

The president made these remarks while talking to the High Commissioner-designates of the United Kingdom and Malawi, and the Ambassador-designate of the Republic of Korea to Pakistan.

The envoys presented their diplomatic credentials to the president and separately called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Talking to Jane Marriot, the UK's High Commissioner to Pakistan, the president said that Pakistan attached utmost significance to its longstanding ties with the UK, which were grounded in historic connections and enduring people-to-people linkages.

He remarked that both countries needed to further expand and promote economic and trade relations for the mutual benefit of the two sides.

He also lauded the contributions of the Pakistani diaspora in the UK towards its socio-economic development.

President Alvi underscored the need for strengthening cultural ties and people-to-people contacts.

He highlighted that both governments were committed to establishing and maintaining a more robust and long-term relationship.

He also urged that the world needed to prevent and discourage the incidents of the Islamophobia in the world.

Speaking to Park Ki Jun, the ambassador of the Republic of Korea, the president said that Pakistan highly valued its multi-dimensional relationship

with Korea, encompassing political, economic, scientific, cultural, and people-to-people linkages.

He mentioned that Pakistan and Korea had tremendous potential to increase bilateral trade to further strengthen economic relations.

He said that Pakistan was open for business and investment, and would welcome Korean investment in all sectors of its economy.

The president informed that Pakistan offered some of the most exotic mountaineering and religious Buddhist sites, and would welcome Korean tourists to visit and explore these sites.

Talking to Younos Abdul Karim, the high commissioner of Malawi to Pakistan, the president expressed Pakistan's deep appreciation for its historical and brotherly ties with Malawi, which were marked by shared interests, values, and goals.



ISLAMABAD: The United Kingdom's High Commissioner-designate to Pakistan Ms Jane Marriot, the Ambassador-designate of the Republic of Korea Mr. Park Ki Jun, and the high Commissioner-designate of Malawi Mr Younos Abdul Karim, presenting their diplomatic credentials to President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Murad says technical education has potential to bridge skill gap, foster economy

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Thursday said that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) was the only sector that has the potential to bridge the skills gap and foster economic growth and reduce poverty.

"We must approach our work in the TVET sector with a spirit of inclusivity that provides access to all marginalized sectors of society,"

This he said while speaking at the inauguration ceremony of Government Polytechnic Institute, Azam Basti, adopted by SZABIST, ZABTech (ITV). The ceremony was attended by Chancellor SZBIST Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho, Minister Labour

Saeed Ghani, Director ZABTech Waheeda Mahesar, and others.

Shah said "he has full faith and confidence in the faculty and staff of SZABIST-ZABTech to deliver the same standard of excellence at Govt Polytechnic Institute (GPI) Azam Basti as its other Chapters in Sindh". He anticipated that it would teach 1,000 trainees in the first phase and the number would increase in the second phase.

GPI Azam Basti was handed over to SZABIST-ZABTech from STEVTA as per a Cabinet decision of the Government of Sindh.

The CM expressed his satisfaction to witness firsthand its state-of-the-art facilities in its classrooms and vocational laboratories. "I

am impressed to see the vast selection of women-specific skills training on offer," he said and added unemployed women were an untapped resource for productivity and economic output for the Province. Murad Shah said that SZABIST-ZABTech's expansion and outreach since its inception in the year 2000 have been impressive. He added that it was the largest TVET provider in the private sector in Sindh.

Murad said that recently, SZABIST-ZABTech has expanded outside of Sindh into the Province of Balochistan. SZABIST-ZABTech has also adopted the Center of Excellence, Hub under a Public Private Partnership with the Government of Balochistan.

Foreign Minister of Iran, Mr. Hossein Amir Abdollahian, calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad.

Mayor Karachi calls for achieving revenue targets set by KMC

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Thursday said that the revenue targets set in the budget should be achieved in any case to further stabilize the institution financially and negligence of officers will face action in this regard.

He said this while talking to the 10-member delegation of All Sindh Officers Welfare Association KMC headed by Abdul Qayyum Khan, said a statement.

The Mayor of Karachi said that all necessary measures will be taken for the welfare of KMC employees.

On this occasion, Deputy Mayor Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad, Parliamentary Leader of the People's Party in City Council Najmi Alam and General Secretary of People's Party in Central District Dil Muhammad were also present.

The delegation discussed with the Mayor matters regarding the promotion of the officers and other KMC employees and the DPC.

As many as five alleged accused including four street criminals and a drug peddler was arrested by different police stations of the city in separate actions on Thursday.

According to police, two street criminals identified as Usman and Hassan were arrested in injured condition after an encounter with a patrolling team of Korangi Industrial Area police station near C1 Ground when they were attempting to rob a citizen.

Two pistols and snatched mobile phones were recovered from the accused.

Five including injured street criminals, drug peddler arrested

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Patel inaugurates G-13 community health centre

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for National Health Services Abdul Qadir Patel on Thursday inaugurated the state-of-the-art 70-bed community health centre in G-13 sector.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, the minister said that a large number of population will get benefit from this centre.

