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Govt to come up with solution for inflated electricity bills: PM

Says caretaker Govt trying to resolve electricity bills issue without defiance of IMF agreements

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Anwaar-Haq Kakar Thursday said the government minutely looked into the problem of inflated electricity bills and would come up with a solution within next 48 hours.

Talking to senior journalists and news anchors here on the current challenging economic conditions, he said the government was considering various options to provide relief to the people.

The people had protested against increased electricity bills and the government realized their problems, he added.

To a question, he clarified that the Pakistan army, navy and air force were not

using a single free unit of electricity and their bills were paid from the allocated financial budget.

While employees of WAPDA were using free electricity units and their usage would be rationalized, especially of the higher grade officers some of them were getting huge quantity of free electricity, he added.

He said perception should not be that the government would take any strict measures causing difficulties for the people.

He pointed out that the power sector had been a very challenging issue since the 1990s and the governments of that time signed agreements with in-

dependent power producers to overcome loadshedding which proved costly for consumers.

Over the years, he said, the generation and transmission system of electricity was flawed and the government had to deal with serious issues of line losses, power theft, high circular debt, use of expensive imported fuel and capacity payments to electricity companies.

"These issues cannot be ignored by just closing eyes. We need to diagnose treatment for the disease."

He made it clear that the government would fulfill its agreements with the international financial institutions.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar talking to Anchors and Journalists in a meeting at the Prime Minister's House.

Govt 'prepares' relief plan for electricity consumers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Caretaker government has 'prepared' a relief plan for the electricity consumers after countrywide protests against inflated bills, sources said on Thursday.

From Karachi to

Khyber, people belonging to various walks of life are protesting against soaring electricity bills.

Sources having knowledge of the development said Pakistan has shared the plan with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in writing seeking Rs250 billion relief in electricity bills.

The plan has been prepared by keeping the consumers who use up to 400 electricity units, monthly, the sources said.

Pakistan in its recommendations has suggested taking back the recent hike of Rs7 per unit in the basic tariff of electricity and do-

ing the same phase-wise, later.

Furthermore, Pakistan has also sought the IMF's nod to give installment facilities to electricity consumers.

The Finance Ministry will give a guarantee to the international lender in writing for the collection of August and September's bills in installments, the sources said. Earlier on Wednesday, Caretaker Finance Minister Dr. Shamsud Akhtar ruled out room for additional subsidies within the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreements.

Talking to journalists in Islamabad, the finance minister conveyed the government's sensitivity toward the welfare of the country's poor, saying that they would prevent any exacerbation of hardships faced by the vulnerable.

9 soldiers martyred, 5 injured in suicide attack in Bannu: ISPR

Military's media affairs wing says "such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve", vows to eliminate menace of terrorism.

RAWALPINDI (APP): Nine soldiers of Pakistan Army on Thursday embraced martyrdom after a motorcycle-borne suicide bomber exploded himself while targeting a military convoy in general area Jani Khel of Bannu District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Among the nine soldiers Naib Subedar Sanobar Ali also embraced shahadat (martyrdom), while five soldiers were injured, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

The area was cordoned by the security forces and sanitization was being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area.

"Security forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the ISPR said.

Reacting to the terrorist incident, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said that he was "heartbroken" by the loss of nine "valiant soldiers" to a cowardly terrorist act that injured many.

"Such acts are utterly reprehensible. My thoughts are with the families of the martyred and injured. Pakistan stands resolute against such terror," the interim premier added.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, Dr Nadeem Jan, calls on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Federal minister terms quality education key to development of nation

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi, on Thursday, termed quality education as key to the development of any nation

assured that the government will take every possible measure to further enhance the quality of teaching and research in universities. The federal minister was chairing a meeting with vice-chancellors of public sector universities of Sindh at the Higher Education Commission's Regional Office Karachi. Chairman HEC Dr Mukhtar Ahmed was also present at the occasion.

In the brainstorming session on the improvement of the quality of higher education, vice chancellors of universities spoke in length on the performance of their universities, financial and other issues being faced and measures taken to deal with

them and also presented suggestions for enhancement of quality of teaching and research in the higher education institutions.

Madad Ali Sindhi, addressing the occasion said that Prime Minister Anwar ul Haq Kakar has directed him to visit educational institutions to look into their issues and take measures for their resolution.

The minister said that he had conducted visits to schools in Islamabad and issued directives for resolving issues and now he was having a meeting with vice-chancellors of universities of Sindh.

All the issues including quality of education and shortage of resources were discussed in detail in the meeting and a series of engagements would continue he would also pay visits to the universities to review the situation and find solutions, the minister added.



HYDERABAD: Sindh Law Minister Umer Soomro addressing to the members of Hyderabad District Bar.

Home secretary for gender sensitive training of jail staff

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Secretary for Home Syed Aijaz Ali Shah on Thursday directed the Inspector General of Prisons to put up a proposal for gender-sensitive training to jail staff in the training curriculum in all Sindh prisons to ensure better conduct with the women prisoners in jails.

"There is an exigent need to make genders sensitive training available in all the prisons as the females go through more serious issues including physical, mental, and above-all family issues including children born in jails," he said during a visit to the women's jail in central prison Karachi.

Aijaz Ali Shah inter-

acted with the women prisoners to inquire about their issues.

He directed IG prisons to take stock of the difficulties being faced by the women prisoners and ensure necessary action.

He observed that vocational training centres should be upgraded in prisons with more participation of the women prisoners, in order to provide training to inmates so that jails could be transformed into rehabilitation centres instead of confinement cells.

The Secretary of Home also visited under construction Judicial Complex within the premises of Central Jail and directed to speed up the work.



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi chairing a meeting with vice chancellors of public sector universities of Sindh at Higher Education Commission's Regional Office.

Haris constitutes committee for ensuring security on Imam Hussain's Chehlum

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Minister for Home and Prison Brig (ret'd) Haris Nawaz on Thursday said the Constitution of Pakistan gives complete freedom to all religions and schools of thought in the country to perform religious rituals and in this regard the caretaker government was taking concrete steps for ensuring the rights to all schools of thoughts.

He said this during a meeting with a delegation of scholars in his office, according to a news release.

The delegation was led by Allama Nisar Qalandari, Vice President Jafaria Alliance. Other members of the delegation included Allama Hasan

Masoudi, Vice President of Jafaria Alliance, Shabbir Raza, General Secretary of Jafaria Alliance, Sarwar Ali of Pak Muharram Association, Shah Hassan Naqvi of Safinatul Momineen Trust, Shah Najaf Bargah, Shamsul Hasan of Organization of Aza, Shahzad Rizvi of Organization of Aza, Ali Hussain of MWM, Ghayur Ali of Pak Hyderi scouts and others.

The minister said extraordinary security measures were being ensured on the occasion of Chehlum of Hazrat Imam Hussain (A.S). The security at the main processions and Majalis venues will be made foolproof and coordinated in consultation with the organisers.



KARACHI: Activates of Jamaat e Islami Women wing hold protest against over electricity bill charges.

IT industry got potential to fix Pakistan's trade imbalance: IT Minister

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif on Thursday said that IT industry of Pakistan had grown and the industry could fix Pakistan's trade imbalance as this was a service based industry, thus no bill of import as no goods being sent to Pakistan.

He shared these views as chief guest at inauguration ceremony of "ITCN Asia 2023", International IT & Telecom Show at Expo Centre here.

