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In major relief IHC acquits Nawaz Sharif in Avenfield property reference

Grateful to Allah Almighty over acquittal in Avenfield case: Nawaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): Parvaiz pleaded that co-accused Maryam Nawaz and Captain @ Safdar had already been acquitted in the instant reference, and that decision had become final as it was never challenged by the prosecution. The lawyer read out various sections of the NAB Ordinance and said that it had defined 'benamidars' as well. He said the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had to first provide a comparison of income and assets value in order to establish the point that the assets' value was higher than the income or not. Without such comparison, the case of assets beyond sources of income

could not be proceeded, he added. He further said that there were cases where the value of the assets was known but not the income. In such cases, the courts declared that the case could not be instituted since the income was not known. Amjad Parvaiz said the property in question was purchased during 1993 to 1996. The appellant had no connection with the property and the prosecution also could not prove it, he added. To a court's query, the lawyer said that firstly the prosecution had to prove the accused as a public office holder, and then his dependents

'benamidars'. He further said that NAB could not prove even one of the allegations levelled against his client. In the Panama verdict, the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) and NAB investigation reports did not point out Nawaz Sharif's connection with the property. JIT's head Wajid Zia admitted that there was no evidence to prove Nawaz Sharif's connection with the property, he added. He said that it had also to be indicated in the indictment that the one's assets did not match with the declared income. The value of properties was not even

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KUWAIT: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Interior of Kuwait, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Pakistan's Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir and Pakistani delegation in a group photo after the signing of MoUs of cooperation between Pakistan and Kuwait.



QUETTA: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki addressing the participants of 12th National Security Workshop Balochistan

Politically stable, economically strong Pakistan vital for protection of Indian minorities: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Wednesday said that a politically stable and economically strong Pakistan was vital for the protection of the rights of minorities in India, especially Kashmiris who had been struggling for their right to self-determination for over seven decades. Addressing the Kashmir seminar, jointly organised by the Friends of Kashmir and the Kashmir Media Service, he said Pakistan had always extended

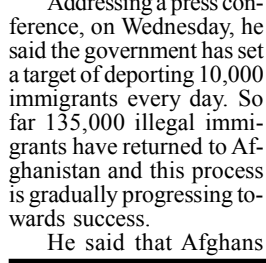
its moral, political and diplomatic support for the just cause of Kashmiris and would continue to do so till freedom of the occupied territory. He said India was a so-called democracy where minorities were being mistreated and victimised by the majoritarian Hindu hardliners. He said after the unfortunate Jaranwala incident, the Government of Pakistan expressed solidarity with the victims, but the Government of India never supported the victims of the atrocities of Hindutva brigade.



KUWAIT: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meets Crown Prince of Kuwait H.H. Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Illegal immigrants to be repatriated at any cost, says Achakzai

QUETTA (APP): The Caretaker Provincial Information Minister Jan Achakzai reiterated the government's were involved in sixteen attacks in different bomb attacks and sabotage incidents during one year. The government has decided that ten thousand illegal immigrants will be sent to Afghanistan every day, he said reiterating that who has an Afghan Tazkira or any other document cannot escape from following the government policies regarding one document regime. He stressed the state of Pakistan has decided to crack down on terrorism, whether from across the border or within the country. In order to speed up the process of repatriating illegal immigrants, the DIGs of Zhob, Loralai, Qila Saifullah, Pishin, Mastung and Quetta districts have been urged to take one thousand migrants into custody and make them cross the border every day. He said that Afghans



Caretaker PM meets Dy PM, Minister for Interior of Kuwait

KUWAIT (Online): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar met First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Interior of Kuwait, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, today. General Syed Asim Munir NI(M), Chief of Army Staff was also present during the meeting. The two leaders underlined the importance of historical brotherly ties between the two countries and reaffirmed the desire to strengthen the fraternal ties by transforming them into a mutually rewarding economic partnership.

Asif Zardari, Bilawal reach Quetta

QUETTA: The central leaders of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) including its President, Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari reached Quetta on Wednesday. They arrived from Karachi by special airplane. Also reached Quetta along with them were included senior leaders of the party Nayyar Bokhari, Salim Mandiwala, Sharjeel Memon and others. They were warmly welcomed by the provincial leaders of the party including Changez Khan Jamali, Rozi Khan Kakar, Nawab Sanaullah Zehri, Abdul Qadir Baloch, Ali Madad Jatak, Sabir Baloch,

Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo likely to join PPP

QUETTA: The central leader of Balochistan Awami Party and former Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo is likely to join the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) soon. According to the sources, Mr. Bizenjo has made his mind to join the PPP. Mr. Bizenjo would also be meeting the PPP's central leaders Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari soon. However, Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo would not be attending the party's founding day event being held in Quetta today, the sources informed.

Pakistan, Kuwait reiterate desire to further deepen bilateral relations

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan and Kuwait have reiterated the desire to further deepen and broaden bilateral relations. The desire was expressed by Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah during their meeting in Kuwait Wednesday. The Prime Minister reaffirmed the importance Pakistan attaches to its relationship with Kuwait and reiterated the desire to further expand bilateral cooperation in diverse fields. He underscored the resolve to forge deeper economic engagement between Pakistan and Kuwait-including in trade, energy, IT, Labour, Mineral and investments. Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar expressed satisfaction at close cooperation between the two countries at multilateral fora. He appreciated the measures undertaken by Kuwait for recruitment of Pakistani manpower in the fields of health, security and infrastructure. The Crown Prince of Kuwait reciprocated the sentiments of the Prime Minister.



CHAMAN: Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar being briefed by Deputy Commissioner Chaman Captain (Retd) Raja Athar Abbas regarding current situation

Resolving issues of local population of Chaman: Establishment of border markets & promotion of trade activities need of hour, says Governor

QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has stressed that the establishment of border markets and promotion of trade activities is need of the hour and it can help resolve the issues of local people of Chaman besides contributing in the rehabilitation of the country's economy. The Governor was speaking to a representative delegation of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Chaman on Wednesday. During the course of meeting, the issues being faced by the local traders were discussed. In addition to this, there

1,36,000 illegal immigrants repatriated so far: Safe & honourable expulsion of illegal immigrants being ensured after 31st October's deadline: Chief Secretary

QUETTA: The Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan has stated that the safe and honourable expulsion of illegal immigrants is being ensured only after the 31st October's deadline. He said that the provincial government and administration are sending the illegal immigrants to their countries in respectable manner, which is unprecedented. The Chief Secretary was presiding over a high level meeting about the ongoing process of repatriation of the illegal immigrants from the province, here on Wednesday. Addressing the meeting, Chief Secretary said that the transit camps have been established in different districts for temporary accommodation of the immigrants proceeding to their countries besides taking other necessary

Geo-political importance of province not hidden from any one: All available resources being mobilized for restoration of peace in Balochistan, says caretaker CM

QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has stated that geo-political importance of the province is not hidden from the eyes of anyone. He said that all available resources are being mobilized for restoration of peace and protection of life and property of the masses. The caretaker government is giving priority to development of the province alongside paying attention to the healthcare, education and development of basic infrastructure. These views were expressed by the caretaker Chief Minister while addressing the participants of 12th National Security Workshop Balochistan here on Wednesday. The Secretary planning Lal Jan Jaffar briefed the participants of workshop about the overall budget of the province as well as government's priorities, development projects and future challenges and strategy. Addressing the participants, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki said that the economic opportunities and means of employment can be created by making investment in the sector of natural resources. Therefore, comprehensive measures are being taken for investment in the natural resources in the province, so as to attract the local and international investors to make investments and thus create opportunities of livelihood, he maintained. The Chief Minister said that Balochistan is the custodian of traditions and great hospitality and it is our utmost endeavour to protect life and property of the masses and restore exemplary peace of the past.

COAS General Asim holds in-depth talks with Kuwaiti Crown Prince

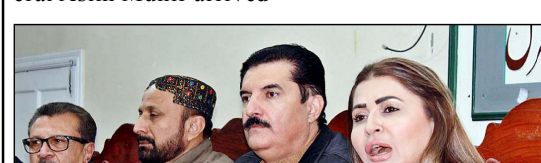
KUWAIT City (INP): Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir on Wednesday called on Kuwaiti Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and held a detailed meeting with him involving discussions on matters of mutual interest. The Army Chief was accompanied by Minister for Law and Justice and Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Ahmad Irfan Aslam. The meeting was also attended by Pakistan Ambassador to Kuwait Malik Mohammad Farooq. Earlier, COAS General Asim Munir arrived in Kuwait, along with his delegation for an official visit.

