

Independent

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Ex PM to remain in jail for 'cypher' hearing IHC suspends Imran Khan's sentence in Toshakhana case

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday suspended the imprisonment sentence of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan in the Toshakhana criminal case and ordered to release him on bail.

The two-judge bench comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, in their eight-page judgment reserved on Monday and issued today, also ordered the former prime minister to submit surety bonds of Rs 100,000 to avail the bail.

The judgment said, "As the sentence given in the case is of short duration, the

court considers that the petitioner is entitled to suspension of sentence and release on bail. The trial court's sentence of 3 years imprisonment and a fine of Rs 100,000 is suspended."

It further stated that the trial court pronounced the sentence on the complaint of the Election Commission of Pakistan under the Election Act.

The Supreme Court's Qaim Ali Shah case reference was also included in the written decision. It said that the top court had declared that it was the high court's discretion to grant or deny bail.

The order also said that by accepting the plea of the

accused, the decision of the trial court of August 5 "is suspended and the petitioner should be released on bail on filing a bond worth Rs 100,000."

The IHC said the jurisdiction of the trial court and other issues for consideration were not being determined in the order. The respondents had given detailed arguments on these issues, but they would be decided in the main appeal.

The court also gave a reference of the order of the Supreme Court in an appeal against the suspension of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's sentence in the Avenfield property case. It said that the top court had

expressed its displeasure on issuing lengthy orders in decisions pertaining to the suspension of the sentences.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Humayun Dilawar had announced a three-year jail term along with fine of Rs 100,000 to the former prime minister in the Toshakhana criminal case lodged by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

INP adds: Imran's legal team filed a fresh petition in the IHC seeking directives to refrain authorities from further "illegal and unjustified arrest" of the former premier in any case filed against him after August 5, when he was convicted in the Toshakhana case.



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Ayesha Tanzeem, Head of South & Central Asia Division, Voice of America called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar. Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi also present in the meeting



ISLAMABAD: DG Anti-Narcotics Force Major General Muhammad Aniq Ur Rehman Malik calls on Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior and Anti-Narcotics Sarfraz Ahmad Bugti.

DG, ANF briefs Interior Minister on narcotics control

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General (DG) Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) Major General Aneeq ur Rehman Malik Tuesday brief caretaker Interior Minister Sarfraz Buti regarding efforts being made for narcotics control.

All departments will have to work together to save the nation from the curse of drugs, the minister said adding the role of ANF in this regard was very important.

He appreciated the recent raids of the force and

arrests of drug peddlers along with recovery of drugs from their possession.

The minister also directed to take strict action against those involved in drugs business.

He said Pakistan would be made a drug free country while the young generation will be protected from the menace for healthy society.

Sarfraz Bugti said the government would provide all kind of support in that regard.

ECP seeks proposals for transfer/posting of key officials in Sindh

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), in a bid to ensure free, fair and transparent elections, on Tuesday directed the Sindh Chief Secretary and Inspector General of Police to suggest transfers/postings of key provincial government officials.

In a meeting, chaired by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja, it was emphasized that ensuring transparency and impartiality in the elections was the foremost duty of Sindh government's top officials.

"As an initial measure, the transfers and appointments of crucial officials are necessary to ensure non-controversial elections. Subsequently, the process will involve the appointment of district returning officers, returning officers, assistant returning officers, and monitoring teams," it was further stressed. The Election Commission extended its full support and protection to the Sindh Chief Secretary and IGP.

Earlier, both the Chief Secretary and IGP apprised the meeting of their preparedness for the upcoming general elections.

Cabinet unable to decide on relief in bills

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Caretaker government could not give any relief to the people who came out on the streets against the increase in electricity bills.

The federal cabinet meeting was held last day under the chairmanship of caretaker prime minister Anwarul Haq Kakar.

Owing to the terms and conditions of the IMF agreement, a decision could not be taken to provide relief in bills to consumers in the form of subsidy. It has been decided to collect dues in six installments from the consumers using up to 400 units of electricity after IMF's consent. In the meeting, the possible relief in electricity bills for the month of July was reviewed. According to the sources, the Ministry of Finance took a stand in the meeting that it is not possible to provide relief to the people in the form of subsidy on electricity due to the IMF agreement.

The Energy Division presented various options to provide relief to the people in the cabinet meeting. According to the sources, it was agreed in the meeting that the bills will be collected in installments during the next six months from the consumers using up to 400 units of electricity, but this will be possible only with the consent of the IMF.

The Cabinet directed the Energy Division to fix the procedure. While WAPDA could not decide on the free electricity units given to employees of distribution companies and related institutions. According to the sources, the issue of outsourcing of Islamabad Airport was entrusted to the steering committee. According to the sources, the federal cabinet approved the signing of the agreement with the Hong Kong Examination Authority, the memorandum of understanding between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on vocational training, and the memorandum of understanding between Pakistan and Belarus.

Govt meddling in judiciary affairs, says CJP Bandial

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial on Tuesday expressed concerns over attempts to meddle in the judiciary through further appeals in the Supreme Court Practice and Procedure Act.

The remarks were made during the hearing of the PTI chairman's petition against the NAB amendments, in which the Attorney General admitted to flaws in the Act.

The chief justice also referred to previous court orders related to the Act, stating that the Attorney General had informed about the Review of Orders and Judgments Act on June 1. However, despite assurances that the assembly would review the Act, no action has been taken.

Justice Bandial also questioned why the Attorney General sought time twice to review the Act,

causing delays in legal proceedings. He also expressed concerns about the government's interference in the scope of the apex court.

Justice Ijaz pointed out that the government itself admitted to the flawed legislation, which led to the suspension of proceedings under the Act by court order. He emphasized that the court could not effectively carry out proceedings under such a suspended law.

During the hearing, the chief justice welcomed the PTI's lawyer Khawaja Haris and expressed his hope to avoid being targeted for his statement. He clarified that the Supreme Court does not intend to overrule the Parliament, but the Supreme Court Practice and Procedure Act is unconstitutional and interferes with the independence of the judiciary.

The CJP declared that only the three-member bench would hear the NAB amendments case, and adjourned further hearing of the case until today.

APP adds: The Supreme Court (SC) Tuesday adjourned hearing till today in petitions challenging the amendments in National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) law.

A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan and Justice Mansoor Ali Shah heard the case filed by Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI).

At the outset of hearing, the chief justice remarked that Supreme Court Practice and Procedure Act was contradicting with the constitution, adding that it was an attempt to interfere the powers of judiciary through this act.



KARACHI: Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab inaugurates the operations of Land Management & Digital Archive System computerized land record at KMC Head Office.

Mayor Karachi terms digitization of land records as major challenge

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that the major challenge of the city is the digitization of land records, which has been started by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) land department.

He said this on the occasion of inaugurating the Land Management and Digital Archive System operations at the head office of KMC's Land Department. He said that with the computerization of land records, it will not be possible to make any fabrication in this record in the future. The land department challan will be issued along with a QR code that would bring transparency in this process while the amount of challan will be credited to the KMC's account, he added.