The minister said that the key difference between the IT industry and all the other traditional industries

was that the IT was a service based industry.

Dr. Umar Saif said that we lived in a country where the Achilles heel of our economy is how much we can export. But the Achilles heel is that wherever we decide to export, whenever we increase our exports, we also have to import a lot of stuff and raw material.

He said that the textile industry and all the other traditional industries in Pakistan also depend on import of raw materials, which means that even if we begin to export, even if there is a lot of domestic consumption, our trade imbalance continues to go into a

boom, he added.

He said that the solution to this, of course, is the growth of service-based industries, industries for which the raw material already exists in this country as our biggest strength is a very large, educated, tech-savvy, skilled, young population. The average Pakistani is only 22 years old, he noted.

The minister said that our close to half a million graduates from university every year as a lot of them do technical degrees and could be employed here or become part of the global workforce to what is now called the gig economy.



KARACHI: Malaysian Counsel General in Karachi Herman Hardynata Ahmad cuts the cake along with others during event to mark the 66th National Day of Malaysia, in Provincial Capital.

IT sector can be a game changer in current economic situation: Mayor Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that the Information technology (IT) sector can be a game changer in the current situation of the Pakistani economy.

He expressed these views while addressing the opening ceremony of the three-day 23rd ITCN Asia exhibition after formally opening the event for citizens and IT delegates at the Expo Center on Thursday.

He said that as many as 55 percent of Karachi's population consists of youth and if given the right guidance and opportunities, these youths can be IT-oriented and deliver their skills for the betterment of the country. He said that KMC offers I.T projects on Karachi land, and Public Private Partnership would be a good business model for projects like I.T Parks in Karachi.

He said that ITCN Asia Exhibition in Karachi is the best platform to understand I.T and communi-

cation at the local level.

On this occasion, Deputy Mayor Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad and Mayor Karachi Spokesperson for Political Affairs Karamullah Waqasi were also present.

Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that such events can remove the negative perception of Karachi and create a positive image of the city. This will benefit Karachi, Sindh province and the whole of Pakistan.

Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that if ITCN Asia organizers need a space to work in Karachi or need any other support, KMC will provide all kinds of assistance.

He said that it is a matter of pleasure that in the ITCN Asia a good number of companies are participating including well-known international brands like Google, which gives access to the latest technology to the IT organizations working at the local level.



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif along with others cutting ribbon at the opening of "ITCN Asia 2023", International IT & Telecom Show at Expo Centre.

Madad Sindhi visits Mazad-e-Quaid, pays respect to father of the nation

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi on Thursday visited the mausoleum of Father of the Nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, where he paid his respects and offered Fateha.

The Minister laid a floral wreath at the mausoleum and also penned his comments in the visitors' book. In his remarks, the minister paid tribute to Q u a i d - e - A z a m Muhammad Ali Jinnah for his struggle to create a separate homeland.

Speaking on the occasion, the Federal Minister said by following the ideology and sayings of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan could become a prosperous and developed nation.

Madad Ali Sindhi said that as soon as he took over the charge of the Ministry of Education, he started to visit primary schools as for a long time proper attention had not been paid to government schools.

Pakistan shared relief plan in electricity bills with IMF

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan has shared relief plan in electricity bills with IMF.

The finance ministry has given a written confirmation to the IMF to collect the August and September bills in installments.

According to the details, after approval from IMF, Consumers who have consumed 400 unit will get relief to pay bill in installments.

According to sources in the Ministry of Finance, the IMF may agree to receive electricity bills from consumers if the IMF agrees, there may be an agreement for 2 months.

An answer is likely to be received today from the IMF on the relief in electricity bills.

While there will be no relief for tax reduction, however, consent to receive the bill in installments may be obtained.

It is to mention that yesterday the caretaker government had submitted proposals to the IMF for relief in electricity bills.

Pakistan's total foreign reserves reach at \$13.17 billion

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$ 13,171.1 million while reserves held by the central bank reached \$ 7,849.3 million.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that SBP's reserves decreased by \$ 81 million to \$ 7,849.3 million on account of debt repayments during the week ended on August 25, 2023.

Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at \$ 5,321.8 million, it added.

In the previous week ending on August 18, 2023, total liquid foreign reserves held by the country was US\$ 13,248.4 million.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Beyond reason

The violation of fundamental rights — including the right to due process, to freedom of association and speech — across the country, is now beyond farce. There is not even the pretence of adhering to the law, only a relentless determination to erase all dissent through whatever means can be conjured up to illegally deprive recalcitrant individuals of their liberty, and to silence them.

Consider the travails of lawyer and vocal critic of enforced disappearances, Imaan Hazir Mazari. Her "original sin", a fiery speech made at a PTM rally in Islamabad, has been used to file three FIRs against her. She was first arrested on multiple charges, including sedition, rioting and dacoity, etc — by law-enforcement personnel who reportedly barged into her residence in the early hours without an arrest warrant.

Granted post-arrest bail in one case, Ms Mazari was kept in custody until she obtained bail in the second one as well. Shortly after her release, she was rearrested outside the prison gates — this time on far-fetched allegations of "terror financing" — an arrest that her lawyer has claimed violated the Islamabad High Court's orders.

Outspoken PTM leader Ali Wazir, arrested alongside Ms Mazari, is yet to be granted bail. The former South Waziristan MNA was an exception earlier for having been kept behind bars on various pretexts for over two years, despite being acquitted and granted bail several times. But post May 9, there is a sinister predictability to the pattern of repeated incarceration at the pleasure of the authorities.

Ms Mazari's mother, former PTI MNA Shireen Mazari, was subjected to the same until she announced she was leaving her party. Many other PTI leaders — including Shehryar Afridi, arrested an outrageous 10 times — have been made to go through this 'revolving door imprisonment', which makes a mockery of the courts. Those turning their backs on the party 'won't' their freedom.

While PTI's lawyers are preoccupied with defending Imran Khan, the legal troubles of other party leaders — not to mention ordinary PTI supporters — are getting scant attention. Several of them are in the security establishment's custody and facing trials in military courts.

The Punjab caretaker government informed the Lahore High Court that the detainees are not allowed to meet their families or legal counsel of their choice. Are these foreign enemy agents or citizens of Pakistan? The flagrant abuse of power being witnessed today leaves Pakistan looking like a country virtually unmoored from the universal principles of justice on which its Constitution and its international human rights obligations are based. One wonders whether the centres of power are cognisant of how this affects the country's global standing. Or is that not a priority in these times? As for the caretakers, pleading helplessness is not an option. They are complicit.

Inflation and devaluation



Khurram Husain

For more than two and a half years now, at least, the country has been seeing relentless and unending pressure on the exchange rate and the price level. The present bout of exchange rate volatility began in May 2021 and has continued unabated since then. The dollar had moved around 150 to the rupee for two years until that month. Less than 30 months later, its value doubled versus the rupee, and still the pressure is refusing to subside. It took 10 years for the dollar to double in value from 75 to 150 rupees, from 2008 till 2019. It took less than two and a half years for it to double again from May 2021 till the present.

As the same time, inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index skyrocketed only a few months after May 2021, and rose relentlessly till our time, with a few interruptions along the way.

The question to ask is: what is driving this relentless surge for almost two and a half years now, punctuated with brief moments of what seems like stability? Why this persistent surge in pressure on prices over such a long period?