PPP set to hold powershow in Quetta today

QUETTA: All is set to stage the grand public meeting of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) on occasion of its 56th founding day in Quetta today (Thursday). The top leaders of PPP including its chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and former President Asif Ali Zardari would be addressing the public meeting in the spacious football ground of the Ayub Sports Complex. The extra-ordinary arrangements have been made for the public meeting of PPP on eve of its founding day. All the leaders of PPP including Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Asif Ali Zardari, Nayyar Bokhari,

Iranian ambassador to Pakistan meets caretaker CM: Domki assures to take steps for resolving security & trade related matters being faced by public, traders at border

QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has stated that the steps would be taken to resolve the security and trade related matters being faced by the general public and traders at the Pak-Iran border. The Chief Minister was speaking to the Iranian ambassador to Pakistan here on Wednesday. During the course of meeting, the matters about mutual interests and other related ones were discussed. The Chief Minister said that the federal government would be approached to resolve the federation related matters. He also announced that the delegations of traders from Balochistan province of Pakistan and Seistan-Balochistan of Iran would be exchanged for promotion of trade and resolve the issues being faced by them. Referring the issues mentioned by the Iranian ambassador during the meeting, the caretaker Chief Minister assured that the necessary steps would be taken to address them.



QUETTA: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) senior leader Shazia Marri addressing a press conference held at Quetta Press Club



Iranian ambassador to Pakistan meets caretaker CM: Domki assures to take steps for resolving security & trade related matters being faced by public, traders at border



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PPP determines to complete unfinished mission of ZAB, Benazir Bhutto

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan Peoples (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Wednesday said that his party is determined to complete the unfinished mission of the party's founding chairman Quaid-i-Azam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) and Chairperson Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

In a message on the 56th Foundation Day of PPP, he said that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had founded the party on political wisdom and a far-reaching vision, following which we have to build a prosperous and strong Pakistan, in which the rights and interests of all countrymen are taken care of equally.

Paying glowing tribute to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto for her unparalleled struggle and sacrifice, he said that Shaheed

Bibi resisted dictatorship, centralism and extremism throughout her life and protected the fundamental rights of the people and fought for their prosperity.

"Bhuttoism as well as the philosophy and vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto are beacons of light in our struggle," he added.

Bilawal Bhutto said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Eighteenth Amendment, NFC Award, transfer of unfettered presidential powers to the Parliament, Aghaz-e-Haqoq-e-Balochistan, Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and "Pakistan Khayati" are reflection of President Asif Ali Zardari's vision, adding: "We will carry forward President Zardari's brilliant and timeless vision to develop and

strengthen Pakistan."

He paid glowing tribute to the party workers, who endured the hardships of imprisonment and exile, faced flogging, and bravely kissed the gallows for the sake of democracy in the country. He also reiterated that the party will not let the sacrifices of its great cadres go in vain.

Chairman PPP once again expressed solidarity with the people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and strongly supported their right to self-determination.

"We will never forget that PPP was founded on the Kashmir issue," he said, adding that his party would continue to support Kashmiri brothers politically, diplomatically and morally till independence from Indian occupation of the occupied valley.



QUETTA: Provincial Advisor Mir Danish Khan Lango meeting with Caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan

IHC acquits Nawaz Sharif....

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determined by NAB or JIT and in the court's verdict.

At this point, the IHC chief justice noted that the reference had only three to four pages.

Nawaz Sharif's lawyer contended that the prosecution had to prove that Maryam Nawaz, Hussain Nawaz and Hassan Nawaz were dependents of his client but no evidence was produced in that regard.

He said that the burden of proof was never shifted to the defence rather it was for the prosecution to establish the case.

He said there was also no evidence that the property remained in the ownership or custody of Nawaz Sharif, and the trial court announced the verdict on the basis of mere assumption.

Additionally, the court had already acquitted Maryam Nawaz in the reference as the prosecution could not present any documented evidence in favour of its charges, he added.

Justice Miangul Hassan remarked that the court had declared in some verdicts that four elements ought to be established for declaring a 'benamidar'. Even if one of those was

not proved, then the individual concerned would not fall into the category of benami, he added.

To the court's question, the NAB prosecutor said that the references at that time were filed following the Supreme Court's decision.

On this, Justice Aurangzeb remarked: "You want to say that you were bound to file the reference. We understand that filing the reference was a compulsion for NAB."

The prosecutor said the Bureau did not file an appeal against the acquittal of Maryam Nawaz at that time, and now that decision had become final.

The court then inquired whether the instant appeal should also be accepted.

At this stage, the NAB prosecutor said that the Bureau was also withdrawing the appeal against the acquittal of Nawaz Sharif in the Flagship investment reference, and the court accepted the request.

After the two sided concluded arguments, the court declared the verdict of accountability court as null and void, and acquitted the former prime minister of charges of making assets beyond known source of income.

Asif Zardari, Bilawal reach...

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Chaudary Yasin, Sardar Umar Gorgej and others.

Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari would address the public gathering to be held on the occasion of Founding day of the party today (Thursday) at Ayub sports complex.

Bilawal Zardari would also address the High court bar at the High Court Bar room tomorrow, Friday.

Moreover, he would also be meeting the delegations of different organizations.

Meanwhile, Asif Ali Zardari met the party leaders and key workers and thanked them for the warm welcome accorded to them upon arrival in Quetta.

It may be mentioned here that other senior leaders of PPP including Syed Khurshid Shah, Faisal Karim Kundi, Ms. Shazia Marri, Syed Nasir Hussain and others have already reached Quetta to participate in the event of founding day of the party.

The arrangements have already been made for the founding day event of the party.

Imran picks Gohar for PTI's top spot

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Chairman Imran Khan has officially nominated Barrister Gohar Khan as his preferred candidate for the pivotal position of chairman in the upcoming PTI intra-party election. This announcement underscores the party's commitment to a democratic process within its structure.

Barrister Gohar Khan, hailing from the Buner district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, brings a wealth of legal expertise to the table, being a distinguished lawyer of the Supreme Court.



KUWAIT: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meets First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Interior of Kuwait, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

Govt to try to resolve missing person issue: Sarfraz Bugti

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Interior Minister, Sarfraz Bugti said on Wednesday that the caretaker government would try its best to resolve the issue of missing persons.

Talking to media persons after appearing before the Islamabad High Court's Chief Justice, he said that chief minister Baluchistan had constituted an inquiry commission to probe the murder allegations on Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) and if allegation was proved correct, an action would be taken according to the law.

The minister said that the issue was sub-judice and should not be discussed publicly however the commission earlier constituted for missing persons would present its report on the recovery of 25 missing persons to the court.

Responding to a query, Bugti said that there was a

very thin line between self-disappearance, enforced disappearance and missing, adding there were many cases of self-disappearances however the cases of enforced disappearances yet to be decided under the UN charter.

The minister further said that the commission would categorize the cases of self-disappearances, enforced disappearances and missing persons after reviewing all the cases.

He said that development was not only an issue of Baluchistan but of the entire country and the caretaker government had very limited mandate but it would make possible efforts in that regard within its domain.

The minister said that on the directions of the court, he would invite family members of missing persons at a dinner to listen their grievances.

AJK PM seeks ensuring modern training curriculum of police force

MIRPUR (AJK): (APP): Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq has emphasized the need for a training curriculum for the police force in line with modern demands.

While addressing the police passing out parade in the State metropolis on Wednesday, he said that the police force was responsible for maintaining law and order besides protecting the life and property of the people.

The PM lauded the AJK Police for its significant contribution to maintaining the law and order situation in the liberated territory.

He said that Azad Kashmir was reckoned to be the most peaceful region in South Asia with the lowest crime rate. He said that the credit for this goes to the police department which has always performed duties of a national nature along with the Pakistan Army and paramilitary forces.

He said that the AJK Police not only maintained peace and order in the region but also prevented many acts of terrorism from happening based on prior information.

Praising the young girls for joining the police, he

said, "I also pay tribute to my daughters who have taken the bold decision to join the police force."

Anwar ul Haq said that it was the duty of the state to ensure that the police force gets proper training as per the requirements of the modern era. Stressing the need for carrying out investigations on a scientific basis, he said that the traditional method of investigation has lost its effectiveness.

The PM assured the IG Police of his full cooperation to bring reforms to the police department. For effective policing, he said that the training curriculum of the police force should be harmonized with the requirements of the modern era.

He said that the government would continue its reform process in the police department and would provide more resources for the department.

He said more resources would be provided to CTD, service centres, women's police stations, and tourism police. He said that a series of new recruitments would start soon in the police department. The recruitment process, he said, would be completely transparent.

Pakistan ready to draw world's attention to Climate Resilience Agenda at COP-28

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Climate Change & Environmental Coordination, in collaboration with the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF), in a concerted effort to address the urgent and escalating challenges posed by climate change, has organized a high-level Dialogue on "Pakistan's Roadmap for COP 28 - Expectations & Goals."

This event served as a crucial platform for engaging with national and international stakeholders, including government bodies, development partners, international community stakeholders, UN agencies, NGOs, civil society, private sector, and academia in order to strengthen climate resilience agenda of Pakistan, a news release said issued here on Wednesday.