He said that mother and child healthcare services will also be provided at the centre besides availability of child specialist and children

vaccination facility. He said that basic blood tests, ultrasound and X-ray facility will also be provided to the patients.

He said that the centre will provide treatment of all primary level diseases to local population.

The minister also launched the 300-bed Federal Government Polyclinic extension project.

Under the project, a hospital will be established in the federal capital which will be completed in three years.

MOU signed between SFD and UNWFP SFD closely working with WFP in strengthening food systems in Sindh: Chawla

Independent Report KARACHI: A memorandum of understanding

Mukesh Kumar Chawla said that SFD is closely working with WFP in



(MoU) was signed here at a local hotel between the Sindh Food Department and World Food Program.

On this occasion Sindh Food Minister Mukesh Kumar Chawla, Special Assistance to CM Sindh on Investment Board and Public Private Partnership Project Director World Food Program UNWFP Chris Key and others were also present. Secretary food Sindh Raja Khuram Umer Shazad and Country Director World Food Program UNWFP Chris Key signed on MoU.

Speaking on the occasion Sindh Food Minister

strengthening food systems in Sindh and in collaboration with WFP we are improving our wheat supply chain in particular conditions of storage infrastructure. He added, "SFD appreciate support of WFP in strengthening food systems

We are ready to work to extend this technical support in other areas of overall food systems strengthening. Mukesh Kumar Chawla said that Sindh province is Pakistan second largest wheat producing region with annual production of 4.043 million ton of wheat in 2020-21 SFD maintains supply of over 1.2 million tons of wheat in 1457 wheat storage units in Sindh.

Iranian FM calls on Chairman Senate

ISLAMABAD (Online): Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani has said that Pakistan Iran bilateral relations are rooted in historical linkages and based on religious, linguistic, cultural similarities and spiritual affiliation.

He expressed these views in a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian here at Parliament House on Thursday.

Abdul Ghaffar Shaikh appointed as Acting Chief Operating Officer HESCO

HYDERABAD (APP): Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (HESCO), CEO, has transferred three officials, entrusting them with new responsibilities.

According to an office order issued here on Thursday, 3rd August, in line with the announced changes, Abdul Ghaffar Shaikh, previously serving as Project Director (Const.), has been appointed as the Acting Chief Operating Officer.

Health insurance for journalists, artists a step forward to equitable Pak: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that the introduction of a health insurance facility for journalists and artists was a step forward to achieving the milestone of an equitable Pakistan as dreamt by Qaid-e-Azam.

He was addressing the ceremony of agreement signing between the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and State Life Insurance Corporation for providing health insurance cards to journalists, media workers, and artists as well as technical workers associated with the film industry.

The prime minister said the agreement was of utmost importance as it addressed the media men and artists who worked

hard, even sometimes during tough working conditions, but remained deprived of basic amenities in their lives.

However, the government would provide them with health insurance coverage through budgetary allocations under the PM Program.

Calling her a "moving spirit" the prime minister appreciated the key role of Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyu Aurangzeb to launch the said insurance facility.

He recalled that during Nawaz Sharif's tenure, health insurance card was launched on a massive scale, and at that time, the Punjab government also implemented his vision.



KARACHI: Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) Spokesman, Sardar Abdul Rahim along with Leaders of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM-P) are addressing a joint press conference after meeting, held at Functional House in Karachi.

President urges efforts to deepen Pak-Iran ties in trade, culture

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday called for efforts to deepen and widen the relationship between Pakistan and Iran, particularly in the areas of trade, economy, culture, and people-to-people contacts.

The president, talking to Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Iran Mudassar Tipu, who called on him here, underlined that Iran was a brotherly neighbouring country and Pakistan greatly valued its relationship with Iran rooted in history, culture, and religion.

DC kashmore Kandhkot inaugurates women sewing centre in Ghouspur

LARKANA (APP): The opening ceremony of "Women's Sewing Center" was held in Ghosapur, on Thursday which was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner Kashmir-Kandhkot Engineer Manawwar Ali Mithani, Additional Director Social Welfare Department Kashmir Nazir Ahmed Memon.

While addressing the ceremony on this occasion, the deputy commissioner Kashmir-Kandhkot Engineer Manawwar Ali Mithani said that the girls who came to the centre will be encouraged and at the same time they will be given better projects for the future, he added.

WASA initiates development scheme with Rs. 411.93m to improve drainage system

HYDERABAD (APP): The Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) of Hyderabad Development Authority (HDA) has initiated a development scheme at a cost of Rs. 411.93 million to improve the drainage system of the downtown areas of Hyderabad city.

The was informed by the officers of WASA to Regional Director Provincial Ombudsman Hyderabad Abdul Wahab Memon who visited the downtown areas

of taluka Hyderabad City on Thursday in connection to review the implementation of the orders of Provincial Ombudsman Sindh Aijaz Ali Khan.