He said this method will prevent fake works as the fake item will not be found in the database. In the future, only valid and certified challans will be issued by KMC and this initiative will benefit KMC and all the citizens living

in Karachi, he added.

Municipal Commissioner Syed Afzal Zaidi, Director Land Sabah ul Islam and other officers were also present on the occasion.

Mayor Karachi said that land records are being digitized on a daily basis. Congratulations to the land department KMC for this operation. KMC is being transformed into a transparent organization, where there will be no room for fake and wrongdoings, he said.

Meanwhile Consul General of France in Karachi Alexis Chahtahtinsky called on the Mayor of Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Tuesday and discussed matters of mutual interest.

The Mayor Karachi welcomed the French Consul General at the KMC head office and informed the details regarding various civic affairs including the local government system. He said that Pakistan and France have long friendly relations and France can help Pakistan in medical, nursing, and other fields.

Govt to utilize all available resources for polio-free country: Nadeem

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Health Minister Dr Nadeem Jan said on Tuesday that the interim government was committed to actively implementing a special emergency response plan to eradicate all forms of polio in the country and reach children in remote areas.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that the polio vaccination campaign in remote areas and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) was considered a major reason for the significant reduction in the number of polio cases in the country. "All the provinces would ask to pay special attention to ensure that every child is reached by the polio programme," he added. He said that the Ministry of Health is actively involved in the polio program and we will ensure that the focus on polio remains unwavering.

Bilawal expresses concerns over reports of breaches in Sutlej river dykes

KARACHI (APP): Chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Tuesday expressed deep concerns over reports of breaches in the Sutlej river embankment and demanded that people from flood-affected areas be ensured evacuation to safer places.

He urged the government to ensure coordinated measures on a war-footing basis to control the ravages of floods, adding, "Measures should be taken to protect large populations like Bahawalpur and

Ahmedpur Sharqia from the ravages of floods".

The PPP Chairman directed the party office-bearers and workers to actively participate in the relief activities in the flood affected areas and cooperate fully with the administration in this regard.

He said that the government should conduct a survey to estimate the damage caused by the floods, adding that the government should also announce a special package for the Sutlej river flood victims.

Domki, UAE Consul General agree on establishing coordination between business community

Independent Report
KARACHI: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki visited the consulate of United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Karachi on Tuesday.

During the visit, he inaugurated the Facilitation Desk in the UAE Consulate. Upon his arrival in the Consulate, the UAE Consul General based in Karachi, Bakheet Ateeq Al-Remeithi warmly welcomed the caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan.

While briefing the caretaker Chief Minister, the Consul General UAE said that the objective behind establishing Happiness Desk in the Consulate is to provide via and other necessary facilities to the Pakistani people.

He said that it would also provide assistance to the Pakistani business community doing business in UAE and in promotion of the joint ventures of investment there.



KARACHI: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki being briefed by UAE Consul General Bakheet Ateeq Al-Remeithi about Facilitation Desk in the UAE Consulate



Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leaders speaking during a press conference in Islamabad

After meeting with ECP PPP again calls for polls on time, announcement of election date

ISLAMABAD (INP): The PPP on Tuesday again called for holding polls within the constitutionally mandated 90-day period following the dissolution of the National Assembly (NA) on August 9, demanding the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announce the schedule for the polls.

The party reiterated its demand following a meeting with the electoral watchdog at its secretariat in Islamabad — where the ECP has been holding consultations with various parties on the electoral roadmap in recent days. The consultations are being held against the backdrop of the ECP ruling out elections this year, while the 90-day limit for holding polls — mandated under Article 224 of the Constitution, ends on November 9. The ECP reasons its decision to push elections beyond November 9 on the basis of the notification of results of the new digital 2023 census and Section 17(2) of the Elections Act, which states: "The commission shall delimit constituencies after every census is officially published."

Ministry to hold 'Interfaith Harmony Conference' today

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony is holding an "Interfaith Harmony Conference" on Wednesday, to bring together religious leaders and representatives from various faith communities to discuss pressing issues related to attacks on religious sites, desecration of holy scriptures, and the safety of minorities.

Presiding over by Minister for Religious Affairs, Aneeq Ahmed, the conference would promote unity and cooperation among different religious groups besides providing a platform for open dialogue and collaboration on topics crucial to fostering interfaith harmony.

Federal Ombudsman says: 98 percent of cases decided in favour of complainants

HYDERABAD (APP): The Federal Ombudsman Dr Syed Rizwan Ahmed has said 18 regional offices of the Federal Ombudsman Pakistan are providing justice to the citizens affected by the black sheep working in the government departments. Addressing the business community at Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) here on Tuesday, the former ambassador Ahmed claimed that 98 percent of the decisions made by them come out to be in favour of the complainants.

He apprised that the people could submit their complaints online or by jotting them down on a piece of paper which should be

couriered to his office. "The Federal Ombudsman's office wanted to ensure that the services meant for the people reach them," he observed.

He suggested the business community to create awareness among the traders and industrialists about the functioning of the ombudsman's office. He added that the community should put up banners in the markets and in the industries to acquaint people. The Ombudsman asked the people to desist from stealing electricity. "The power distribution companies can't serve detection bills without establishing theft," he underlined.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Sutlej floods

Climate change-related devastation seems to have become such an ordinary feature of our news cycle that it does not appear to be arousing the same level of angst as our more ephemeral problems do. With national attention focused more on political and economic challenges, widespread devastation continues in Punjab along the Sutlej, which has swelled manifold to reportedly its highest level in 35 years, inundating vast areas along its banks. The flooding was triggered by the flow of large volumes of water into Pakistan from India, where heavy monsoons in the north of the country — rainfall was reported as almost three times the norm in the Ladakh region, for example — have fed the river and forced it to spill its banks. Satellite images captured by Nasa's Earth Observatory depict a huge level of flooding in both countries, with before and after images of the Sutlej taken around mid-June and mid-August showing how radically the landscape has changed in a very short while.

With hundreds of thousands of citizens already relocated, efforts to secure affected populations and move them to safer lands are still ongoing. Thankfully, the authorities have been proactive in their rescue operations, managing to move thousands of residents and livestock from hundreds of settlements in the fertile plains alongside the Indus's eastern-most tributary to safer locations before there could be any major loss of life. The Punjab relief commissioner believes life will be back to normal "soon", and the people will eventually be able to return to their homes, but that is unlikely to be the end of this episode. Vast tracts of cropland have been submerged, and their produce may be destroyed by the time the waters recede. There will also be new health challenges in the affected areas arising from waterborne diseases, which will require timely action by the provincial authorities.