To find the answer, do a simple exercise. This gets a bit technical, so let me explain it first. Take the money supply projections contained in the IMF staff reports of April 2021, February 2022 and September 2022. Take the overall broad money supply, called M2, as well as the aggregates called Net Domestic Assets (NDA) and the Net Foreign Assets (NFA), and put the projections into an excel

sheet. Underneath each of these projections, take the data reported by the State Bank for the same period, and calculate the difference between reality and projection.

The projection represents the path to stability. It tells us how the money supply and its aggregates need to move in order for the mounting external sector pressures on the economy to be dissipated. The real figures, reported by the State Bank, tell you what actually happened in reality. The difference — reality minus the projection — tells you how far the economy moved from its projected path to stability.

When you do this exercise, you will notice something. Overall, broad money growth remains more or less within a narrow band of where it is supposed to be. So far so good. But notice how the compositional aggregates are moving relative to where they are supposed to be. The IMF projected a certain level of money supply growth in each staff report. But in its projections, the bulk of the growth was supposed to come from rising NFAs, with NDAs either growing slowly (as per the April 2021 projection) or contracting slightly (as per the February 2022 projection).

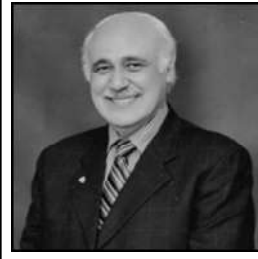
In reality, the exact opposite happened. If you plot the difference (reality minus projection) you will notice that NFAs are falling sharply while NDAs are rising. This is the diametric opposite of what was envisioned in the projected path to stability. And this divergence not only continues in both periods covered by the April 2021 and February 2022 staff reports, it also aggravates. By the time of the September 2022 staff report, the difference between where we are supposed to be by programme end (Q4FY23) and where we actually were is so large that it is difficult to fathom

how it is going to be rectified.

Now, look at the staff report for the latest Stand-by Arrangement. You will notice that the projections for the monetary aggregates do not even envision a path back to stability. All they do is arrest the deterioration. The previous three staff reports envisioned NFAs becoming positive within a quarter or two. In the SBA, they remain negative throughout the programme period. All that the government is being asked to do is to go into a holding pattern, arresting further deterioration in the money aggregates.

This is the crux of the matter. Serious malfunctions on the balance of payments and fiscal accounts are throwing the monetary aggregates far from their projected path to stability. This malignant movement in the monetary aggregates, in turn, is fuelling inflation and exchange rate pressure. Endless rounds of devaluation are failing to arrest or dissipate the pressure, because the underlying movements keep producing more pressure even after every devaluation. It will take years, but it can still be done. The State Bank will have to build reserves by starving the interbank market of dollars, while the state will have to mobilise a massive tax effort the likes of which it has not done in decades. Or a fresh exogenous event that results in a new shower of foreign exchange coming upon us appears. In the meantime, to get a sense of where things are moving, keep an eye on the broad money, NFAs and NDAs as they shape up, and see whether they are trending towards or away from the projection in the SBA. And best of luck to everyone! The scale of what is coming should not be underestimated. — Courtesy Dawn

On disobedience



F.S. Aijazuddin

It began with Adam. John Milton blamed him for the world's woes in this fiery opening to his epic poem Paradise Lost: "Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit/Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste/Brought Death into the World, and all our woe."

With woes, disobedience came with some compensating virtues. The playwright Oscar Wilde contended that "Disobedience... is man's original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made [,] and rebellion".

A recent rebel — Edward Snowden of WikiLeaks fame — argued: "Sometimes to do the right thing, you have to break a law [,] You have to make sure that what you're risking, what you're bringing onto yourself, does not serve as a detriment to anyone else."

In Pakistan, disobedience is the fourth injunction, omitted from our national motto. Disobedience has become the new norm — whether to the laws of God, to the Constitution, to man-made laws, Rules of Business, or to the orders of a superior.

In October 2021, the then chief of army staff Gen Qamar Bajwa announced the transfer of Gen Faiz Hameed from the post of DG ISI to commander Peshawar Corps. The appointment was notified by the ISPR on Oct 6 (No PR-165/2021-ISPR). Prime minister Imran Khan (it is said at the transferee's behest) held the COAS's order in abeyance. Six weeks later, in November, Gen Hameed obeyed his chief's orders

and left the ISI. To some, such independence of action constituted disobedience to a higher institutional authority.

More recently, the principal secretary to the president, Waqar Ahmed, questioned the orders signed by his employer for reversion to the Establishment Division. The dislodged principal secretary related with a confidential letter, which, though marked "For the Eyes of the President", somehow leaked into the media. In it, he complained: "The decision to surrender my services isn't based on justice." He urged the president to "initiate an investigation into the matter through the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) or any relevant agency to uncover any misconduct", adding, with misplaced bravado, that he was "prepared to testify before the Supreme Court or any other court".

As if that disobedience was not bitter enough for the beleaguered president, Ms Humaira Ahmad, identified by the president as the replacement principal secretary, declined his offer even before orders for her transfer had been processed. President Arif Alvi will complete his five-year term on Sept 9, 2023. All too conscious of the shelf life of his constitutional powers, he invited the chief election commissioner, Sikandar Sultan Raja, to meet him for consultation on the next election date. The CEC declined, fobbing him off with the humiliating rebuff that in his "considered view, participation in the meeting would be of scant consequence".

However, the CEC did find the time the following day to meet the US ambassador Donald Blome to hear him pontificate on "the United States' support for free and fair elections conducted in accordance with Pakistan's laws and Constitution". Perhaps His Ex-

cellency detects a faint pulse in our Constitution and something still twitching in the laws of Pakistan that the Pakistani public no longer discerns. For them, the Constitution is no more than a perforated filigree of a once noble intent. Our laws, after 76 years of abuse and misuse, have become a discoloured Rubik's cube, manipulated by legislators, politicians and lawyers alike to yield meanings of their choice.

Disobedience is now endemic in Pakistan. Traffic rules are disobeyed. Tax laws are disobeyed. Jail manuals are disobeyed. Rules of Business are disobeyed. Orders in civilian ink and military khaki are disobeyed. Judicial orders, even up to the eminence of the Supreme Court, are disobeyed. And now, we see the travesty of our president — the constitutional symbol of 240 million Pakis-tanis — reduced to the level of an ineffective supplicant, like "an old Arab prematurely blind, whom the caravan has left behind". Two hundred and fifty years ago, in April 1774, the British parliamentarian Edmund Burke warned his myopic colleagues in Westminster: "Reflect how you are to govern a people, who think they ought to be free [,] Your scheme... yields nothing but discontent, disorder, disobedience".

In today's stygian gloom, where churches are desecrated, the homes of our Christian brethren torched and Bibles burned, it might serve as a palliative to recall St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians in the New Testament: "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." Those who arrogate to themselves control of the destiny of 240m Pakistanis should not ignore these words. They do so — at our peril. — Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Dr Umar Saif unveils \$10bn IT exports plan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr Umar Saif on Thursday unveiled the roadmap to achieve the annual target of \$10 billion IT exports through four major dimensions.

Speaking as a chief guest at the 23rd ITCN Asia 2023 "Declaring Pakistan The Regional ICT Hub," he said the annual IT export could be increased to \$3.5 billion from the present level of \$2.6 billion by providing confidence to the IT companies to retain their exports income in special accounts of local banks.

Special forex accounts and online banking platforms were necessary for the IT companies to invest in the core infrastructure for purchasing essential software services and hardware equipment, he added.