According to the spokesman, the Provincial Ombudsman Sindh Aijaz Ali Khan had passed an order after hearing the grievances of the residents regarding submerging of Goods Naka and its adjacent areas as a result of choking the drainage system.



KARACHI: Chairman ECPC Professor Mansoor Ahmed along with others addresses to media persons during press conference held at Karachi press club.

Cardiac diseases considered to be main cause of death worldwide: Experts

KARACHI (APP): Cardiovascular diseases are considered to be the main cause of death worldwide. Pakistan was located in the region where the rate of this disease was the highest in proportion to the population.

Addressing a press conference here at Karachi Press Club on Thursday, chairman National Conference for Preventive Cardiac (NCPC) and Ex-President of the Cardiac Society Prof. Mansoor Ahmed said there has definitely been a reduction to some extent, but despite this, heart diseases were still the cause of more

deaths in Pakistan and around the world.

Professor Mansoor said this disease was increasing rapidly in developing countries, while in developed countries, due to its preventive measures, the rate of the disease has decreased to some extent, complete abstinence from smoking.

He said control of diabetes, blood pressure and especially cholesterol was very important, in our country, the use of unhealthy foods that cause heart diseases was high, while the version was even most of the schools do not have sports fields.

Suspension of gas supply in North Karachi irritates Karachities

KARACHI (INP): Suspension of gas supply in North Karachi for about 24 hours caused significant hardships for the residents irritating the Karachities.

According to the details, disruption of gas supply posed severe challenges for the people of the area especially women who had to face problem in preparing meals and breakfast.

Although the gas supply was restored in some areas of North Karachi at 12 o'clock, the suspension continued for several hours without any prior notice, the residents informed.

In response to the situation, the spokesperson of Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) stated that the gas supply was restored at 9:30 PM on Wednesday, but it faced issues again in the early hours due to extremely low pressure in the system.

FES Pakistan hosts landmark public hearing on workers' rights and human welfare

Independent Report KARACHI: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Pakistan (FES Pakistan), in collaboration with Public Service International (PSI) and Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC), successfully organized a "Public Hearing on Privatization and Public Debt in Pakistan" today.

The event aimed to address the pressing issues related to privatization policies and public debt and their impact on workers' rights and public welfare in the country.

The public hearing commenced with opening remarks from Mr. Abdullah Dayo, Programme Advisor of FES Pakistan, who warmly welcomed the distinguished panelists, PSI officials, SHRC, trade

unionists, and PSI affiliates and welcomed distinguished panelists on the stage.

Kannan Raman, Sub-regional Secretary for South Asia at Public Services International (PSI), a prominent labor advocate, passionately voiced his concerns about the adverse effects of privatization policies during the historic Public Hearing.

Drawing attention to the underfunding of public services, impacts on low-income families, and marginalized groups, Brother Kannan stressed the urgent need for transparency in privatization processes and highlighted the importance of protecting workers' rights and promoting resilient trade unions for a more equitable

work environment in the country.

Followed by him Kate Lapin, a fervent advocate for labor rights and regional Secretary for PSI Asia and Pacific, made significant contributions. Ms. Lapin's speech highlighted three crucial points: First, she underscored the repercussions of conditionalities imposed by international financial institutions (IFIs), emphasizing how they can adversely impact labor rights and human welfare in the country. Second, Sister Kate passionately advocated for the necessity of strong public services to combat the challenges posed by the climate crisis, stressing their role in ensuring the well-being of communities. Third, she emphasized the importance of

resilient staff and government effectiveness, particularly in the context of privatization, to uphold the rights and welfare of the populace.

Sister Kate's expertise and dedication have been instrumental in promoting labor rights and public welfare, both within Pakistan and on the global stage. Dr. Kaiser Bengali, a renowned senior economist, highlighted the misconception that industrialization is solely due to the private sector, noting that public sectors, particularly PIDC, have played a crucial role in promoting industrial growth in Pakistan. He stressed the need to strike a balance between public-centric and private-centric norms and called for united efforts to protect

workers' rights.

Senior Economist Ms. Iffat Ara emphasized the significance of planning and processes before privatizing any establishment, emphasizing the need to safeguard labor rights and state-owned profits.

She called for setting mandates for the state, focusing on national interests, increasing foreign reserves, and prioritizing economic growth through enhanced exports. Ms. Ara also stressed the potential of public-private partnerships in the manufacturing sector and emphasized the collective effort required to safeguard human rights. Ms. Nuzhat Shireen, Chairperson of Sindh Commission for the Status of Women raised concerns about the lack of representation of

women in trade unions and public sectors, the prevalence of sexual and gender-based harassment, and the denial of proper hiring practices. She urged for the inclusion of women and trans individuals in policymaking to bridge the gender gap and address these issues effectively.

Barrister Rida, in her address, highlighted how privatization can exacerbate gender disparities and stressed the importance of including trans individuals in policies to promote inclusivity and equal opportunities. Iqbal Detho, Chairperson SHRC, expressed gratitude to FES and PSI for organizing the public hearing and outlined SHRC's mandate of promoting and protecting human rights.