This was one of the many series of events, seminars, and dialogues held prior to COP 28 to brainstorm, aware and explore key consideration points to present Pakistan's perspective and achievements during COP 28.

Such efforts have emphasized the need for collective negotiations, awareness, accountability, and action to address the unprecedented challenges facing humanity, the planet, and biodiversity. For efforts to be effective and meaningful, negotiations and dialogues hold great importance.

As the host country for COP 28, the United Arab Emirates has outlined a comprehensive agenda to make this conference a pivotal moment in the global fight against climate change. Caretaker Federal Minister for Climate Change & Environmental Coordination, Ahmad Irfan Aslam said that such pre-COP events refined our collective negotiating positions.

He stressed that our mission was to mainstream climate change in the economically and socially vulnerable sectors of the economy and to steer Pakistan towards climate resilient development. The minister highlighted the commitments made under Paris agreement and initiatives undertaken to deal with the impacts of climate change but also stressed on the fact that a lot was still needed to be done.

He further said, "Climate action is not a choice; it's our shared responsibility and a priority. Together, we can turn the tide of climate change and build a sustainable legacy for generations to come."

CEO NDRMF, Bilal Anwar said that in the face of climate challenges, resilience had become our great asset. The NDRMF believed in fostering a world where every community was equipped to withstand the impacts of climate change, creating a future of strength and sustainability, he added.

CEOs of various organizations and representatives of the international community participated in the dialogue, sharing their insights and experiences on climate resilience.

The dialogue was moderated by the Minister for Climate Change & Environmental Coordination, Ahmad Irfan Aslam, who emphasized the need for a holistic approach to climate resilience, encompassing economic, social, and environmental aspects.

The dialogue was held in a grand hall at the National Convention Centre, Islamabad, and was attended by over 500 participants from various sectors of society.

The dialogue was a significant step towards strengthening Pakistan's climate resilience agenda and showcasing its commitment to global climate action.

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REQUEST FOR APPLICATION FOR MATCHING GRANT FOR HIGH TUNNEL SYSTEM INSTALLATION

Country: Pakistan
Project: Balochistan Livelihoods and Entrepreneurship Project (WB IDA Credit/Grant)
Project ID: P159292

The Government of Balochistan (GoB) has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Balochistan Livelihoods and Entrepreneurship Project (BLEP). The BLEP overall objective is to promote livelihoods through enterprise development and job creation to support poverty reduction and sustainable and inclusive economic growth in rural areas of Balochistan.

The Project Management and Implementation Unit (PMIU), Balochistan Livelihoods and Entrepreneurship Project (BLEP) now invites grant application from progressive farmers in selected eight districts for installation of high tunnel system (HTS) on cost sharing basis. The grants will be awarded and implemented in accordance with BLEP grant regulations and internal grant management policies. Moreover, the final beneficiaries will be selected through balloting. **WHO CAN APPLY:** Beneficiaries from Balochistan province fulfilling the following criteria may apply for the High Tunnel System (HTS). 1) Must agree to a minimum contribution ratio of 25% (Non-refundable); 75% BLEP of the total cost 2) Apart from that Rs. Three lacs (300000) for one unit of 22176, Six lacs (600000) for two units of 22176 and Nine lacs (900000) for three units of 22176 as a security amount (refundable). 3) Possess a valid CNIC and must be a local of respective district. 4) The applicant must have fertile agriculture land in the respective districts the land must be levelled. 5) Willing to participate in the capacity building/training session by BLEP. 6) He/She has valid and legal proof of ownership of agriculture land in the respective districts. 7) He/She has reliable source of water. 8) Possess the required power source for the Tunnel system. 9) Has sufficient manpower (skilled labour) for operation and maintenance of HTS. 10) Must agree to pay grantee share within 15 days of the balloting. 11) Must adhere to the environmental and social safeguards as per BLEP Environmental and social management documents (ESMF/ESMPs etc.). 12) He/She signs an affidavit to not sell and transfer to another location, the high tunnel system or any of its components for years, after installation. 13) Willing to abide by any other factors that may be added by BLEP in the better interest of tunnel facility. **SUITABILITY CRITERIA FOR HTS LAND/FARM** The following criteria will be adopted to select the site/farm for installation of High tunnel system: 1) The farm shall be accessible for frequent visits by interested stakeholders; 2) The farm shall be free from water-logging, salinization, alkalization; 3) The farm shall not be isolated by such obstacles which do create problems in the economic design and in engineering design/dimensions of the intervention. 4) Any person applying for more than one unit. Will provide land where all the units can be built close to each other. The maximum distance between units should not exceed 15 feet. **GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION** The BLEP support offer is restricted to following eight districts of Balochistan. Killa Abdullah/Chaman, Killa Saifullah, Pishin, Zhob, Chagai, Sherani, Mastung, and Nushki. **SIZE OF HIGH TUNNEL SYSTEM** The farmers may apply for any of the two sizes of high tunnel system. 1) One-unit 132x168=22176 Sqft. 2) Two units 2x(132x168)=44352 Sqft. 3) Three Units 3x(132x168)=66528 Sqft. Detail Request for Application (RFA) may be downloaded from the BLEP (www.blepgob.org.pk), and received from the respective BLEP district offices. For further information interested applicants may contact the BLEP office on the following available contact numbers. The applicants should submit the hard copy of the application through registered courier at the following address within 20 days of the publication of this advertisement. The BLEP reserves the right to make any changes in above given information or accept/reject any or none of the application submitted, with or without providing the reason. **Address: Balochistan Livelihoods and Entrepreneurship Project (BLEP), H# 450-5/9 Tajikabad, Killi Shabo Off Chaman Housing Scheme, Airport Road Quetta, Balochistan. Ph: 081-2823304, Email: info@blepgob.org.pk, Web: www.blepgob.org.pk**

AB No.192/29-11-2023

Head of Project (PMIU) Balochistan Livelihoods & Entrepreneurship Project Balochistan (BLEP)

www.dprgob.pk | dpr.gob | dprgob | ddpr.balochistan

Safe & honourable....

Continued from page 1

measures for their repatriation.

He said that the Afghan immigrants are returning to their country via Chaman, Badini and Brapcha borders on daily basis.

Additional Chief Secretary Home informed that more than 1,36,000 immigrants have so far been repatriated to their homeland from Balochistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Secretary directed to improve the situation at the border crossing points in Chaman, Badini and Brapcha so that these passages may also be used for future trade.

This would have positive impacts on the economy of the country in future besides providing ample opportunities of the livelihood, adding he hoped.

He also mentioned that the federal government has decided to give special package to the laghris (local traders and vendors) in case their livelihood was affected.

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Government, ILO to forge collaborative path to enhance social justice, decent work

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Jawad Sohrab Malik held a meeting with Assistant Director-General & Regional Director, International Labour Organization (ILO) Ms. Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa here at the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis on Wednesday.

Jawad Sohrab Malik reaffirmed the commitment of the Government of Pakistan to the Global Coalition for Social Justice and Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection along with its dedication to the shared goal of ensuring Decent Work for all.

He emphasized the importance of collaborative

efforts to achieve this objective, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach.

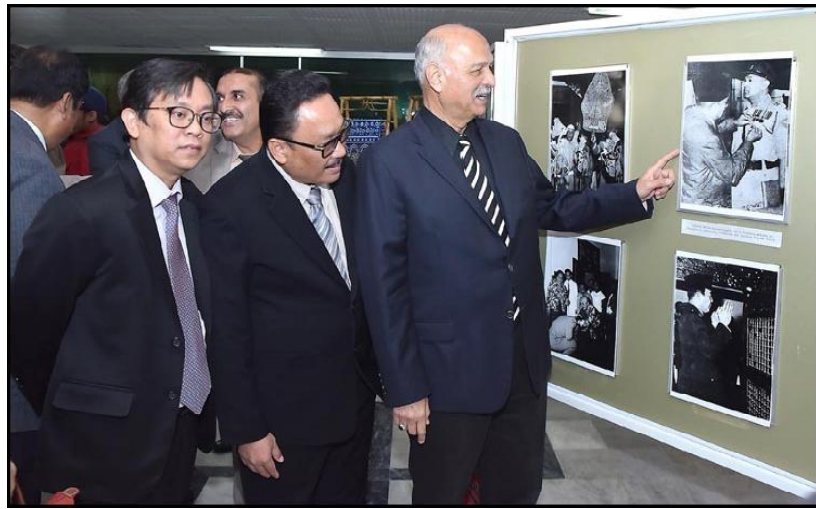
He commended the ILO's initiatives, particularly its efforts towards the national skills passport, said a press release.

SAPM reiterated his commitment to supporting the scaling of this initiative and emphasized the significance of human capital development and skills training for women to address gender disparities faced by them during work.