The minister said the ministry, through a partner-

ship with the private sector, would train 100,000 software developers to enhance the exports by \$2 billion per annum, which would translate the export values to \$5.5 billion. In that regard, he said, various training programmes and boot camps would be organized to build the capacity of university graduates in accordance with in-demand skills of the IT industry.

The training initiative would even provide jobs to thousands of graduates in the country who would support themselves and their families, he added.

"Presently, our higher educational institutes produce 35,000 to 40,000 graduates every year in different disciplines, and merely 10 percent are employable."

Dr Umar Saif further said that Pakistanis were the second largest online workforce community in the world, however, revenues earned by them were reflected in remittances of

overseas Pakistanis because of the unavailability of the international payment gateway, PayPal.

The facilitation of freelancers through a global payment gateway and easy account facility would also enhance exports by another \$2 billion, he added.

The freelancers, he said, were being empowered with training in different skills, but an ecosystem and workstations were equally vital for them to enhance their contribution to exports of IT and IT-enabled services.

He said the government, in collaboration with the private sector, would create space on 5,000 points in different cities for freelancers.

"Besides, the tax rate on the income of freelancers is extremely high, which should be equalized to the tax rate of the IT industry at 0.25%. Hence, the rising trend of the Gig economy can also be facilitated in Pakistan."

Tahir Bhatti takes charge as ZTBL President

ISLAMABAD (APP): Tahir Yaqoob Bhatti on Thursday took over as President/Chief Executive Officer of Zarai Taraqiati Bank Ltd (ZTBL).

Tahir Bhatti is a high profile banker with experience of over 35 years in almost all major areas of banking with large and mid-tier financial institutions, according to news release.

He has been part of senior management teams of Askari Bank, Allied Bank Ltd and Faysal Bank.

Prior to joining ZTBL, Bhatti served as President/CEO of Punjab Provincial Cooperative Bank Ltd, the oldest financial institution in country dealing in agriculture.

Bhatti is an MBA from Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Lahore and M.Com from Hailey College of Commerce Lahore. He is also a qualified DCMA (Gold Medal-



ist) and Fellow of Institute of Bankers in Pakistan (IBP). He is certified director from IBA Karachi and remained on Board of Faysal Asset Management Ltd, ABL Asset Management and Board of Studies of Punjab University for Commerce education.

During his illustrious banking career, Bhatti got various professional trainings and courses, both local and international, with top-notch institutions, including 'High Impact Leadership Program' at Columbia Business School, New York, USA.

Gold rates increase by Rs.3,400 to Rs 239,800 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.3,400 on Thursday and was sold at Rs.239,800 as compared to its sale at Rs. 235,400 the previous day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.2,915 to Rs.205,590 from Rs. 202,675 whereas the rate of 10 gram 22 karat went up to Rs.188,457 from Rs. 185,785, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price per tola silver increased by Rs.50 and was sold at Rs.2,900 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs.42.87 to Rs.2,486.28.

The price of gold in the international market, however, increased by \$7 to \$1,945 from \$1,938, the Association reported.



FAISALABAD: A view of the hustle of bikers at fuel station after the news of the price hike of petroleum products in City.

Pakistan-KSA affirm strong bilateral trade ties, mutual cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ambassador of Saudi Arabia in Pakistan Nawaf Saeed Al-Maliki met the Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce and Industries and Production, Dr. Gohar Ejaz here on Thursday.

Both the dignitaries affirmed strong bilateral trade, ties and mutual cooperation between the two brotherly countries, according to a press release issued here.

During the meeting, Ambassador Nawaf extended congratulations to Dr Gohar on his recent ap-

pointment and conveyed warm regards from Saudi Arabia's Custodian of Two Holy Mosques and Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman.

Dr Gohar discussed the strong historical ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, expressing gratitude for Saudi Arabia's consistent support of Pakistan's economic stability and growth.

The minister commended the Saudi leadership's visionary approach and assured Ambassador Nawaf of Pakistan's unwavering partnership and

reliability.

The Ambassador emphasized the fraternal bond between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, characterized by mutual trust and cooperation on various bilateral and regional matters of common concern.

The Ambassador also praised the Minister's efforts to enhance the country's trade prospects.

The meeting also saw the Minister welcoming Ambassador Nawaf to Commerce, where a souvenir was presented as a gesture of goodwill.

PFC delegation left for Russia to explore investment opportunities

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-level delegation of Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) led by its Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq Thursday left for Russia with the primary objective of exploring investment opportunities, fostering joint ventures and collaboration within the furniture industry.

In a press statement CEO PFC said that the council is a representative body of the country's vibrant furniture sector, and has taken this initiative with the intention of promoting economic collaboration and mutual growth be-

tween two great nations.

Recognizing the strengths and potential of both the Russian and Pakistani furniture industries, this delegation seeks to facilitate partnerships that will not only enhance trade but also foster cultural exchange and strengthen the diplomatic ties that bind both countries, he added.

He said as we move forward, he believes that such collaborative efforts will not only contribute to the economic well-being of both countries but will also act as a testament to the enduring friendship between Pakistan and Russia.

Saqib Rafiq appointed Chairman RWMC

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Caretaker Cabinet of the Punjab Government with the approval of the Election Commission of Pakistan appointed President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Saqib Rafiq Chairman of Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC). According to RCCI spokesman, the appointment had been made for three years. As per the notification, the non-executive board members are Danyal Chaudhry, Raja Abdul Hanif, Zia Ullah Shah, Abdul Basit Javed and Shahram Bin Shahzad.

ICCI calls for focusing on agriculture sector to boost its exports to over USD 10 billion

ISLAMABAD (APP): President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari on Thursday said that despite being an agricultural country, Pakistan had to import agricultural commodities worth over USD 5 billion per annum. However, by focusing on better development of the sector, Pakistan can increase the exports of the agricultural sector by over USD 10 billion per annum, which will help revive the economy.

He said that the Fruits & Vegetable Market of Islamabad was located at an important place as it supplied fruits & vegetables to twin cities, KPK, Azad Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and many other areas.

The president urged to develop the market on modern lines that would help promote business activities and exports of this

sector. He said this while talking to a delegation of the Market Committee of I-11/4 Fruits and Vegetables Market that visited ICCI led by its Chairman Sajid Abbasi.

Sajid Siddique Vice Chairman, Naeem Azam Khan, Agha Siraj Durrani, Ch. Ilyas, Sohail Chaudhry and others were in the delegation. Ahsan Bakhtawari briefed the Chairman Market Committee about the key issues of the traders of Fruits & Vegetable Market, I-11/4, Islamabad and stressed for their early solution.

Speaking on the occasion, Sajid Abbasi, Chairman, Market Committee, Fruits & Vegetables Market said that he was a public representative and the Market Committee would be used in the best interests of the people and the traders.



FAISALABAD: President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) Dr. Khurram Tariq addressing a press conference at FCCI Complex.

Rupee sheds Rs1.09 against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani rupee on Thursday witnessed a Rs1.09 devaluation against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs305.53 against the previous day's closing of Rs304.44.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs322 and Rs325 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs1.93 paise to close at Rs 352.70 against the last day's closing of Rs350.77, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen went up by 02 paise and stood at Rs2.09, whereas an increase of Rs3.14 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs387.97 as compared to the last closing of Rs384.83.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 30 paise each to close at Rs83.18 and Rs81.45 respectively.