Within a year of 2022's catastrophic monsoon and the floods that followed, we are witnessing a rerun of the disasters wrought on our lands by climate change. The locus may have shifted to another geographical area, but the worst effects of the damage done to the global environment by developed nations are again being faced by the vulnerable populations of the Global South. With COP28 just a few months away, Pakistan, India and all other nations bearing the brunt of climate disaster must join forces and seek the operationalisation of the agreement to compensate countries for loss and damage arising from climate change, which was reached at the conference last year. Key issues like who is to pay, who will benefit, and what amount will be allocated to the loss and damage fund have yet to be decided, and, with time already having run out for the people of the subcontinent, the matter needs urgent attention.



Syed Shehryar Raza Zaidi

Among the many existential crises Pakistan faces, the plight of its minorities and the downtrodden seems to be the least of the state's worries. In all the perceived concern for Pakistan's economic plight and the fundamentals of its Constitution, the people of Pakistan — that is, its constituents — have been left at the mercy of mobs, religious fanatics and feudal lords.

A nation which has continued to vociferously protest against the desecration of the Holy Quran now finds itself condemning the desecration of churches and the homes of its minority Christian community by its own brethren.

Unfortunately, Pakistan's minorities have had to live their lives in fear — the fear of being subjected to abuse, fear of being killed at the whim of the local cleric, and fear of being accused of religious hate crimes — because their existence is seen as hampering the economic rights of some in the mob.

To put things in context, a mob of 'religious fanatics' recently burned the homes and places of worship of the Christian community in and around Faisalabad on the mere allegation of blasphemy. A mere allegation was enough to condemn thousands of people belonging to a particular religion to violence. It forced them to spend the night in the fields, praying for their lives. Pakistan has one of the most stringent blasphemy laws even among fellow Muslim countries.

Living in fear

It also has among the highest, if not the highest, number of blasphemy cases reported anywhere in the world, despite the overwhelming majority of its population calling itself Muslim.

Unfortunately, for some religious bigots in the country, being accused of blasphemy is the same as being convicted of it. This has meant that tens of people have been brutally murdered on charges of blasphemy even before they had a chance to defend themselves. This has given rise to a sense of fear amongst not just members of the minority community, but also free thinkers and individuals who otherwise wish to be vocal against the misuse of religion. Islam is a religion of peace which codifies every aspect of human life and presents before us the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the embodiment of kindness, serenity, respect and love. Yet, its weaponisation by politico-/socio-religious leaders for their own petty political, social or monetary gains has meant that entire generations have been led to believe that they are the 'true protectors of faith', when in reality they are individuals with a flawed sense in their practice of religion.

If there are any words of comfort — although even these would be ironic — for Pakistan's minorities, it is that they are not the only ones bearing the brunt of unbridled lawlessness. Many among the Muslim community have also had to, and continue to, live in constant fear of the violation of their person, life and livelihood. The pages of newspapers are filled with incidents of rape, torture and the general degradation of human values being committed with impunity by feudal lords and the privileged classes. The recent alleged rape and torture of Fatima, a 10-year-old girl in Sindh, or the alleged inhumane

treatment of Rizwana, an adolescent in Punjab, are all examples of the diminishing fear of one's actions.

All these incidents constitute crimes punishable with lengthy sentences if not death, and yet they continue to be committed one after the other, without fear of accountability. The reason is simple: the diminishing writ of the state.

The writ of the state or the fear of accountability by the state of one's actions lies at the heart of a successful country. It is as important for the functioning and existence of a country as a country's territorial integrity. Yet, the state here appears to be at a loss when it comes to enforcing such writ on the religious, political and economic elite.

It is not that there is insufficient legislation or that the Penal Code lacks effective measures to protect the fundamental right to life, and the freedom to practise and propagate religion; instead, the ruling elite lacks the will to enforce these rights, or fears antagonising powerful groups that could lead to retribution or losing their voter base.

This is where the other limbs of the state should come into the picture. The august Supreme Court and other state institutions that are perceived to hold sway and authority in the running of this country must realise that radicalisation, religious intolerance and the unmitigated abuse of power harm the very fabric of society and need to be dealt with as much firmness as the vehemence with which state property is damaged or desecrated. For what is Pakistan if not a collective of its people, a bouquet of flowers made up of the followers of different religions, and diverse ethnicities and circumstances all coming together to emit the fragrance of unity, togetherness and love? -- Courtesy Dawn

Skeletons in your closet



Hassan Kamal Wattoo

For a country that discovers fresh, unique ways to fail its people every day, we're awfully weird about acknowledging failings of the past. Consider one of the greatest failures in modern history: 1971.

I'll admit, this is something I hesitate to bring up. See, as a patriot, love for one's country is often persistent and inextinguishable. This place has its flaws, but it's ours. The subject of our loyalties. The sole friend in a crowd of strangers. And if a friend has been through a bitter divorce, one's immediate reaction isn't to start interrogating. We listen to their version of events, nod along (even when we notice holes in their story), and offer our assurances that they are wonderful and deserve better.

But what if it transpires that our friend isn't too innocent? Say, if the other side alleges unspeakable abuse, pulls out evidence, and points to a pattern of behaviour that persisted long after things fell apart? If all signs point to our friend being a bit messed up in the head, and emboldened by lack of consequence, we might not feel very safe in their presence either.

In April this year, the Guardian published the following report: "We lay like corpses. Then the rapping began: 52 years on, Bangladesh's rape camp survivors speak out." It features eyewitness accounts of the women who lived through Pakistan's violent break-up with its East. The stories they tell are so dark, anyone with a

heart would shiver.

But let's assume for a moment that they're a pack of lies. That these war-surviving old women are conniving imposters, and this 200-year-old British newspaper is conspiring to malign our glorious, angelic past. Did the Foreign Office issue a rebuttal? Has any government body contradicted the testimonies? If we don't deny them, do we have an ounce of shame to address the living, breathing proofs of our country's sins?

Of course, Pakistan isn't the only country with a sinful past. America had the slave trade. Britain had colonialism. Germany was Germany. Where we are unique is being the only major country that views 'shut up, act cool, and pretend it never happened' as a viable policy decision.

We'll teach our kids that the split with East Pakistan was infinitely complex; one of the profound mysteries of the universe, riddled with nuances like 'actually, we only killed 30,000 people'. Everything except 'the narcissistic authoritarians in charge of this country treated their own people like idiots who wouldn't mind their rights being robbed from them'. What does this accomplish?

In 2008, the US Congress formally apologised for slavery and the Jim Crow laws. In 2018, Justin Trudeau apologised for Canada's failure to help a ship of Jews escaping the Nazis. One ship. Seventy-nine years ago. Did these countries lose anything by acknowledging a mistake? Did some humility and self-reflection make them weak, or did it strengthen their moral position?

Pakistan has an honesty problem. Mostly with itself. One grounded in childlike insecurity and pathetic chest-thumping hubris. But here's my question: what is there to be so insecure about?

Have you ever seen the Germans trying to hide, censor or downplay the dark parts of their history? If they did, would it not be a lingering reminder of their willingness to do it again?