During the meeting, Ms. Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa expressed interest in assisting the Government of Pakistan in developing a national roadmap for safe, fair, and inclusive labor migration.

Recognizing the pivotal role of labor migration in today's globalized world, both parties underscored their commitment to creating an environment that protects the rights and well-being of workers.

She praised the Government of Pakistan's dedication and stressed the importance of building robust partnerships to effectively address challenges and capitalize on opportunities in the realm of labour migration. Reflecting the shared vision of the Government of Pakistan and the ILO, this collaborative endeavor marks a pivotal step towards fostering social justice, promoting decent work, and ensuring the well-being of workers in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, Head of National Archive of the Indonesia Imam Gunarto and others visiting the photo-exhibition titled 'Sorkarno's Legacy in Building Stronger Bonds of Indonesia-Pakistan Brotherhood' organized by Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in collaboration with National Archive of Pakistan and National Library of Pakistan at National Library.

IPO-Pakistan, US for improving IP policies, laws in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to promote intellectual property rights in the country, Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPO-Pakistan) and US Intellectual Property Counselor for South Asia Wednesday reaffirm the commitment to carry forward the agenda of improving Intellectual Properties (IP) policies, laws and regulations in Pakistan.

This was discussed during a high level visit of the US delegation to IPO-Pakistan Headquarters here headed by US IP Counselor for South Asia, John Cabeca, and consisted of Ms. Dong Eun, Zach Bailey and Hamza Khan.

While the Pakistani side was led by Chairperson IPO, Farukh Amil, Director General, Ms. Shazia Adnan, and senior management of IPO-Pakistan were also present in the meeting, said a press release issued here.

The chairperson IPO-Pakistan briefed the delegation about the measure-

ments taken by the organization for promoting IPRs.

He said that IPO-Pakistan believed that Patents, Trademarks and Copyrights had an important role in economic growth and development and in that regard it had already taken a number of initiatives to improve the IPR regime in the country.

Regarding the establishment of IP tribunals in the country, the chairperson informed the US delegation that two new IP tribunals had been established in Quetta and Rawalpindi and approval of two more had been granted.

Appreciating the advancement and development of IPRs by the US, Farukh Amil desired that IPO-Pakistan would like to benefit from the US experience and expertise in IP.

To raise IP awareness in Pakistan, it was useful to have high profile engagement such as an MoU that would chart further action.



ISLAMABAD: Visitors takes keen interest in the photo-exhibition titled 'Sorkarno Legacy in Building Stronger Bonds of Indonesia-Pakistan Brotherhood' organized by Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in collaboration with National Archive of Pakistan and National Library of Pakistan at National Library.

Over 1,47,000 bikers without helmets fined during ongoing year

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police issued more than 1,47,000 fine tickets to motorcyclists driving their bikes without helmets during the ongoing year. Police spokesperson said, "Islamabad police is endeavoring to maintain an exemplary traffic system in the city and check those involved in negligence on roads." Over 1,47,000 fine tickets were issued to motorcyclists driving their bikes without helmets during current year. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) of Islamabad Muhammad Sarfraz Virk while hailing the performance said, "A vigorous campaign of Islamabad capital police had been launched as per directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPPO) Dr Akbar Nasir

Khan to create awareness among citizens about traffic rules." As per directions he said that the Islamabad Capital Police personnel have been directed to ensure implementation of traffic rules irrespective of status and demonstrate patience as well as politeness while issuing traffic violation tickets to the road users. He further said, "Islamabad Capital Police is utilizing all available resources to facilitate the general public."

He appealed the parents not to allow their children to drive bikes or cars till age of maturity. "The personnel of the force issue traffic violation tickets not as a punitive measure but the purpose is to ensure a safe road environment in the Capital and secure the lives of the people.



ISLAMABAD: Jawad Sohrab Malik SAPM on Overseas Pakistanis, Charge d'Affaires of Romania Eduard Preda, Acting Dean of Diplomatic Corps Mohammad Karmoune, Ambassador of Morocco and others cutting cake on the occasion of the National Day of Romania at local hotel.

Mushahid acclaims Indonesian President Soekarno as Pakistan's great friend, 'Third World hero'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman, Senate Standing Committee on Defence, Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed Wednesday acclaimed the Indonesian President Soekarno as a great friend of Pakistan and lauded him as hero of the third world at a function organised by Embassy of Indonesia to laud the historical services of their Father of the Nation.

He attended the ceremony as chief guest, a news release said issued here.

The Senator who spent his childhood in Jakarta as his father, Colonel Amjad Hussain Syed,

was Pakistan's first Military Attache to Indonesia, talked of Soekarno's solidarity with Pakistan during the 1965 War with India.

He said President Soekarno was not only a great freedom fighter but also the architect of the 1955 Bandung Conference, which laid the basis of Asian resurgence, Afro-Asian Solidarity and Non-Aligned Movement.

The Senator later inaugurated the photo exhibition of historic photos of President Soekarno with world leaders.

Senator Mushahid Hussain's father, Colonel Amjad Hussain Syed, was

also honoured in the photo exhibition as he is the recipient of the highest Indonesian military award, Bintang Dharma (Star of Merit), conferred on him by President Soekarno in 1963.

Two photographs of Colonel Amjad Hussain Syed were on prominent display at the exhibition, one of his meeting President Soekarno and the other receiving the Indonesian award.

Later, Mushahid Hussain joined Indonesian students studying at the Islamic University in Islamabad in singing an Indonesian song.

Counter-terrorism strategy NACTA briefs MCMC participants

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Coordinator NACTA, IGP Muhammad Tahir Rai Hst SL briefed the participants of the 38th MCMC Course on the security situation in Pakistan on Wednesday.

He said that there are challenges being faced in this field, but the LEAs are bravely fighting this war. The whole nation is behind the LEAs with a strong resolve to eradicate terrorism and extremism from society.

He said terrorist organizations will be dismantled and the terrorists will be brought to justice.

He further briefed that the NACTA has made a holistic Counter Terrorism

Strategy which is based on data and information such as 1) The data is collated and analyzed in NACTA; 2) Actionable intelligence is provided to the LEAs for conducting IBOs (Intelligence Based Operations); 3) Threat Assessment is made and provided to the implementing partners; 4) The implementation of the National Action Plan is monitored and reviewed in NACTA.

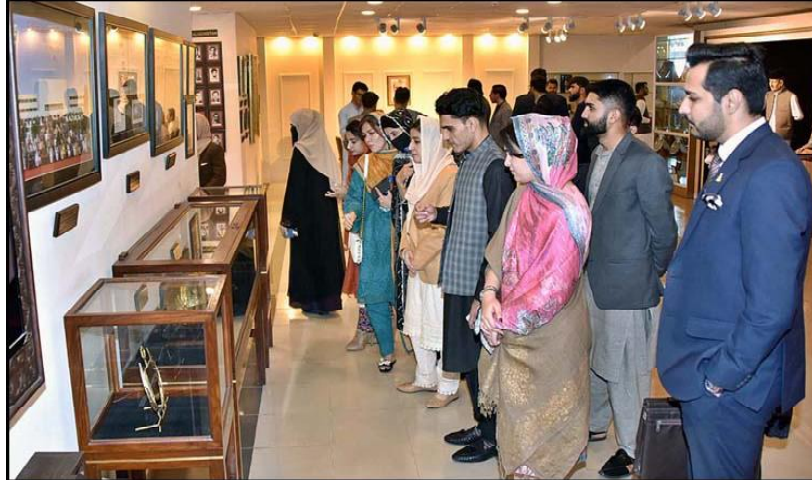
With these above efforts, terrorism will be ended in Pakistan on a sustainable basis. No talks will be held with terrorists. They will be defeated comprehensively this time, he added.

Irfan says: Perhaps noise of delaying election not yet reached Apex Court

ISLAMABAD (Online): Head of PML-N Manifesto Committee Senator Irfan Siddiqui has said in a statement on Twitter that Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, calling the February 8 elections as unwavering, had warned the media not to raise doubts about the elections.

He said that suddenly a media campaign has been set up in the name of delaying the elections.

Irfan Siddiqui said that perhaps this noise not yet reached the court of justice.



ISLAMABAD: A group of students from various universities of Pakistan under model council of common interests (CCI) project of the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) visiting Senate Museum at Parliament House.

About Pak-Indonesia ties Indonesian Embassy holds exhibition to enhance awareness

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Embassy of Indonesia in Pakistan inaugurated a week-long exhibition on Wednesday to enhance awareness among the people of Pakistan about the multi-dimensional relationship between Indonesia and Pakistan.

The exhibition, organized by the embassy in collaboration with the National Library of Pakistan, National Archives of Indonesia, and National Archives of Pakistan, was arranged in the premises of the National Library of Pakistan, a news release said.