PRCS provides cash assistance to landslide victims of Muzaffarabad

MUZAFFARABAD (APP): Following the tragic incident of a landslide in Damishi Abhiyal, Muzaffarabad district, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) once again showcased its unwavering dedication to promptly assisting and aiding those affected. Following the directions from Chairman PRCS Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, Muhammad Ubaidullah Khan, the Secretary General of PRCS, presented a cheque amounting to PKR 760,000 to Mr. Ejaz Raza, Chairman PRCS AJK Chapter, to provide assistance to the victims and their families.

In light of this, a sum of PKR 40,000 per family will be distributed among the 19 householders from the impacted community. These funds are intended to

support the victims in recovering and rebuilding their lives and homes after the devastating incident in Damishi Abhiyal.

Speaking on the occasion Chairman of Pakistan Red Crescent Society National Headquarters Islamabad Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari said that PRCS will continue its support to the most vulnerable segment of societies without any discrimination.

Moreover, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari also expressed deep sorrow over the losses caused by the landslide tragedy and also assured that the National Headquarters Islamabad will continue to provide full support to the Azad Kashmir branch and other branches so that, immediate and timely assistance can be provided to the

victims as a result of any disaster throughout Pakistan. "PRCS remains dedicated to its humanitarian mission, providing assistance and relief during times of crisis, and ensuring that no one is left without support", added Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari.

The Chairman PRCS AJK Chapter extends heartfelt gratitude to the National Headquarters Islamabad and Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari for their invaluable support in aiding the victims of the devastating landslide incident.

The Chairman PRCS AJK acknowledges the unity and collaborative effort that underlines the mission of PRCS in alleviating human suffering and helping communities rebuild.



ISLAMABAD: European Union Ambassador, Riina Kionka calls on Federal Minister for Law and Justice Ahmad Irfan Aslam.

Minister launches tour packages for families

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Caretaker Minister for Tourism, Museum, and Archaeology, Syed Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel here Thursday launched tour packages under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority for families and females.

Director General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA), Barkatullah Marwat, General Manager Planning KPCTA, Hayat Ali Shah, GM Culture, Sajjad Hameed and Commandant Tourism Police were also present at the inaugurating

ceremony. The tour packages include the City Tour which will cost Rs 3000 per person, Takht Bahi which will cost Rs 1000 per person and Khanpur Lake Tour will cost Rs 3500 per person.

Addressing the ceremony, the minister said that KPCTA would also start a bus service enabling tourists to visit and enjoy the beauty of famous tourist destinations of KP and historic places of Peshawar City. He said that the city tour would include visit of Sethi House, Namak Mandi, Museum, Ghor

Ghatni and other famous places.

He said that KPCTA has also arranged various recreational events including paragliding, boating, and jet skiing for visitors on Khanpur Lake.

He appreciated the efforts of KPCTA to promote tourism and facilitate visitors and said that the hospitality of KP people is well known in the world. He also highlighted the steps of KPCTA to boost tourism and said that the government would provide all the needed assistance and cooperation to visitors.

Sheikh Saad Nomani performs Qirat at Governor's House

LAHORE (APP): Sheikh Saad Nomani, the miracle reciter of the Holy Quran from Madina, performed Qirat (recitation of the Holy Quran) at the historic Darbar Hall of the Governor's House, here on Thursday.

Visiting Lahore on the invitation of Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman, Sheikh Saad Nomani is of Pakistani descent and lives in the Holy city of Madina where he teaches at the Masjid-e-Nabvi. He has the unique ability to render recitation in the manner of 99 world renowned qaris.

Sheikh Qari Saad Nomani recited Holy Quran

Qari Ahmed Mian Thanvi, Hafiz Abdul Wahab Ropri, Maulana Muhammad Umer Makki, Mufti Intikhab Alam Noori, former MPA Majid Zahoor, renowned Qurra and Naat Khawan were conspicuous among the audience.

The Governor Punjab welcomed Sheikh Qari Saad Nomani to the corridors of Governor's House, adding his presence was a moment of honor and blessedness.

Sheikh Saad Nomani stressed the need to introduce Quranic education to the children at an early age, adding that Quran is the path to success and redemption in this world.



LAHORE: Punjab Governor, Muhammad Balighur Rehman presenting gifts to Pakistani-born renowned reciter of Holy Quran and teacher (Madris) at Masjid Nabawi (PBUH) Al-Sheikh Qari Saad Nomani after a meeting at Governor House



MULTAN: View of business activities seen closed while market gives desert look during the shutdown strike called by trader community against inflation price hiking and the highly inflated electricity bills, in Multan.

PID Dera role for disseminating accurate information lauded

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Vice Chancellor Gomal University Professor Dr Shakibullah on Thursday lauded the role of the Press Information Department (PID) Regional Office, here, for disseminating accurate and timely information to the masses.

During his visit, the VC took around different sections of the PID where he was briefed about its role and other relevant matters by In-charge PID

Muhammad Fazlur Rehman.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that the revival of the PID office was a welcome initiative for the journalists of Dera Ismail Khan, Tank, South Waziristan, Lakki Marwat and Bannu districts besides local newspapers operating in those areas to get timely information and news about public welfare projects of the government.

Governor condoles over demise of Hafeez Ulfat

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali Thursday expressed profound grief and sorrow over the demise of senior journalist, founder and Chief Editor of Daily Sarhad, Hafeez Ulfat.

In his condolence message, the governor expressed sympathy and solidarity with members of the bereaved family. The governor prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul and courage for the bereaved family to bear the irreparable loss with fortitude.

CEO KP-EZDMC inaugurates tree plantation drive in Hattar

PESHAWAR (APP): The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC), Javed Iqbal Khattak Thursday inaugurated tree plantation drives in Hattar Economic Zone and Hattar Special Economic Zone (SEZ). More than 500 saplings have already been planted so far in the plantation drive in both zones.

KARACHI (APP): The Advanced Studies and Research Board (ASRB) of the University of Karachi has awarded 26 PhD, 100 MPhil, seven M.S. (30 Hours Course Work), two MS (Master of Surgery), and one MD (Doctor of Medicine) degrees in various disciplines during the recently held ASRB meeting.

The ASRB meeting was chaired by the KU Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi, said a spokesperson of KU on Thursday.

The PhD degrees were awarded to Shabbir Ahmed (Applied Economics [AERC]), Sana Aurangzeb, Madiha Sattar, and Rumaisa Zakir (Biochemistry),

Muhammad Anas (Chemistry), Salim Saif Ullah (Chemistry [HEJ]), Khatiq Ahmed (Computer Science), Samina Imtiaz, and Khaizran Siddiqui (Genetics), Swaleha Raziullah (History), Syeda Tasneem Zahra (Islamic Learning), Sharmila Faruqi, and Khurram Faizan (Law), Nazish (Marine Biology), Farhana Niazi (Mass Communication), Aiman Fatima, and Rozina Rashid (Microbiology), Muhammad Behroz Naem Khan (Molecular Medicine [PCMD]), Sumaira Ansari (Pharmaceutical Chemistry), Kanwal Iftikhar, and Shireen Sadaruddin (Pharmacology), Naushen GM. (Psychology), Nusrat (Sindhi), Rashid Manzoor

(Social Work), Hamida (Sociology), and Shahla (Statistics).