These persistent cruelties evoke the kind of anger these pages would struggle to carry the weight of. But we know that the folks running this country don't take nicely to bitter truths. So, I'll address it like a friend that's made terrible mistakes, but can still correct course. To quote a modern lyricist, T. Swift, "it must be exhausting always rooting for the anti-hero". We do it anyway. Because critique can come from a place of love, and this struggling young nation has been through a lot.

In its history, it's seen wholesale assaults on its peoples' civil liberties. Some who dissented, shot dead. Others, many others, gone missing. Politicians persecuted until they folded. Collective punishment on those around them until they bent and broke. It's seen fundamental rights treated like suggestions, discardable at a whim. The will of millions displaced by a handful of men in Islamabad drawing rooms. It's seen the Constitution treated like a joke, judges taking its butchered, bloodied remnant and rewriting its most basic principles. It's seen the persistent delusion that free speech can be crushed into submission. The hubris of the powerful declaring at every juncture that they know what's better for you, not you. And, it has seen columnists unable to speak freely about any of it. But you know what's wonderful? That we learned so much from all this history, and never allowed it to repeat itself. Of course, we can continue showering our friend with unquestioning, unconditional love and support. Surely, he'd never turn on us. -- Courtesy Dawn-- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

IT sector has potential to address Pak trade imbalance: IT minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr Umar Saif on Tuesday highlighted the potential of the IT sector in addressing the country's trade imbalance.

Talking to a private TV channel, the minister said that the IT sector held an almost 80 percent trade surplus, making it an attractive industry for boosting the country's economy.

He emphasized that the untapped potential within the IT sector could significantly contribute to the country's economic ad-

vancement. Dr Saif pointed out that the current value of Pakistan's IT exports stood at \$2.6 billion, providing employment opportunities for around 150,000 individuals within the sector.

He noted that software developers presently earned an annual income of approximately \$17,000 to \$18,000, whereas their Indian counterparts earned around \$30,000.

Discussing the academic landscape, the minister revealed that Pakistani universities currently produced 20,000 to 22,000 IT

graduates, of which only 2,000 to 2,200 secured jobs. He mentioned a disparity in skills, often falling short of international standards. To bridge this skill gap, he stressed the necessity of collaboration between Pakistani IT experts and universities. Dr Saif proposed that several IT companies channel funds abroad out of which a significant amount could be repatriated to Pakistan by offering incentives to them.

According to the minister, these incentives could potentially bring an additional \$1 to \$2 billion to the

country. He also acknowledged Pakistan's global standing as the seventh-largest mobile phone market, boasting an impressive usage of 190 million mobile phones.

Dr Saif shared the government's vision of fostering local manufacturing of affordable, high-quality mobile phones.

"This strategic step aims to diminish the reliance on imported phones, thereby mitigating the outflow of foreign exchange," Dr Saif said emphasizing that this initiative had a two-fold potential



PESHAWAR: Traders of Peshawar protesting against the high rate of electricity bill at GT road.

5.2m SMEs active in Pakistan contributing 20% to GDP

SBP plans liberal loan disbursement to SME sector

MULTAN (APP): Around 5.2 million Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) were active in the national economic sphere contributing 20 per cent to country's GDP and State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is planned to enhance loan disbursement to this sector on softer terms by more than double the existing level to accelerate the national economic growth.

This was stated by SBP Multan officials at a seminar organized by SBP at Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) to upgrade level of awareness of SMEs and women entrepreneurs on banks' refinance facility, credit guarantee scheme for women en-

trepreneurs and Prime Minister's Youth Agriculture financing scheme for renewable energy to enable SMEs and women entrepreneurs to bring their business and industrial activity more productive and profitable on modern lines.

MCCI president Mian Rashid Iqbal thanked SBP Multan on their awareness initiative, aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs and encouraging budding investors to take advantage of the government schemes to propel the national economy to new highs.

Assistant Director SBP Multan Kiran Amjad gave a detailed briefing to the participants through multimedia and said that

loan disbursement to SMEs was only 6-7 per cent of the total volume but given their importance, SBP has started taking steps to increase soft term loan disbursement to SMEs to 17 per cent. "Easy loan schemes have been launched and SBP would achieve this target in cooperation with commercial and Islamic banks."

She said that small scale businesspersons can get up to Rs 150 million while medium scale investors can avail up to Rs 800 million loan and that too only on 5-7 per cent mark up rate. She disclosed that SBP has given Rs 100 million per month loan disbursement target to commercial and Islamic banks.

SCCI raised an alarm regarding soaring energy prices plaguing the industrial landscape

SIALKOT (APP): President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Abdul Ghafoor Malik has raised an alarm regarding the critical issue of soaring energy prices plaguing the industrial landscape.

In his assessment of the prevailing crisis, President SCCI Abdul Ghafoor Malik highlighted the adverse impact of exorbitant electricity costs on Pakistan's manufacturing and export sectors.

President SCCI emphasized that the recent surge in energy prices, as evidenced by the issuance of electricity bills with an alarming hike of up to 80 to 100%, was a substantial setback for the manufacturing cum export sector of the nation. "This escalation, attributed to an assortment of taxes and levies, presents a formidable challenge that cannot be ignored," he added.

Malik highlighted the compounding effect of this crisis on the competitiveness of Pakistani exporters on the global stage.

He said that the substantial increase in the electricity component within the manufacturing cost, effectively doubling the burden, would place exporters at a disadvantage amidst intense international competition.

Expressing his grave concerns, President SCCI Abdul Ghafoor Malik said that the skyrocketing energy costs had made it arduous for exporters to maintain their competitive edge and sustain international commitments.

Malik also expressed apprehensions about the potential cancellation of orders and the subsequent implications on exporters' capacity to meet their international obligations.

Afghan bound China cargo termed good omen for enhancing regional trade

PESHAWAR (APP): President Frontier Custom Agents Association (FCAA), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi while welcoming crossing of first ever China cargo for Afghanistan via Khunjerab border, has termed it a good omen for enhancing trade in the region. In a press statement issued here on Tuesday, the President FCAA said that it was really heartening to know that Afghanistan bound China goods had started crossing through Pakistan.

This development, Zia added, will not only increase volume of trade at regional level, but will also create a large number of livelihood opportunities for people associated with customs clearance, goods transportation, fuel business, daily wagers etc.

It merits an insertion

here that Pakistan Customs has recently facilitated the first ever cargo from China to Afghanistan via Khunjerab border under the Transports International Routiers (TIR) Convention, which provides an easy and economical route for trade between countries across the world.

The first consignment started its journey from Kasghar, China and after crossing over to Pakistan via the Khunjerab pass, it

will reach Kabul in Afghanistan. This transit route will reduce the travel time to almost 70% and is also economical as it is expected to reduce the logistics costs by more than 30 percent, Zia opined. He said that presently, the flow of bilateral and transit trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan was not up to mark and inclusion of China cargo in the business would improve commercial activities in the region.