The exhibition showcases a compelling collection of photographs, vid-

eos, and letters, providing a portrayal of the interactions between the founding fathers of Indonesia and Pakistan, Soekarno, and Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. It offers a unique glimpse into President Soekarno's visits to Pakistan and his meetings with Pakistani dignitaries, underlining the shared history that binds the two nations.

Speaking on the occasion as chief guest, Head of the National Archives of Indonesia Imam Gunarto appreciated the people of Pakistan for their love and respect for the leaders of Indonesia, especially President Sukarno.

Student service centre inaugurated at NUML

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rector National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Major General Muhammad Jaffar (Retd.) inaugurated a Student Service Center in the university on Wednesday.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Pro Rectors, Deans, Directors, HoDs and students.

Speaking on the occasion Rector NUML said that the purpose of establishing state of the art Service Centre was to provide all facilities to the students under one roof.

A general/souvenir store, photocopier & composing shop, mobile/laptop repairing shop, stationery shop and a cafe along with a faculty lounge were set up in the Centre.

Information Commission releases bi-annual report

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Information Commission (PIC) on Wednesday published its latest bi-annual report, fulfilling its obligation under the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017.

This comprehensive report outlines the commission's endeavors and accomplishments, reflecting its unwavering commitment to upholding citizens' right of access to information.

The report, mandated by the Act, provides a detailed overview of the PIC's activities, aligning with the Act's preamble. It delves into various aspects, emphasizing

Commission's initiatives to empower citizens through information access.

The report meticulously details information requests, interactions with public bodies, appeals filed, and their subsequent resolutions.

The Annual Report encompasses statistics from 2018 to June 2023, highlighting the receipt of 3,317 appeals, out of which 1,887 have been successfully resolved, while 1,430 are pending before the Commission.

Notably, the bi-annual report highlights a specific breakdown of appeals received between January 2023 and June 2023.

ICCPO reviews security measures, scrutinized records

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir

said. He said that, the ICCPO engaged with appointed officers and offi-



Khan visited the Special Branch and Police Khidmat Markaz F-6. During the visit, he reviewed security measures, scrutinized records, and assessed the welfare and public facilities for police officers and staff, a public relations officer

China's cooperation on Pak lightning monitoring network acknowledged

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), Mahr Sahibzad Khan Wednesday acknowledged the efforts of the Chinese government in extending cooperation on the Pakistan Lightning Monitoring Network.

In a press briefing held here, the DG PMD said that lightning was a natural weather phenomenon that posed significant threats to life and property.

He said lightning detection sensors are advanced systems designed to monitor and detect lightning activity in a specific area. These sensors play a crucial role in enhancing public safety, providing early warnings, and minimizing the risks associated with lightning strikes.

DG PMD said lightning detection network also provides instant and real-time thunderstorm activities which are usually delayed by the RADAR system.

He said the Institute

of Electrical and Electronic Engineering (IEE), Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) offered to support the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) for the establishment of a 3D lightning detection network in Pakistan. In this regard, a test system was sent to PMD, Islamabad in July this year. He said the system was installed in the PMD, Islamabad office in consultation with Chinese engineers and it was successfully tested and data transmission was established to the cloud server. The system shows real-time lightning data including the location of lightning, its intensity and spatial distribution. Mahr Sahibzad said in order to extend this cooperation, the PMD and the Institute of Electrical Engineering of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (IEE/CAS) signed a Cooperation Agreement on 22nd September 2023, to improve the lightning warning capability and reduce loss of lives.

Police launch campaign against menace of narcotics; educate youth on drug prevention

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police have initiated a special awareness campaign to eradicate use of narcotics from the federal

harms of drugs and preventive measures, emphasizing that drug abuse is detrimental to the health and future of students. Students are urged to



capital and ensure the safety of the youth from the curse of drugs. Police teams have conducted special lectures in various educational institutions to educate students about the harms of drugs and preventive measures.

The Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan highlighted that Islamabad Capital Police has launched a special awareness campaign to rid the federal capital of narcotics and safeguard the young generation from the curse of drugs.

During this campaign, police teams have delivered lectures in various educational institutions about the

protect themselves and contribute to saving their surroundings from the curse of drugs. Parents and teachers are encouraged to collaborate in preventing youth from falling victim to drugs. The police teams have appealed to the public to immediately inform the police about any drug-related activities in their vicinity. The cooperation of the public is deemed crucial for the successful eradication of this menace.

Islamabad Capital Police and Anti-Narcotics Force are jointly working to combat drug trafficking, while special teams have been formed to apprehend drug peddlers in educational institutions.



PESHAWAR: Senator Mohsin Aziz, Chairman Senate Standing Committee on interior presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House.

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The story of Palestine

The yearning for liberation from oppression is part of the human condition. Whether the fight against colonial rule, oppressive regimes, or systemic injustice, resistance movements represent the resilience of humanity to shape its own destiny. And what better example of this yearning for freedom and justice than the decades-old resistance waged by the people of Palestine against the settler-occupier coloniser than is Israel. Today – the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People – is a UN-sanctioned reminder of the Palestinian struggle, a tale of unwavering bravery and resilience in the face of relentless brutality and tragedy. The day this year holds even new meaning after the genocide unleashed by Israel on Gaza in October. It is due to the sheer determination of the people of Gaza and the rest of Palestine that the world has finally seen Israel unmasked. While most mainstream media in the West even today is acting as apologists for Israel, social media has hundreds of thousands of videos showing the true face of the horrors unleashed by Israel against the children of Gaza, the women and men of Gaza, the doctors, nurses, teachers and journalists of Gaza. Despite the US and the entire world powers siding with Israel, for the first time in many years, Israel has lost its PR war – but only after bombing Gaza to rubble and killing thousands of Palestinian, including children who had not even turned one.

Central to the spirit of solidarity is the understanding that liberation is not a one-size-fits-all concept. From the fight for indigenous rights to the quest for racial equality and the battle against authoritarianism, each resistance movement contributes to the broader tapestry of human rights and dignity. It is also crucial to emphasize that solidarity is not synonymous with interventionism. Rather, it involves listening to the voices of those at the forefront of their struggles, amplifying their narratives. The people of Palestine need to be at the centre of every discourse regarding their destiny. This is important at a time when the world has collectively failed them, turning away as the most ruthless example of ethnic cleansing was enacted on Gaza by Israel. Even right now, in the midst of a temporary 'truce', the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned that more people could die from disease than from bombings in the Gaza Strip if the health and sanitation systems are not repaired. And this comes after thousands of innocent Palestinians have died due to the non-stop bombing by the Israeli forces. Due to the fuel and supply shortages in Gaza, targeted attacks on hospitals, the besieged strip has only seen death and doom since October 7.

As the world looks on at Palestine fighting a genocidal monster on its own, the way forward will have to be one of justice for a people that have been dehumanized for decades on end. In the middle of all this despair, let us not forget that a global network of solidarity, resistance and empathy can serve as a catalyst for change for the people of Palestine. For justice, dignity and security of all the people affected by the occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel the world must work together to ensure an end to the occupation. That is the only act of solidarity that can be both long term and sustained.



By Mosharraf Zaidi

When the chickens of Western interventions come home to roost, home tends to be far, far away from where the taxpayers and decision-makers behind these interventions reside. The burden of Western interventions seems to lean strongly in favour of landing in warm weather and Muslim majority environments: Pakistan has been a perennial favoured landing spot.

In Pakistan, we tear our leaders and institutions apart. For running the country into the ground, for lacking capability and imagination and maybe, worst of all, for allowing the good grace that distinguishes us to be consumed by short-termism and cruelty. Far too infrequently do we assess or reflect on the devastating impact of Western intervention on Pakistani territory and in its near-environments – both explicitly in Afghanistan and implicitly in Iran

Persia. Add in the blind Western endorsement of Hindu supremacist leaders in India – and Pakistan is a more tightly packed powder-keg than it has ever been.

The US national anthem boasts of enduring the "bombs bursting in air". In Pakistan too, the bombs burst. In the air. On the ground. In mosques. At police stations. In markets. At hotels. In schools. Everywhere. The Ayatollahs took over Tehran, the Soviets rolled into Afghanistan in 1979, and Al Qaeda conducted the September 11, 2011 attacks, but somehow through forty-five years, two major wars with dozens of countries involved, it is only Pakistan that is at fault for allowing Al Qaeda, the Taliban, the TTP, and a whole new alphabet soup's worth of terrorist groups to keep killing Pakistani citizens, especially our policemen and soldiers.

None of this is to suggest that Pakistan has not chosen the wrong option at successive crossroads moments, but all of it is to suggest that we may be approaching another crossroads and how Pakistan chooses its path should be informed by Pakistani realities. The path forward should not be informed by

fantasies imposed upon a newly bankrupt Pakistani republic – led by optionless military leaders and helpless politicians.