Meanwhile, the MPhil degrees were awarded to Ghulam Abbas, Almas Saleem, Samra Ali, Uroosa Khan, and M. Ammar Qureshi (Applied Economics [AERC]), Ayesha Ahmed Soomro, Saher Asif, Samreen Ahmed, and Raisa Rasheed (Biochemistry), Zunaira Imran, Oniba Khalid, and Sidra Kanwal (Biotechnology [KIBGE]), Samrah Tariq, Areeba Hyder, Hira Naz, Urooj Rehman, Elsa Saeed, and Mariya Rahi (Botany), Azhar Manzoor (Botany [ISHU]), Hammad Zafar, and Muhammad Adnan

Mansuri (Business Administration [KUBS]), Amer Arshad, Jaweria Khatoun, Anam Gul, Rameez Ahmed, Maheen Riaz, Muhammad Taha Qureshi, Wasima Anjum, Saqiba Riaz, Zunaira Hameed, Bushra Anees, and Muhammad Anwer (Chemistry), Aqsa Ajaz, Sana, Munisaa Younus, Ghulam Murtaza, Muhammad Abid (Chemistry [HEJ]), Alia Parveen, Hafiza Nimra, and Afifa Tariq (Clinical Psychology), Gohar Ali, and Javid Ali Narejo (Criminology), Huma Sahar (Economics), Shamaila Kaiser (English [ELT & Applied Linguistics]), Sidra Siraj Ud Din (Food Science & Technology), Uzma Mazahir

(Genetics), Erma Anwar (Geography), Hira Ali Shah (Health, Physical Education & Sport Sciences), Ghazala Rafique, Ameena, Ibadur Rehman, Ghulam Murtaza Maharvi, Hafiz Abdullah Mansoor Suleman, and Salman Hussain (Islamic Learning), Amina Sana, and Humera Jamshed (Library & Information Sciences), Safia Sikandari (Sociology), Syed Maaz Gillani, Tahira, Rimsha, Ahmed Jalil, and Asma Begum (Microbiology), Nadeem, and Bushra Wahid (Marine Biology), Aisha, and Umer Ghani (Mathematics), Hira Ahmed, Humaira Siddiqui, Noor Fatima, Hira Jawed, and Fouzia Noreen (Molecular Medicine).

International News

US approves first arms to Taiwan under foreign aid programme

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's administration has for the first time approved direct US military aid to Taiwan under an assistance programme aimed at foreign governments, officials said on Wednesday, as worries grow over China.

The State Department informed Congress on Tuesday of the \$80 million package, which is small compared with recent sales to Taiwan but marks the first assistance to Taipei under the Foreign Military Financing programme, which generally involves grants or loans to sovereign countries.

The move is sure to anger China. For five decades,

the United States has officially recognised only Beijing although Congress, under the Taiwan Relations Act, requires the supply of weapons to the self-governing democracy for its defense.

Successive US administrations have done so through sales rather than direct aid to Taiwan, with formal statements speaking in the tone of business transactions with the island's de-facto embassy in Washington. The State Department insisted that the first-ever aid under the programme did not imply any recognition of the sovereignty of Taiwan.

"Consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act and our longstanding One China policy, which has not

changed, the United States makes available to Taiwan defense articles and services necessary to enable it to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability," a State Department spokesperson said. "The United States has an abiding interest in peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, which is critical to regional and global security and prosperity."

Taiwan's defense ministry expressed gratitude. "The aid will help in regional peace and stability," it said in a short statement.

The State Department did not formally announce the aid or give details, but a person familiar with the notice said the assistance would involve support to improve awareness at sea.



North Korean leader Kim Jong visits the training center of the General Staff Department of the Korean People's Army (KPA) in an undisclosed location in North Korea in this picture released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

North Korea simulates invasion in 'scorched earth' nuclear strike drill

SEOUL: North Korea said it had conducted a simulated "scorched-earth" nuclear strike on South Korea and rehearsed invading its neighbour as it accused Seoul and Washington of planning their own preemptive nuclear attack.

The North's missile unit fired two ballistic missiles while conducting a "nuclear strike mission", the General Staff of the Korean People's Army (KPA) said in a statement published on Thursday by state news wire KCNA.

South Korean and Japanese authorities said the two short-range missiles traveled a distance of about 360-400 kilometres (225-250 miles) at a maximum altitude of 50 kilometres (30 miles) before landing in the water between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

The reports contained unusual detail about Pyongyang's war strategy, revealing that the drill simulated repelling a sudden invasion, then launching a nuclear counterattack against key targets in the South including military headquarters before sweep-

ing in to occupy "the whole territory of the southern half".

KCNA said: "The KPA staged a tactical nuclear strike drill simulating scorched-earth strikes at major command centres and operational airfields of the ROK [Republic of Korea] military gangsters on Wednesday night."

The Rodong Sinmun newspaper ran pictures of leader Kim Jong-un looking at battleplans and pointing to a blurred map with a long stick, while senior army officers listened to his orders.

Iran's oil output, exports rise as Washington, Tehran talk

LONDON: Iran's oil output and exports jumped in August despite U.S. sanctions, according to consultants and companies that track tanker shipments, as Tehran sells to buyers including China.

Analysts said the higher exports appear to be the result of Iran's success in evading U.S. sanctions and Washington's discretion in enforcing them as the two countries seek better relations.

The United States has sought to limit Iran's oil exports since Donald Trump exited a 2015 nuclear accord in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions aimed at curbing revenues to Iran's government. But the exports have risen during President Joe Biden's term, with China a top buyer, according to the industry trackers.

SVB International, a consultant, estimates Iran's oil production increased in August to 3.15 million barrels per day (bpd), the highest since 2018, with crude oil and condensate exports at just under 2 million bpd.

"Iran is on the path to recover its pre-sanctions oil production," said SVB's Sara Vakhsouri.

Three other trackers contacted by Reuters had similar estimates. The United States is in talks with Iran over a potential agreement in which five U.S. citizens would be released by Iran and \$6 billion in Iranian funds in South Korea would be unfrozen. White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan has declined to offer a timeline on a deal.



A girl and her mother wade through floodwaters after evacuating their home in Tarpon Springs, Florida, when Hurricane Idalia made landfall.

Japan PM tells fisheries minister to apologise for calling Fukushima wastewater 'contaminated'

TOKYO: Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida ordered his fisheries minister to apologise on Thursday for referring to treated radioactive water being released from the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant as "contaminated" and told him to retract his remark.

He said his discussions with the premier involved "the evaluation of the contaminated water" after its release into the Pacific.

Nomura later apologised and retracted the comment but said he would not resign over it, the Jiji news service reported.

Ukraine has developed a long-range weapon, claims Zelenskyy

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Thursday his country has developed a weapon that hit a target 700 kilometers (400 miles) away, in an apparent reference to the previous day's strike on an airport in western Russia.

Zelenskyy said on his Telegram channel the weapon was produced by Ukraine's Ministry of Strategic Industries but gave no other details. On Wednesday, a four-hour wave of drones that Moscow blamed on Ukraine hit an airport near Russia's border with Estonia and Latvia, damaging four Il-76 military transport planes, according to local reports.

The airport is in Russia's Pskov region, about 700 kilometers (400 miles) north of the Ukrainian.

Over 1,000 flights cancelled as hurricane makes landfall in Florida

TAMPA: Airlines in the United States cancelled more than 1,000 flights on Wednesday as Hurricane Idalia slammed into the Big Bend region of Florida, but the storm's power ebbed as it headed toward Georgia.