NPO to organize webinar on 'Crisis Management'

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Productivity Organization (NPO) would conduct a training course on "Crisis Management" on August 30 (Wednesday).

Crisis Management is an organization's process and strategy-based approach for identifying and responding to a threat, an unanticipated event, or any negative disruption with the potential to harm people, property, or business processes, according to an NPO document.

The objectives of crisis

management include prevention - preventing the occurrence of a negative situation, avoidance - avoiding the negative consequences associated with a potential crisis and assessment - understanding the effect or impact of an unfortunate situation or circumstance.

The workshop would provide information about enhanced preparedness, developing crisis management strategies, risk management techniques, stakeholder management, and learning from case studies.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Hidayat Ullah, Chairman Senate Standing Committee On Aviation presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House.

Governor KP for collective efforts to promote country's development, prosperity, peace

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali on Tuesday emphasized the need for collective efforts to promote the country's development, prosperity and peace.

He said that those with intentions of weakening the state and spreading negativity, especially among the youth, cannot contribute positively.

He urged the younger generation to foster a positive mindset, uphold traditions, and promote values.

He expressed these views during a meeting at the Governor's House, where a delegation of 45 members from the district of Dir Upper, led by former provincial minister Shafiqullah Khan, convened.

The delegation included representatives from various political and social circles, such as ANP, PPP, JUI, and PTI, among others.

The delegates discussed issues concerning the region's population, particularly related to notifications in Dir Central District, education, healthcare, gas supply, municipal representative powers, funds, and other challenges.

The delegates appreciated the Governor's receptive approach and thanked him for being a public servant focused solely on addressing citizens' concerns without bias. They highlighted that this was the first time in history that a public-serving Governor was directly accessible to the province's people for dialogue and assistance. During the conversation, the Governor underscored his commitment to resolving public issues impartially and selflessly.

He said that serving humanity was a significant form of worship and that the provision of non-discriminatory public service was a crucial aspect of his belief.

The Governor acknowledged that engaging with the people and institutions dedicated to social



PESHAWAR: 45-members Qaumi Jirga consisting of tribal elders from Dir Bala meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali.

Flood-prone areas Authorities directed to safeguard schools' infrastructure

MULTAN (APP): Secretary School Education for South Punjab, Rana Saleem Ahmad Khan, directed the officials to take all possible measures to safeguard schools vulnerable to flooding in Sutlej river. He was addressing a conference at Civil Secretariat here on Tuesday. The Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of respective districts have been tasked with ensuring comprehensive protection against water-related damages by implementing robust measures.

The conference was participated by key education stakeholders, including Additional Secretary Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi, Deputy Secretaries Khawaja Mazharul Haque Sairur Rahman Khan, DPI (Secondary) South Punjab Zahida Batul, DPI (Elementary) Parvez Iqbal, and other officials.

The Secretary emphasized the paramount importance of restoring damaged school structures and providing essential amenities. He underscored the necessity of proactive measures to avert flood-induced harm, highlighting effective communication with the district administrations concerned. He stressed the need for an enhanced coordination mechanism with relevant authorities to bolster preparedness.

Governor Punjab orders renaming of Bahawalpur zoo

LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman has directed concerned department to restore old name of Bahawalpur zoo and rename it as Sherbagh. During a briefing to the Governor Punjab on Jamia Masjid Al-Sadiq, Bahawalpur Zoo and the remains of ancient civilization Ganweriwala in Cholistan at the Governor's House here on Tuesday, he said the zoo should be equipped with state of the art facilities, new animals should be brought here, and the old animals should be well taken care of.

Commissioner Bahawalpur Dr. Ehtisham Anwar, Additional Deputy Commissioner Bahawalpur Jam Aftab, Secretary Tourism Asif Bilal Lodhi, Head of Archeology Islamia University Bahawalpur Dr. Khalil Ahmed, Secretary Auqaf Tahir Raza Bukhari, DG Wildlife Mubeen Elhi, Secretary Forest Mudassar Waheed Malik, Administrator Auqaf Bahawalpur Ghulam Abbas, Principal Secretary to Governor Nabeel Awan, Special Secretary to Governor Umar Saeed and DG Walled City Kamran Lashari attended the briefing.

The Governor Punjab further said that matters relating to ticketing, parking, living conditions of animals inside cages should be improved.

Balighur Rehman directed to turn Sherbagh into a modern zoo with state of the art facilities.

It was also decided that the Lal Suhanra National Park Bahawalpur will also be improved.

It was further decided excavation work regarding discovery of Ganweriwala archeology in Cholistan will be started in October.

"By discovering ancient heritage and civilization buried in Cholistan more information can be found about the ancient Indus Valley Civilization," Balighur Rehman observed.

He expressed the hope that cities as big as Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa in the ancient Indus Valley Civilization can be discovered in Cholistan, adding, it will give Pakistan international recognition and also create opportunities for tourism.

ECP provided census-related requisite information by PBS

ISLAMABAD (INP): All requisite information related to the 7th Population and Housing Census has provided to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

According to press release issued on Tuesday, the PBS stated, "The information includes gazette notification of Census Charges, Circles and Blocks, colour prints of Digitized maps of 1,85,514 Blocks, Circles and Charges (excluding Sindh) and Census Block wise data etc."

However, it said the colour prints of Digitized maps of Sindh would be handed over by August 30.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman briefed by officers of the relevant departments on Jamia Masjid Al-Sadiq, Bahawalpur Zoo and the remains of ancient civilization Ganweriwala in Cholistan.

ANF foils drone-based drug smuggling attempt

KARACHI (INP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) successfully foiled a drone-based drug smuggling attempt and apprehended one member of the drug smuggling group.

As per initial reports, the ANF officials received intelligence information over which the officials tried to stop the suspected vehicle, but instead of stopping, the accused tried to drive away but crashed.

The ANF officials successfully took the suspect - identified as Fayyaz Hussain in custody and seized a total of 10 kilograms (KG) of heroin and a drone - with one kg of heroin attached to it - from the possession of the arrested suspect. Meanwhile, the ANF officials also revealed that the arrested suspect was also wanted in other cases.

The spokesperson during the interrogation, the arrested suspect confessed to drug smuggling through the drone, while investigations are ongoing to apprehend other members of the group.

Two more ministers included in KP caretaker cabinet

PESHAWAR (APP): The caretaker cabinet of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government was further expanded as two ministers were included in it on Tuesday.

The two new ministers Engineer Aamir Nadeem Durani and Engineer Ahmad Jan were administered oath by the Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali here at Governor's House. Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan also attended the oath-taking ceremony.

Dr. Jamal Nasir says: Pakistan had become fifth most populous country in the world

RAWALPINDI (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Health and Population Welfare Dr. Jamal Nasir said that according to the latest census results, Pakistan had become the fifth most populous country in the world after India, China, America and Indonesia.

He was addressing as the chief guest at a seminar on "Alarming population growth rate and family planning" held in collaboration with the District Population Welfare Department Rawalpindi at the Punjab Arts Council (PAC) titled here on Tuesday.