Watching the leaders of Egypt and Jordan try to manage the fallout from the latest Western intervention – Israel's genocide in Gaza – has been illuminating. We have seen this film before countless times across all formats. Across North Africa and the Middle East, the US invasion of Iraq ignited the dismantling of a series of imperfect, but largely secular series of Arab regimes that managed to stave off the Al Qaedas and Daeshs of the world much better than their successor regimes have been able to.

Egypt's challenges merit entirely separate treatment, but the ease with which extremists are able to point to both Algeria and Egypt (across three decades) should alarm Muslims that believe in predictable, accountable and transparent systems of governance. The alarm often points to the foibles of Muslim elites – but the underlying drivers of bad governance are in lands far, far away.

Today, the best performing and most modern Muslim leaders in the world (most of whom are

in the GCC region) must dodge not just traditional foes emanating from the complexities of Egypt that go back several decades, and the terrorist groups that were birthed of those complexities. They must also manage the hostility of Muslims aghast at what is taking place now in Gaza with the approval of the Western powers that have actively supported Israel's genocide. This has three important implications for strategists in Muslim majority countries, especially places like Riyadh, Rabat, Jakarta, Dhaka, Ankara and perhaps most importantly, Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

First, the cost of aligning with the West is domestic anger and revulsion. Remember, it isn't 1979. Bucking public opinion and countering the artful populist isn't as easy as it was back in the day. Most populists, just like in the West, prey on the simplest and most linear insecurities of people. Mainstream extremist narratives within Muslim majority societies used to be an equal opportunity game – with both state and anti-state players taking turns at playing Ummah Defender.

The Israeli genocide in

Gaza has dramatically shrunk the spectrum and timelines within which this game is played. Put it this way: the temporary ceasefire in Gaza is really a product of the nosediving opinion polls for the Biden Administration from within the US electorate. If such shape shifting pressure is being felt in Washington DC, can you imagine what the Arab and Muslim Street is generating in terms of pressure on their elites?

Second, the Western endorsement of the genocide in Gaza has incentivized Muslim elites' already significant flirtations with China and Russia. Remember: neither China nor Russia is particularly pro-Palestine. But they have both threaded the needle very carefully in calling for Israeli restraint. In doing so, they have deliberately set themselves apart from the Western powers.

The cruelty of both Russian and Chinese authorities in how they have historically dealt with Muslim populations at home, and the gaps in their behavioural profiles with respect to governance are all easily ignored under the shadow of Israel's genocide in Gaza. It would make sense to paint this dynamic with some degree

of scepticism, given both the still awesome firepower that Western allyship offers (hello Turkey, Bahrain and Qatar) and the enduring technological dominance of Western supply chains in the defence sector (ma'salaam Saudi Arabia, UAE, Pakistan and Indonesia). Yet, it would also be unwise to ignore the draw of Beijing and Moscow on these accounts – both countries are rapidly expanding the spectrum of their relations with Muslim majority countries.

Finally, the longer term and perhaps most damaging aspect of the West's support for Israel's genocide is the shared-values thread of alignment between Muslim majority societies and Western nations. This is especially problematic as more and more Western electorates cave to the allure of hate-mongering populists like Viktor Orban in Hungary, Giorgia Meloni in Italy, Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, and the rising Jordan Bardella in France. Western support for Israel however has not been anchored in the populist right wing, but in the supposedly liberal, Muslim-friendly and benign mainstream. —Courtesy The News

How to reform trade



By Dr Muhammad Zeshan

Pakistan's economy faces a pivotal juncture, marked by the imperative need to reassess its import tariff structure. Recent trade data underscores the urgency for policy reforms to stimulate economic growth, foster competitiveness, and integrate seamlessly into the global market.

According to the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Pakistan's import tariff structure reflects a patchwork quilt of rates across various sectors. Average effective tariff rates range from 1.2 per cent for agriculture to 40 per cent for manufacturing where auto-

mobile is the most protected industry with more than 45 per cent protection rate.

While protective tariffs aimed at shielding local industries have been in place, they inadvertently hinder international trade and exacerbate the cost of living for consumers. This conundrum demands a strategic overhaul.

Rationalizing tariffs on essential goods and raw materials, where local production is inadequate, can significantly reduce costs for consumers and invigorate industries reliant on imports. Additionally, aligning tariff rates with comparative advantage sectors can spark growth, creating a fertile ground for innovation, employment, and export potential.

Yet, tariff adjustments alone cannot carve a path to economic resurgence. Robust policy reforms must march hand-in-hand. Streamlining bureaucratic processes, enhancing trade facilitation mechanisms, and fortifying institutional

frameworks are vital to attract investments, stimulate business growth, and amplify competitiveness.

Recent global shifts underscore the urgency for Pakistan to pivot towards greater trade integration. Engaging in strategic alliances through free trade agreements (FTAs) or preferential trade arrangements can open new vistas for the nation's exports, diversify market access, and attract foreign direct investment. However, such agreements must be approached with a clear understanding of their implications and calibrated to safeguard national interests.

Crucially, data-driven reforms should be complemented by a comprehensive approach. They will safeguard the vulnerable segments of society through a shift of welfare gains from producers to consumers to ensure equitable outcomes amidst structural changes.

A stable long-run plan will mitigate potential adverse impacts on specific industries and establishing a

transition plan are crucial for social cohesion and economic stability.

Furthermore, bipartisanship is key. Building consensus across political divides and fostering collaboration with stakeholders including industry leaders, economists, and civil society ensures a more inclusive and effective policy formulation and implementation process.

In tandem with tariff and policy reforms, embracing technology emerges as a catalyst for progress. Implementing digital solutions across customs procedures, logistics, and supply chain management can significantly reduce transaction costs, eliminate inefficiencies, and bolster trade volumes, propelling Pakistan into a more competitive global arena. PIDE finds that digitalization and elimination of unnecessary documents cut the time cost by around 40-60 per cent.

Nonetheless, the path to reform is riddled with challenges. Addressing entrenched interests, bureau-

cratic inertia, and navigating resistance to change necessitate unwavering commitment and visionary leadership. However, the potential dividends of a revitalized economic landscape far outweigh these initial hurdles.

Now is the opportune moment for Pakistan to embrace transformative reforms that leverage its strengths, capitalize on global opportunities, and prioritize the welfare of its citizens. The road ahead demands bold and decisive actions towards a more prosperous and inclusive economic future.

However, embarking on these reforms demands a phased and coordinated approach. Here's a roadmap for the way forward:

Phase-out approach: This is a three-phase scenario. In the first phase, reduce import tariffs on the most protected intermediate industries until their tariff rates reach the average tariff rate (around 12 per cent at present), which will boost producer welfare.

In the second phase, achieve a uniform import tariff rate of 12 per cent by reducing tariffs on all other industries facing higher tariff rates, which will increase consumer welfare.

In the third phase, uniformly reduce tariffs on all industries until we achieve a tariff rate of 5.0 per cent. It is believed that the tariff revenues from this approach will be higher due to a higher size of the economy than the current revenues.

Comprehensive policy overhaul: Simultaneously, embark on a comprehensive policy overhaul. Streamline bureaucratic processes, enhance trade facilitation mechanisms, and fortify institutional frameworks to attract investments and amplify competitiveness.

Strategic trade partnerships: Evaluate existing and potential FTAs and preferential trade arrangements. Negotiate agreements that unlock new markets for Pakistani exports while safeguarding vital domestic industries. —Courtesy The News

Cities left behind



By Rafia Zakaria

Every year, thousands of tourists visit the ruins of the Italian city of Pompeii. This city, which sits at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, was destroyed by a volcanic eruption in 79 AD. The vegetation that covered the mountain had hidden some of the signs of the oncoming eruption but eventually the rivers of molten lava began to flow into the city.

Even then, many of the city's inhabitants did not leave. Most of those people would perish as the volcano erupted and the ash and fiery lava covered everything.

One reason that the ruins of Pompeii still attract so many people so many centuries later is because many of the people whose corpses were found in Pompeii were 'frozen' in the positions in which they died. There are crouching and covering women and children, people trying to get away, people with their belongings.

This provides a picture of the crisis unlike that provided by any other city — it shows why this city was destroyed and abandoned. People who visit the ruins can clearly envisage the last moments of the living city. After those moments, the city as it once was died, never to live in that form again.

the city is a series of mounds. These mounds were created by the inhabitants of the ancient city of Cahokia which was established around 700 AD and had grown in prominence by around 1050 AD. While it would be impossible to tell now, at its height the city was said to have rivalled London or Paris.

Unlike Pompeii, it is not exactly known what happened to Cahokia. It is said that when the city was at its peak the mound-like structures that still remain, huddled markets, temples and space for all sorts of rituals. It was home to nearly 20,000 people, making it one of the most populous of its time.

The culture was rich and there is evidence of beautifully sculpted vessels and statues made of clay. Farmers were responsible for maize cultivation. And yet 200 years after the city was at its peak, it declined and was eventually abandoned.