Southwest Airlines cancelled more than 220 flights, while Delta Air Lines cancelled 157 flights, as of 12pm ET, according to flight-tracking website Flightaware.com. About 2,000 flights were also delayed. Airports at Tampa, Clearwater and Tallahassee shut down operations and were monitoring the status of the storm. Drawing strength from the Gulf of Mexico's warm waters, Idalia unleashed destructive winds and torrential downpours that were forecast to cause coastal flooding up to 16 feet (5 m) deep along the state's Gulf Coast.

Idalia grew from a tropical storm into a hurricane early on Tuesday, a day after passing west of Cuba, where it damaged homes, knocked out power, flooded villages and prompted mass evacuations.

China's Xi likely to skip G20 summit in India

NEW DELHI: Chinese President Xi Jinping is likely to skip a summit of G20 leaders in India next week, sources familiar with the matter in India and China told Reuters.

Two Indian officials, one diplomat based in China and one official working for the government of another G20 country said Premier Li Qiang is expected to represent Beijing at the Sept. 9-10 meeting in New Delhi. Spokespersons for the Indian.

France, US compromise to renew UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations Security Council voted on Thursday to extend a long-running peacekeeping mission in Lebanon for another year after a compromise was reached between France and the United States on language about the freedom of movement of U.N. troops.

The U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) - established in 1978 - patrols Lebanon's southern border with Israel. The mandate for the operation is renewed annually, and its current authorization was due to expire on Thursday.

The French-drafted text was adopted with 13 votes in favor and abstentions by Russia and China. A planned Wednesday vote was delayed as France, the United States and the United Arab Emirates argued over language on U.N. freedom of movement.

France kept language in the resolution that spells out that peacekeepers should coordinate with the Lebanese government.

But in a compromise with the U.S. and the UAE, France added back in text from last year's council resolution - which it had deleted - that demands all parties allow "announced and unannounced patrols" by U.N. troops.

"The ability of the UNIFIL personnel to carry out their responsibilities, independent of any restrictions, is essential," U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, told the council.

"And we've had longstanding concerns regarding the actions by some actors to obstruct the mission's freedom of movement," she said.

Religious scholars condemn blasphemous incidents, call for united action

ISLAMABAD (APP): The religious scholars and leaders, in a unanimous resolution on Thursday, strongly condemned the recent incidents of disrespect towards the Holy Quran.

They, in a conference on 'Honoring the Holy Quran from the Perspective of Religions and Sects' organized by the Iranian Embassy here at a local hotel, vehemently denounced the recent blasphemous incidents endorsed by the governments of Sweden and Denmark as an attack on global peace and religious

freedom.

The religious scholars and leaders said the derogatory actions against sacred religious symbols in the name of freedom of expression were deeply regrettable and violate the principles outlined in the United Nations Resolution 2686 concerning peace, tolerance, and security.

They urged for urgent and effective measures from the United Nations to address this issue promptly.

They also made a formal appeal to the govern-

ment of Pakistan to convene an emergency session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and unite the Muslim ummah (community) to devise a comprehensive action plan on this matter.

"We believe in a path of knowledge and pride as a means to human excellence, condemning violence and fostering understanding. Hence, all proponents of humanity must play their part in countering this divisive agenda," they maintained.

The religious scholars

and leaders pledged to uphold the sanctity and reverence of the Holy Quran, utilizing all available resources to counter the assault on our beliefs.

They said the attack on religious freedom shall not succeed, as they were vigilant and steadfast in their efforts, united against such attacks at all times.

In conclusion, they also condemned the Jaranwala tragedy in its all forms and manifestations and urged the government to bring the culprits to justice without any delay.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi chairing the 23rd meeting of the Board of Governors of the National School of Public Policy, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior, Sarfraz Ahmad Bugti chairing meeting regarding anti smuggling measures.

Foreign minister stresses safe, secure environment for UN peacekeepers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Foreign Minister Jahl Abbas Jilani on Thursday said ensuring a safe and secure environment for United Nations peacekeepers who tirelessly maintain peace around the globe should be the foremost priority.

Addressing the 2023 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial Preparatory Meeting on "Safety and Security of Peacekeepers" here, the foreign minister said Pakistan's participation in UN peacekeeping, spanning over six decades, was a tangible manifestation of its contribution to the maintenance of interna-

tional peace and security, in line with the UN Charter.

He said legal frameworks and adequate accountability mechanisms were paramount for peacekeeper safety. "We must stand firm in holding accountable the perpetrators - individuals and groups that harm or threaten UN peacekeepers."

Medical care for peacekeepers is also essential, he said adding "Our peacekeepers deserve the best care including mental health support. Standardized training, first aid provisions, and enhanced medical facilities are crucial for that".

Summary for live streaming of the court proceedings to be moved to CM: Law minister

HYDERABAD (APP): Provincial Caretaker Minister for Law, Religious Affairs and Human Rights Muhammad Umar Soomro has said that a summary of the proceedings of all courts of the province.

The move would help streamline the court proceedings with detailed information of the cases being heard in all courts of the province, he said while addressing a ceremony organized by District Bar Association Hyderabad here on Thursday.

The minister said that the main objective of run-

ning court proceedings online was to resolve the problems of litigants at the earliest and save precious time for lawyers.

He said that the Sindh Government was trying its best to resolve genuine issues of the lawyer fraternity and providing facilities to them so that they could run court proceedings amicably.

Umar Soomro also announced the provision of books and laptops to the lawyers of Hyderabad. About the issues being faced by the lawyers community, the minister assured that all genuine issues will be resolved on priority.



UK Ship HMS LANCASTER arrives at Karachi port.

SEDF, PMCL, JAZZ join hands to empower SMEs in Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Enterprise Development Fund (SEDF) and Pakistan Mobile Communications Limited (PMCL), operating under the brand name Jazz, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to foster the growth of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (SMEs/MSMEs) in Sindh. The MoU signing ceremony was graced by Sindh Secretary Investment Tameez Uddin Khoro, CEO SEDF Khizar Pervaiz, and Chief Business Officer of Jazz Business Asif Aziz.

PMCL will offer a comprehensive suite of services tailored to the needs of SMEs. As a one-stop solution provider, Jazz Business will assist SMEs in streamlining their operations, enhancing their digi-

tal presence, and harnessing the power of communication technologies to reach new markets.

This collaboration aligns perfectly with SEDF & Jazz Business's commitment to empowering businesses with cutting-edge technology and customized solutions. Tameez Uddin Khoro on the occasion said that this collaboration between SEDF and Jazz Business is a significant step forward in bolstering and innovating the SME sector in Sindh by providing the necessary resources and support for SMEs to flourish and contribute to the economic growth of the region.

Khizar Pervaiz highlighted SEDF's mission is to cultivate a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem in Sindh.

Court allows Imran Khan to talk to his sons

ISLAMABAD (Online): Special court established under secret act has allowed PTI chairman Imran Khan to talk to his sons by telephone.

Chairman PTI filed petition in the court through his counsels Umair Niazi and Shiraz Ahmad seeking permission to talk to his sons Qasim and Suleman.

The petitioner took the plea in the petition that he wants to talk to his sons Qasim and Suleman by telephone or through whatsapp.

Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain of special court accepted the plea besides issuing directives to make arrangements for telephonic talks between chairman PTI and his sons.

KU Senate election under registered graduate category

KARACHI (APP): The election for two seats to the Senate of the University of Karachi from the constituency of registered graduates will be held on October 01, 2023, in the KU Shaikh Zayed Islamic Research Center, from 09:30 am to 2:30 pm.