The minister said that this year, the total population of the world was increased by eight billion people while the current rate of population growth in Pakistan was about 2.7 percent which was very high compared to international standards.

International News

North Korea denounces 'gang bosses' of US and allies amid drills

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: The United States, South Korea and Japan staged joint naval missile defence drills off the Korean peninsula on Tuesday, as North Korea denounced the "gang bosses" of Washington and its allies for increasing the risk of nuclear war. The three nations staged exercises in international waters off South Korea's southern Jeju island to improve their ability to detect and track targets, and share information in the event of provocation by Pyongyang, South Korea's military said.

The drills come as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has called for "radically" modernising the weapons and equipment of his country's naval forces, criticising an increased presence of U.S. strategic assets in the region.

In a speech to mark Navy Day, Kim said the "gang bosses" of the United States, Japan and South Korea announced regular joint military exercises, news agency KCNA reported, apparently referring to their Aug. 18 summit at Camp David, Maryland. "Owing to the reckless confrontational moves of the U.S. and other hostile forces, the waters off the Korean Peninsula have been reduced to the world's biggest war hardware concentration spot, the most unstable waters with the danger of a nuclear war," Kim was quoted by KCNA as saying. In the first standalone meeting between the leaders of the U.S., South Korea and Japan, the three agreed to deepen military and economic cooperation as they seek to project unity in the face of China's growing power and the North's nuclear threats.

Japan said the sharing of information on ballistic missiles was part of the drills on Tuesday.

"The exercises will strongly facilitate trilateral cooperation and demonstrate the commitment of Japan, the United States, and the Republic of Korea to protect a free and open international order based on the rule of law," Japan's defence ministry said in a statement.



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un visits the Naval Command of the Korean People's Army (KPA) on the occasion of the Navy Day, in North Korea, in this picture released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

Putin to visit China in first trip abroad since his arrest warrant

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin has agreed to visit China as his first international trip since the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant against him over war crimes in Ukraine, Bloomberg reported on Aug. 29, citing three undisclosed sources.

The Kremlin's leader has reportedly accepted the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping to attend the Belt and Road Forum in October, the outlet said.

Putin has avoided international trips since the ICC issued arrest warrants against him and Russian official Maria Lvova-Belova for their role in the illegal deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia. The only exemption was the Russian leader's reported visit to the occupied parts of Ukraine.

Earlier in August, he did not attend in person the BRICS summit hosted by South Africa, a country that is a signatory to the ICC's Rome Statute and therefore legally obliged to detain the Russian president.

Fighting in eastern Syria between US-backed fighters and Arab tribesmen kills 10

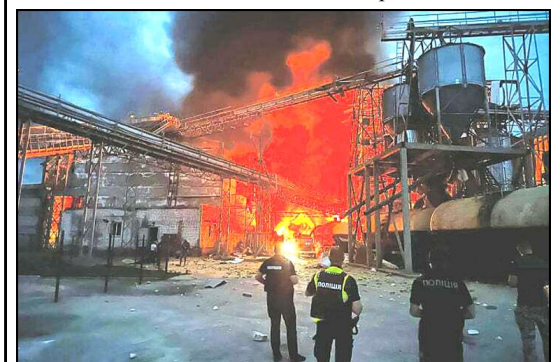
Monitoring Desk
BEIRUT: Arab tribesmen clashed with U.S.-backed Kurdish fighters in several areas of eastern Syria on Tuesday, leaving at least 10 people dead and others wounded, opposition activists and pro-government media said.

The clashes are among the worst in recent years in the region along the border with Iraq where hundreds of U.S. troops have been based since 2015 to help in the fight against the Islamic State group.

The clashes first broke out Monday, a day after the U.S.-backed and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces detained the commander of a formerly allied group and several other members of his faction after they were invited to a meeting in the northeastern city of Hassakeh.

Some Arab tribesmen in the eastern province of Deir el-Zour were angered by the detention of Ahmad Kheibel, better known as Abu Khawla. He heads the Deir el-Zour Military Council, which was allied with the SDF in its yearslong battle against the Islamic State group in Syria.

The clashes raise concerns of more divisions between U.S.-backed Kurdish and Arab fighters in eastern Syria, where the Islamic State group once enjoyed a wide presence. U.S.-backed fighters play a major role in targeting Islamic State sleeper cells that still carry out deadly attacks.



Ukrainian law enforcement officers stand next to a burning industrial facility following a missile strike in the village of Hoholeve, Poltava region.



U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and Chinese Premier Li Qiang have a light moment during a meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China.

More than 1,000 schools destroyed in Ukraine since war began - UNICEF

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: More than 1,300 schools have been totally destroyed in government-held areas of Ukraine since Russia's 2022 invasion and others have been badly damaged, the U.N. children's fund UNICEF said on Tuesday.

Persistent attacks mean that only about a third of school-age children there are attending classes fully in person and many are forgetting what they have already learned, it said.

Beyond Ukraine, more than half of the children whose families have fled the conflict to seven countries are not enrolled in national education, UNICEF said, citing language barriers and overstretched education systems. Some schools have suffered direct hits and others have closed down as a precaution in 18 months of missile and artillery attacks on residential areas across the country.

Ukraine claims retaking town, eyes gains in south

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Ukraine said on Monday its troops had liberated the south-eastern settlement of Robotyne and were trying to push further south in their counteroffensive against Russian forces.

The Ukrainian military said last week that its forces had raised the national flag in the strategic settlement, but were still carrying out mopping-up operations.

Ukrainian forces believe they have broken through the most difficult line of Russian defences in the south and that they will now start advancing more quickly, a commander who led troops into Robotyne said last week.

"Robotyne has been liberated," Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar was quoted as saying by the military. The settlement is 10 km (six miles) south of the front-line town of Orikhiv in the Zaporizhzhia region on an important road towards Tokmak, a Russian-occupied road and rail hub.

Libyan PM sacks FM after storm over Israel meeting

Monitoring Desk
TRIPOLI: Libya's prime minister sacked the foreign minister on Monday in an effort to contain a growing furor over Najla Mangoush's meeting with her Israeli counterpart last week, which prompted protests in several Libyan cities.

Mangoush had said her meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen in Rome was unplanned and informal, but an Israeli official said it had lasted two hours and was approved "at the highest levels in Libya".

Some reports in Libyan media said the foreign minister had left for Turkey after the furor, but others said she was in the country and had been put on a no-fly list.

The meeting is contentious because Libya does not formally recognise Israel and there is widespread public support across the Libyan political spectrum for the Palestinian cause of creating an independent state in territory Israel occupies.

The dispute over the meeting has fed into Libya's internal political crisis.

Kremlin says Pope's comments on Russian history are 'very gratifying'

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: The Kremlin on Tuesday described as "very gratifying" comments by Pope Francis urging young Russians to remember their history, saying that the Russian state had a rich legacy and that it was good that the Pope knew Russian history. Pope Francis has come under criticism for telling Russian youths last week to remember that they are the heirs of past tsars such as Peter the Great.