One of the many theories as to why Cahokia was abandoned was that the people who lived there cut down too many trees from the adjoining farmlands. It was theorised that, as a result of the deforestation, there was nothing to prevent the area from repeated flooding and consequent devastation.

However, recent research published in National Geographic revealed that the soil around the mounds was not disturbed all the way until the 1800s. This meant that there was no significant deforestation by the Native American population.

It turns out that the Western researchers who had been analysing the mounds had just imposed their own understanding of the human relationship with nature on the question of why Cahokia was abandoned.

It is far more likely that the city declined gradually because of conflicts among the elites and some natural phenomena, and so on.

It is only natural to reflect on these cities of long ago at a time when the whole world is witnessing the deliberate devastation in Gaza City and other parts of the Gaza Strip by Israeli bombing. No one knows whether Gaza City will live again.

The mass trauma of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who have suddenly been displaced or have become homeless while the world looked on is simply unimaginable. However, our generation of witnesses will know why and how this particular city was razed to the ground.

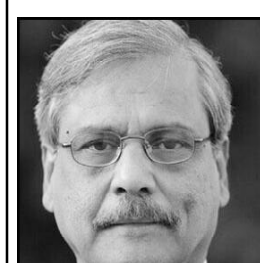
These are stories of cities that were literally devastated. But, there does not have to be an actual destruction or even ruin of a city for it to be lost forever. In a live performance that famous ghazal artist Tina Sani gave in Kathmandu, she prefaced her performance of one of Faiz Ahmed Faiz's poem with a wistful remembrance of Karachi as it was in the 1960s.

The city has changed so much she noted, too many of the people who made it what it was have gone. The poem is Kuch Pehlay Inn Ankhon Aagay (before my eyes a little while ago)

Tina Sani's words and Faiz's poem remind one of the fact that cities can be lost when the people that make them leave, or even when one leaves oneself. It is often said that one does not step into the same river twice — this could also be said about cities. Once a city is left behind, the passage of time ensures that one does not step into that city again.

Immigrants recount this phenomenon again and again when they return to the cities they once lived in after a long period of time. In their minds, the frozen city that they left behind, one they reference repeatedly in their mind's eye, is more alive than the actual version of that city as it actually exists. —Courtesy Dawn

PPP's hour of reckoning



By Zahid Hussain

Often described as an accidental leader, Asif Ali Zardari is undoubtedly one of the shrewdest political figures in the country. Past master in the art of political wheeling and dealing, he has managed to maintain the party's role as a major player in the power game, despite its eroding national status. But his politics of gamesmanship has also caused the party to lose direct contact with the masses, which was the hallmark of PPP politics since the party's inception.

Now it seems that his leadership and style of politics is being challenged by his son. But the crafty politician is not willing to give up his mantle.

In a long TV interview last week, Zardari struck back with a clear message that he is still the boss. Curiously, cracks have emerged with the elections only a couple of months away.

What seems to have irked the former president was Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's public statement calling old politicians — that also includes his father — to retire and clear the way for the younger generation. "Stopping someone will only create more problems," Zardari retorted.

But it was certainly not the only reason behind the widening gap between the two. Bilawal's increasing assertiveness and aggressive stance against the PML-N on various issues at public rallies also seem to have led Zardari to criticise his son publicly.

"Bilawal is also not fully trained," he remarked,

"[We] are training him."

Although there have been reports of differences between father and son on various issues related to policy matters, it was for the first time that Zardari publicly rebuked his son. In his interview, he forcefully justified his own approach.

Most importantly, he sounded quite confident of his party heading a coalition government after the elections. His statement cannot be dismissed as mere boastfulness; he seems to actually believe that his political manoeuvring can work.

For Zardari, it seems Bilawal's harsh tenor towards rival political parties could harm the party's prospects of power. The gap seems to be increasing as the two have taken contradictory positions on the fairness of the electoral process.

Such division on the narrative in the run-up to the polls could hugely damage the party's electoral prospects. It seems the divide can intensify with the allocation of party tickets as Zardari has indicated that tickets would be given at his discretion.

It is not just about who calls the shots in party matters. The differences also reflect the long-brewing frustration in the ranks as the party loses its support base particularly in Punjab, limiting its presence to Sindh.

There seems to be a strong feeling that its existing approach limits its entire politics to deal-making, and the PPP could lose further ground in the coming national polls. It will also be a struggle to return to populist politics to regain lost political ground particularly in Punjab.

The transformation from populist politics to the old-style wheeling and dealing came after Zardari took charge following the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. That also brought an end to the party's strong connection with the masses. His excellent political

deal-making skills aside, Zardari never had the kind of popular appeal the Bhuttos had. Therefore, it's not surprising that the PPP has turned into a regional party under his leadership. The party returned to power after the 2008 elections that took place months after Benazir Bhutto's assassination, but the slide in its political fortunes started appearing soon after.

It may be true that Zardari's skill at making compromises helped the party survive in power for a full five-year term, an unprecedented feat in Pakistan's political history. But electoral support for it suffered during that period because of the absence of a popular leadership.

The government's poor performance led to the party's fall in the 2013 elections. The party succeeded in retaining power in its stronghold of Sindh, but was almost wiped out in Punjab except for a few seats won in the south of the province.

With the emergence of the PTI as the main challenger to the PML-N, the PPP lost further ground in the province. Several of its leaders joined the PTI bandwagon. The party's once strong vote bank disappeared. As a result, the PPP could win only six seats in the Punjab provincial assembly in the 2018 elections.

The PPP, however, remained a significant player on the national political stage because of its continued political domination in Sindh.

It may also be true that Zardari played an important role in the vote of no confidence against Imran Khan. Although Zardari fully backed the PDM-led coalition government, which included Bilawal as foreign minister, the PPP refrained from taking responsibility for the Shehbaz Sharif administration's flawed economic policies. —Courtesy Dawn

Inaugurate solarization project in PPC CM KP launches 'Khushal Pakhtunkhwa' campaign

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice (Retd) Arshad Hussain Shah here Wednesday launched the "Khushal Pakhtunkhwa" campaign and inaugurated the solarization project at Peshawar Press Club (PPC).

The project has been completed at a cost of Rs6.4 million.

Accompanied by Caretaker Information Minister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel, Chief Secretary KP, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, and other relevant authorities, the Chief Minister KP has formally inaugurated the mega project.

The CM was informed that installation of the 25KV solar system

would help save Rs2 million under the head of electricity to the press club and provide uninterrupted power supply to the journalist community helping them to fulfil their professional duties with ease. Upon arrival at the press club, the Chief Minister was warmly received by the President of PPC, Arshad Aziz Malik, elected members of his cabinet and journalists in large numbers. Later talking to reporters, the chief minister said a "Khushal Pakhtunkhwa" campaign has been launched in the province under which problems of people would be addressed at their doorsteps.

Besides improving governance on principles of people's service delivery,

he said that a strict campaign against encroachment, price hike, profiteering, adulteration, crimes, traffic problems and drugs were launched in KP under the campaign.

Seeking the cooperation of journalists in the fight against narcotics, the chief minister said that training through agriculture and livestock departments would be provided to people and farmers enabling them to get maximum production from crops. The Khushal campaign's positive effects would soon become visible.

Tourism in KP would be promoted through awareness, linkages with tourist operators and hotel unions besides exploration of new destinations for tourism.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah and President of Press Club Arshad Aziz Malik inaugurating the solar system and renovation work of Press Club.

Caretaker Sindh CM visits civil hospital Hyderabad, expressing dissatisfaction on mismanagement

HYDERABAD (APP): The Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar visited the civil hospital Hyderabad on Wednesday, where he inspected various departments of the hospital and interacted with patients, inquiring about the facilities and expressing dissatisfaction with the mismanagement observed in different sections.

He inspected the male and female dialysis units, where he expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the dirty condition of beds and washrooms.

According to the spokesperson of the Chief Minister, Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar also visited the surgical ICU and expressed satisfaction with

the arrangements there, he checked the medication stock in the Surgical ICU, which was reported to have 12 beds and 8 technicians available in different shifts.

The Chief Minister said that although the Director-General (DG) Health had inspected the hospital, but the desired objectives were not achieved.

He directed the DG health to conduct inspections of each unit.