KU Registrar Professor Dr Abdul Waheed, who is also the Returning Officer for the election, announced that the last date for submission of nomination form is September 14, 2023, till 1 p.m.

He said that nomination forms will be submitted at room number 24 of the old administration building of the University and candidates can also send their papers through mail or courier service.

According to him, the last date for withdrawal of candidature is Thursday, September 21, 2023, till 1 p.m.

He added that the final list will be put on display on the same day by 4 p.m.

Section 144 imposed at exams premises

HYDERABAD (APP): Commissioner Shaheed Benazirabad Division Muhammad Abbas Baloch through a notification has imposed Section 144 CrPc at the examination center of Tehsil Moro.

Section 144 would remain imposed from September 1 to 5 during the Spring Semester Final examination of Allama Iqbal Open University.

Section 144 CrPc has been imposed to prevent the use of unfair means during exam, entry of non-concerned persons at the exam centre except candidates appearing at the exam and use of Photostat machines in the limits of exam centre. The area police have been directed to initiate legal action against violators of Section 144 CrPc under section 188 PPC.

It may be mentioned that Deputy Commissioner Nausheero Feroze through a letter had recommended Commissioner.

Interior Minister seeks briefing to cope smuggling of goods

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Interior Minister Sarfraz Bugti on the directions of Prime Minister Anwar ul Haq Kakar on Thursday sought a briefing from provincial governments on the stoppage of smuggling of goods.

The minister was chairing a meeting regarding anti-smuggling measures here. Secretary Interior Abdullah Khan Sumbul, Director General Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Mohsin Hassan Butt and officials from the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), ministries and provincial offices participated in the meeting.

Minister Bugti stressed the need to make a comprehensive plan to curb the smuggling of fertilizers and sugar from the country.

The smuggling of necessary items including sugar and fertilizers from the country is burdening the economy, said the minister adding that the price hike due to the smuggling of goods is creating troubles for the common man.

He said cross-border smuggling of basic items of necessity will not be tolerated, adding that action may be initiated against those involved in illegal smuggling and their facilitators.



ISLAMABAD: Iranian Deputy Minister for Economics and Finance calls on the Acting Secretary Ministry of Economic Affairs.

Pak, Iran for enhancing economic, trade ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Iranian Deputy Minister for Economics and Finance Reza Bakhshi Thursday called on Acting Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs Humair Karim and discussed cooperation between Pakistan and Iran.

Reza Bakhshi reiterated Iran's keen interest in bolstering cooperation across various sectors, including mutual development projects, investments, banking systems, and trade relations with Pakistan.

The Iranian Deputy Minister for Economics and Finance's visit marks another step forward in the enduring partnership between Iran and Pakistan. Both nations remain committed to fostering cooperation that will not only benefit their economies but also contribute to the stability and development of the broader region.



KARACHI: Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader, Haleem Adil Sheikh waves hand to his supporters on the arrival for case hearing at Clifton ACT Court in Karachi.

Health minister calls on President Alvi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, Dr Nadeem Jan called on President Dr Arif Alvi here on Thursday and discussed matters relating to national health in the country.

The president emphasized special focus on issues of breast cancer, growing population and mental health in the country.

President Alvi and the minister discussed the proposals regarding nutrition, rehabilitation of differently abled persons, and mental and physical weakness among the children.

The president stressed the need to provide consultation facilities to improve mental health in the country.

He said the basic treatment of mental health could be provided with the help of modern technology, Artificial Intelligence and Chatbot.

The minister commended the president's special focus and guidance for eradication of polio in the country.

President Alvi appreciated the overall services of the Dr Nadeem Jan in the health sector.

PM directs maximum facilitation of overseas Pakistanis at airports

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday directed the Immigration and Customs authorities to extend maximum facilities to overseas Pakistanis at airports.

"The overseas Pakistanis are a valuable asset for the country and their services for economic stability are laudable," the prime minister said chairing a meeting to discuss the matters related to the national economy.

In the meeting, the prime minister was apprised of the current economic indicators as well as the present situation.

The meeting held consultation to devise a strategy to curb smuggling of different items besides re-

viewing the progress in the barter trade with Iran.

The representatives of the business community assured the government of their all-out support for revival of the national economy.

A detailed discussion was also held regarding the dollar appreciation as well as the steps to curb the illegal business of the foreign exchange.

Caretaker Ministers Dr Shamshad Akhtar, Gohar Ejaz, Sarfraz

Ahmed Bugti and Murtaza Solangi, Advisor to PM Ahad Cheema, State Bank Governor Jameel Ahmed, Federal Board of Revenue Chairman Malik Amjad Zubair Tiwana, federal secretaries and senior officials attended the meeting.



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindhi offering Dua after laying floral wreath during visit of Mazar-e-Quaid.

'Encroachments a serious problem in Karachi'; says Murtaza

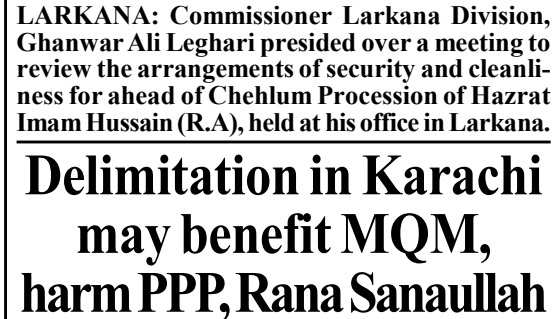
KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that encroachments are a serious problem in Karachi and KMC is also affected by it.

The land department has been directed to take action against people wherever they are occupying KMC land without legal documents and KMC is not getting revenue from that place, he said this while presiding over a meeting of Land Department officials on Thursday. On this occasion, Municipal Commissioner Syed Afzal Zaidi and Mayor Karachi's spokesperson for Political Affairs Karamullah Waqasi were also present.

Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that all the records related to the acquisition of lease and revenue recovery have been brought from the land department.

According to the preliminary information, the most important information has been found regarding Cattle Colony Landhi, where about seven hundred and fifty or eight hundred acres of land belongs to Cattle Colony and about 250 acres of land is used for washing area.

In this way, people are sitting on a total of 1000 acres of land, but KMC does not get any income from it, nor does it get lease money, so it has been decided to take action against those who are illegally using KMC's land.



LARKANA: Commissioner Larkana Division, Ghanwar Ali Leghari presided over a meeting to review the arrangements of security and cleanliness for ahead of Chehnum Procession of Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A), held at his office in Larkana.

Delimitation in Karachi may benefit MQM, harm PPP, Rana Sanaulah

ISLAMABAD (Online): President of PML-N and former Interior Minister Rana Sanaulah said that population census will lead to increase seats in Karachi which can benefit MQM Pakistan.

While talking to private TV channel Rana Sanaulah said that it is a national fortune that everyone agreed on census. Everyone knew that constituencies have to be demarcated after census. Now if anyone thinks any other slogan is more appropriate then put it.

He said that MQM was concerned about census and perhaps they are

benefiting from them. Seats will increase in Karachi which is likely to harm PPP.

He said that some people are benefiting from constituencies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). Those who are benefiting want delimitation of constituencies and those who are suffering want them not yet. The constitution and law require that delimitation of constituencies should be done now after approval of census.

Regarding the agreement with IMF, PMLN leader said that nation knows that we made great efforts.