'Hundreds of thousands' trafficked into SE Asia scam centres - UN

Monitoring Desk
BANGKOK: Hundreds of thousands of people are being trafficked by criminal gangs and forced to work in scam centres and other illegal online operations that have sprung up across Southeast Asia in recent years, the United Nations said in a report on Tuesday.

The report cited "credible sources" estimating that at least 120,000 people across Myanmar and around 100,000 in Cambodia may be trapped in scam operations, with other criminal-owned enterprises in Laos, the Philippines and Thailand ranging from crypto-fraud to online gambling.

"People who are coerced into working in these scamming operations endure inhumane treatment while being forced to carry out crimes. They are victims. They are not criminals," said U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk.

Cambodian police spokesperson Chhay Kim Khoen said he had not seen the U.N. report but queried the number.

"I don't know how to respond, where did they get the (100,000) number from? Have they investigated? Where did they get the data? Foreigners are just saying things."

Myanmar's military-run government did not respond to requests for comment.

Caretaker Federal Minister says: Pak needs to invest more in flood management, early warning amid growing vulnerability

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Water Resources Ahmed Irfan Aslam on Tuesday said the country during the 2022 monsoon floods bore \$30 billion in economic and infrastructure losses that demanded to invest more resources in flood management and early warning systems for better disaster preparedness.

The Interim Minister delivered his keynote address at the launching ceremony of the National Master Plan on Flood Telemetry and National Consultation on Updated National Flood Protection Plan-IV which

was supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Minister Ahmed Irfan Aslam said globally some \$2.93 trillion was lost due to natural disasters whereas during the 2022 monsoon floods, Pakistan faced huge economic losses as mentioned above and these were staggering statistics.

He said, "If we are to grow as a nation, as an economy we need to have strategic flood management plans. Water-related natural disasters can be managed through informed forecast which is not possible without modern flood telemetry systems," he added.

related departments were silently working without any recognition like the Federal Flood Commission (FFC) which should be acknowledged and appreciated. He also extended his gratitude to the ADB for supporting the upgradation of the National Flood Protection Plan-IV as the government had initiated the endeavour based on the lessons learned during the floods of 2022.

He said the exchange of knowledge and information had a long way aiming to protect more lives which would significantly contribute to the implementation of the updated Plan.

The Caretaker Minister also lauded the Secretary Water Resources for his dedication to the subject matter and termed it helpful in taking informed steps at the Division.

Secretary of Water Resources Division Syed Ali Murtaza in his opening remarks said that the country was highly vulnerable due to floods. However, the recurring floods had incurred huge economic losses to the country whereas information and prevention of floods was a key driver for the country to ensure convincing flood management strategies on the ground.



HYDERABAD: Fishermen are hunting into Indus river as the water level increases due to low flood that may cause any life risk for them, near Jamshoro.



KARACHI: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki offer Fatcha at Mazar-e-Quaid

Bridging gap between policy, laws and practice key to lessen gender based violence: Advisor

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Assistant for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaah Hussain Mullick Tuesday stressed the need for bridging gap between women empowerment laws and practice for lessening the gender discrimination and violence against them in the society. She was addressing at a national conference of service providers on gender based violence here.

Representatives of different stakeholders participated in the conference and shared their valuable views on this occasion.

Highlighting the deplorable condition of

women of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), the Special Assistant said that Indian armed forces had been committing heinous crimes especially, against women in the IIOJK for the last seven decades.

She said, rape was being used as a ferocious tool of weapon against Kashmiri women in order to demoralize them and suppress Kashmiris's just cause for the right to self-determination.

Indian state authorities not only condone such condemnable acts but also encourage such nefarious crimes as a state policy, she added.

Shahbaz Sharif says: Conviction of darling suspended, not abolished

LONDON (Online): Former Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif has said the conviction of the darling has been suspended and has not been abolished.

He said this in a statement while reacting to suspension of PTI chairman sentence in Toshakhana case. He went on to say that message of 'good to see you and wishing you good luck reached Islamabad High Court. If every one knows what will be decision before the announcement of decision then it should be matter of grave concern for justice system.

ECP assures to hold free, fair polls as per constitution

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan has assured to hold the upcoming elections peacefully and impartially as per Constitution and the law.

Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja gave this assurance, while chairing two separate meetings in Islamabad on Tuesday.

The meetings were aimed at reviewing the preparations regarding the upcoming general elections in the country.

Members of the Election Commission, Secretary ECP, Chief Secretary Sindh, IG Sindh, Chief Secretary Balochistan, IG Balochistan, Provincial Election Commissioner Sindh and Balochistan, and other senior officers of ECP attended the meetings.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary and IG Sindh briefed the Election Commission on preparations for the upcoming general elections and assured full cooperation in this regard.

The Election Commission emphasized on the Chief Secretary and IG Sindh that conducting transparent and impartial elections are fundamental responsibility of ECP. In this regard, the first step is the transfer and posting of all officers and officials who are important in the perspective of impartial elections.

The Election Commission has issued directives in this regard, because transfer and posting is the first step towards transparency. After that, there will be appointments of District Returning Officers, Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, and Monitoring Teams will be made.

The Election Commission assured full support and cooperation to Chief Secretary and IG Sindh. In the second meeting, the Chief Secretary, IG Balochistan, and Provincial Election Commissioner Balochistan briefed the Election Commission on preparations for the upcoming elections.

Forthcoming ten months to witness substantial progress in execution of 5G action plan: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication on Tuesday said the forthcoming ten months would witness substantial progress in the execution of the 5G action plan.

During a meeting with Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Major General (Retd) Hafeez Ur Rehman, the minister discussed in detail the upcoming plans related to telecommunication.

Dr. Umar Saif, the Minister, shed light on the paramount importance of optimal spectrum utilization and the coordinated deployment of the 5G network.

One of the central tenets of the plan is the prioritized removal of obstacles that could impede the smooth execution of the 5G strategy.

Dr. Umar Saif expressed unwavering determination to eliminate hurdles by establishing a priority-based criterion.

He specifically highlighted that challenges related to taxation, telecom density, and spectrum management would be actively addressed.

In alignment with this proactive stance, Dr. Umar Saif reiterated the administration's dedication to refining the quality of telecom services, thus enhancing the experience for consumers.



KARACHI: Activists of Pakistan Markazi Muslim league holds protest outside K-Electric against the unjust price hike of electricity and overall inflation across the country

KP Relief Department, IRC sign MoU to strengthen disaster response efforts

PESHAWAR (APP): The Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Department (RRSD) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) on Tuesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance the disaster management and fortify the emergency response efforts.

Secretary Relief, Abdul Basit and Country Director of IRC, Shabnam Baloch signed the MoU. This moment marked that the IRC was committed to an enhanced collaboration with RRSD-Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) across all phases of disaster management. The collaborative initiatives encompass rapid response strategies, anticipatory actions, capacity-building projects and reinforcement of disaster preparedness programs.

The successful execution of this partnership

hinges on the availability of essential resources to facilitate joint endeavors.

Throughout this collaboration, RRSD and IRC maintain their distinct missions and responsibilities, ensuring the preservation of their individual objectives.

Commenting on this development, Secretary of Relief, Abdul Basit, stated, "By harnessing the resources at our disposal, RRSD and IRC are poised to identify shared areas of interest in aiding communities affected by disasters or conflicts through targeted program interventions."

He further added, "I strongly believe in the significance of building and strengthening local capacities in disaster preparedness and response. Additionally, he said we need to establish efficient mechanisms to streamline humanitarian efforts and prevent duplication of work during emergencies.

Rupee extends losses against dollar

KARACHI (APP): Exchange rate of Pakistan rupee weakened by Rs 1.06 against the United States dollar in the interbank trading on Tuesday and closed at Rs 303.05 against the previous day's closing of Rs 301.99. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 319.5 and Rs 322.5 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs 1.41 paisa to close at Rs 327.56 against the last day's closing of Rs 326.15, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and stood at Rs 2.06, whereas an increase of Rs 2.43 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 382.10 as compared to the last closing of Rs 379.67. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 29 paisa each to close at Rs 82.51 and Rs 80.78 respectively.

Court extends physical remand of Parvez Elahi till Sept 2

LAHORE (APP): An accountability court on Tuesday extended physical remand of former chief minister Punjab and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi till September 2 in a case of receiving kickbacks in development projects.

Earlier, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) team produced Chaudhry Parvez Elahi before Accountability Court Judge Sajid Ali Awan on expiry of physical remand term.

A prosecutor represented the bureau and

pleaded with the court to extend physical remand of Parvez Elahi as investigation could not be completed from him. He submitted that Parvez Elahi was not cooperating with the investigation team.

However, Parvez Elahi's counsel Advocate Amjad Parvez opposed the physical remand plea besides questioning the arrest of his client by the bureau.

Subsequently, the court extended the physical remand of Parvez Elahi for another 4 days and directed for producing him on September 2.

OGDCL workshop on energy explores latest trends, future prospects

Independent Report KARACHI: The Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) on Tuesday hosted a dynamic workshop on energy in collaboration with the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS).

The workshop, held at the OGDCL headquarters, provided a platform for industry experts and thought leaders to convene and deliberate on the current landscape, future prospects, and collaborative initiatives within the energy sector.

The workshop was graced by the presence of Mr. Ahmed Hayat Lak, the Managing Director of OGDCL, alongside all Ex-

ecutive Directors of OGDCL, and other senior officers. The gathering facilitated constructive exchanges of insights and perspectives on the advancements in the energy domain, fostering a deeper understanding of ongoing projects, challenges, and emerging opportunities.

The three-session workshop was enriched by presentations from esteemed speakers, prominently featuring LUMS Energy Institute (LEI) luminaries - Dr. Fiaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Prof. Nauman Ahmad Zaffar, and Dr. Naveed Arshad. The sessions encompassed a diverse range of topics, spanning the power sector's challenges and prospects, the significance of advanced batteries in national energy security, and the role of Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Disruptive Energy Technologies.

These discussions not only expanded horizons but also underscored the potential for innovation-driven solutions to shape the future of energy. Speaking at the event, Mr. Ahmed Hayat Lak, MD/



CEO OGDCL, expressed his enthusiasm about the collaborative potential between OGDCL and LUMS and said, "This workshop signifies a remarkable opportunity to bridge industry and academia, paving the way for innovative partnerships. By synergizing efforts, we can collectively drive the energy sector towards sustainable growth and resilience."

China, Pakistan hold joint air force training exercise

BEIJING (APP): China and Pakistan kicked off a joint air force training exercise within Chinese territory as part of efforts to further boost training and coordination between the two militaries and deepen their exchange and cooperation on military technology.

C o d e n a m e d "Shaheen (Eagle) - X," it is the 10th joint training exercise between the Chinese and Pakistani air forces.

The exercise will focus on training in typical combat scenarios such as joint air defense and joint countermeasures, CGTN reported on Tuesday.

The two sides will send fighters, early warning aircraft and several other types of aircraft, as well as ground forces such as ground-to-air missiles and radar and signal troops to participate in the exercise. Chinese naval aviation units will also be involved in the training.

The "Shaheen (Eagle)" series between the two countries started in March 2011.

Jl urges SC to direct ECP for ensuring elections within 90 days

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) has formally requested the Supreme Court to direct the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to ensure the holding of elections within 90 days of the dissolution of the National Assembly.

The petition in apex court was filed by JI leader Liaquat Baloch on Tuesday. The petition pleaded with the court to direct ECP to ensure the holding of general elections in the country within 90 days.

It is pertinent to mention that this is the third petition filed with the apex court. Earlier, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Supreme Court Bar Association President Abid S. Zubairi had filed the same petition in the apex court.

The PTI plea stated that Supreme Court should also direct the ECP to issue the schedule for upcoming general elections.

New FAO Office helps strengthen partnerships for agriculture

HYDERABAD (Online): The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) inaugurated a new provincial office in Tando Jam, Hyderabad District, on Monday, August 28, 2023 marking a significant milestone and a new partnership to drive positive change in communities.

"Universities and academia play a key role to help shape sustainable agricultural practices through research and innovation," said Prof. Dr. Fateh Muhammad Marri, Vice Chancellor Sindh Agriculture University, Tando Jam who attended the ceremony.

This new FAO provincial office underscores the Organization's commitment to forging enduring partnerships with academic institutions in support of agriculture in Pakistan.

"This new office is the UN that we need for Pakistan, one that brings our staff and support close to the people and the local governments that we serve," said Julien Harnes, UN Resident Coordinator for Pakistan. "It is particularly exciting to see the office in the Sindh Agricultural University, where we can combine research and action."

"FAO's strategic focus is to build long-term collaborations with universities," said Ms. Florence Rolle, FAO Representative in Pakistan.



KARACHI: Sindh Wildlife Department officials capture the lion spotted on the loose at central artery Shahr-e-Faisal. A lion spotted on the loose at central artery Shahr-e-Faisal, captured and handed over to the Sindh Wildlife Department, according to police

Care taker PM to visit Kenya in first week of Sep

ISLAMABAD (Online): Care taker Prime Minister (PM) Anwaarul Haq Kakar will undertake official visit of Kenya in the first week of September following invitation extended by the Kenyan President.

According to private TV channel, care taker PM visit will last 3 days.

Members of care taker cabinet, advisors and Special assistants will accompany care taker PM during his visit to Kenya. It has been said agreements and MOUs on bilateral ties, trade and investments will be signed during the care taker PM visit to Kenya.



LARKANA: IBA passed candidates are holding protest demonstration for PST and JEST appointment letters, at Jinnah Bagh