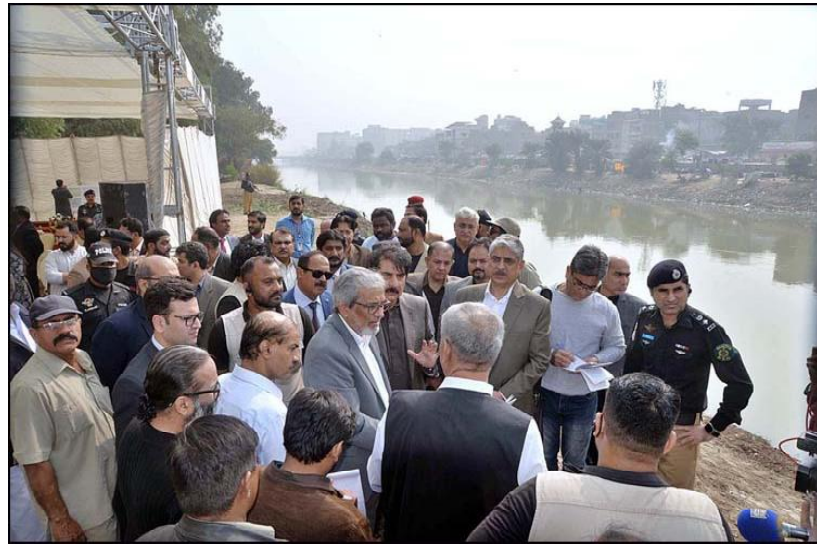
He also visited the Medical ICU, checked the duty roster, and examined the medication stock.

He was informed that the lithotripsy machine in the "Laal Batti" was not functional and was being imported, an order has been placed in this regard,

on which the CM also checked the order.

Chief Minister visited the operation theater complex and also checked the operation theaters of the neurosurgery department, where he was told that all the types of equipment were functional and 25 surgeons serving over there adding that, at that time, no operation was being done in the operation theatre, on which the chief minister expressed his indignation that no surgery is scheduled in 6 operation theatres, surgeries should have been done because patients are on the waiting list and no any surgery list is scheduled.

He also went to the endoscopy suite and interacted with patients.



HYDERABAD: Caretaker Chief Minister Sindh Justice (R) Maqbool Baqar visit at Phuleli canal.

Governor stresses youth to divert attention toward modern educational research

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali Wednesday said that we should prepare our children to meet challenges of the current century and divert their attention toward research and modern fields of education.

Addressing a dinner hosted by Dir Chamber of Commerce and Industry at Lower Dir, the Governor stressed youngsters to improve their capabilities and meet the requirements of the current world.

The dinner was also attended by the former caretaker minister, Fazal Elahi, Provincial Chairman, Federation of Pakistan Chamber, Qaisar Khan, President Malakand Chamber, Shoaib Khan, President Haripur chamber, Tayab Swati, presidents of Bajaur and Chitral Chambers besides members of FPCCI executive body.

KP minister directs utilization of resources for imparting skills

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Newly Merged Districts Affairs, Technical Education, Industries and Commerce, Dr. Aamer Abdullah has directed that the available resources of technical education department should be utilized for the provision of skilled development and professional training.

The caretaker minister also directed to include olive grafting and other relevant necessary training courses for the areas of Orakzai, Bajaur and Waziristan in the said special program while complete data of the trained and employed skilled workers under this program should be

provided. He gave this directive on Wednesday during a briefing given to him regarding the Accelerated Skilled Development Program, a special project launched by the Department of Industries, Commerce and Technical Education department for the merged districts.

Project Director Khalid Usman Wazir and Coordinator Tufail provided details regarding the aims and objectives of this important project.

The minister was informed that under the project, essential training courses related to the core sectors of mining, textile, manufacturing and construction, tourism, livestock and agriculture, engineering.

Sindh health minister flays attack on Polio team in Bannu

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Caretaker Health Minister Dr Saad Khalid Niaz Wednesday strongly condemned attack on a polio team in district Bannu Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and directed to beef up security of vaccination teams across Sindh province.

He, in a statement issued here, termed martyrdom of a policeman in the attack on the polio team in Bannu as sad incident.

He said polio workers were playing vital role for eradicating polio and vowed that no compromise could be made on security of polio workers during the anti-polio campaign. The minister directed to increase security measures across Sindh saying that Police and Pakistan Rangers Sindh have been asked to beef up the security of polio teams particularly in sensitive areas.

CTD held bank cash withdrawal robbers

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) announced on Wednesday the capture of two suspected street criminals accused of targeting individuals withdrawing money from banks.

According to a CTD spokesperson, the apprehension took place within the Soldier Bazaar police station's jurisdiction. The detainees, Muhammad Munir and Rizwan Ali, were found in possession of two firearms, and it was revealed that they had prior incarceration related to various cases. Initial investigations disclosed their involvement in robbing individuals withdrawing cash from banks across multiple areas such as Defence, Gulshan Iqbal, Surjani, Ferozeabad, Azizabad.



LARKANA: Sindh Caretaker Minister for Health, Dr. Saad Khalid Niaz is talking to media persons after visiting the Chandka Medical College Hospital in Larkana.

Ashrafi urges UN tribunal to probe Israeli aggression in Gaza

LAHORE (APP): Special Representative to the Prime Minister and Chairman of the Pakistan Ulama Council Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi has said that a United Nations (UN) tribunal should be established to investigate Israeli aggression and war crimes in Gaza, Palestine.

He was addressing a seminar, organised at Jamia Manzoor-ul-Islamia on Wednesday, to express solidarity with the Palestinian people. He said Israel was an occupier, aggressor, and oppressor. "We are working towards a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and the government is maintaining open and direct communication at the global level, in this regard," he said. Ashrafi said today, the entire world

observed the Day of Solidarity with Palestine. He said the atrocities of Israel were evident not only to Islamic nations but also to the people of Western countries, who continue to raise their voice against Israeli aggression. Due to the international pressure, the OIC, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and other nations, a ceasefire and release of prisoners had been achieved in Gaza, he said and hoped for a lasting ceasefire to facilitate swift humanitarian activities in Gaza. He said that Army Chief's meeting with the Palestinian ambassador at the Army headquarters and expression of unity in the Commanders' Conference indicated the clear direction of Pakistan's principled stance.



ABBOTTABAD: People are waiting for public transport after strike called by drivers due to decrease of local fares by Regional Transport Authority (RTA), at Sarban Chowk in Abbottabad.

PDMA prepares winter contingency plan to cope natural hazards

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) under the guidance of Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Wednesday formulated the Winter Contingency Plan for 2023-24 in order to cope with various natural hazards which the province may face during the winter season.

The plan encompasses strategies to manage hazards such as extreme low temperatures, smog, snowfall, rainfall, landslides, flash floods, and seismic activities in the

mountainous north and west.

Muhammad Qaisar Khan, the Director General PDMA, stated that the Winter Contingency Plan 2023-24 was initiated in October 2023, involving key stakeholders such as the Federal Government, Provincial Line Departments, District Administration, UNDP GLOF-II, and other development partners.

Digital tools for data collection were developed and shared, including information of district and sector-specific hazards, vulnerability profiles, hazard impacts, damages.

Punjab Governor says: Pak values its ties with Germany, wants to further expand in various fields

Independent Report

LAHORE: Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Pakistan Alfred Grannas called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman and discussed matters of mutual interest, promotion of cooperation in education, environment and trade during a meeting at the Governor's House, here on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that Pakistan values its relations with Germany and wants to further expand relations in various fields, especially education, environment, technology, energy and trade. He said that devastating flash floods wrecked havoc in Pakistan

last year due to climate change. He said that the Pakistani government and people are grateful to the German government for helping the flood victims. He said that both countries need to continue coordinated efforts to tackle the challenges of climate change and finalize the climate partnership agreement soon.

The Governor Punjab said, "We are thankful to Germany for continuous support to Pakistan for GSP plus status." He further emphasized the need of students exchange programme between Pakistan and Germany. He said that the academic exchange program will strengthen people to people contact between the two countries.



LAHORE: Ambassador of Germany to Pakistan, Alfred Grannas, called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House.

Gilani for revolutionary steps to address terrorism, poverty, inflation issues

MULTAN (APP): Former Prime Minister, Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani on Wednesday emphasized the importance of addressing the issues of terrorism, poverty, and inflation through revolutionary actions for the betterment of the people.

In a statement issued here in connection with Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) 56th Foundation Day, he stated that the PPP is a mission whose foundation was laid by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Its purpose was the establishment of democracy and the struggle for the rights of the people, he said adding that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Co-Chairman

Asif Ali Zardari were committed to the mission of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto.

They are advancing the Charter of Democracy (CoD), initiated by Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, to strengthen democracy. The PPP has worked extensively on the (CoD), and the remaining tasks will be included in the new manifesto, the senator maintained.

This year foundation day ceremony was being organized in Quetta which aims to end a sense of deprivation in smaller provinces. Gilani praised the significant achievements of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto, followed by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

Students from friends of Police visit PSCA

LAHORE (APP): A delegation of students from Friends of Police, comprising 150 participants from various universities, paid a study visit to the PSCA, here on Wednesday.

Commander DSP gave a detailed briefing on the functioning of the Authority.

The delegation was shown the workings of different departments within Safe City, including the Emergency Call Centre 15, Media Management Centre, and Women Safety App. They were also briefed on the Electronic Data Analysis Center, the Traffic Management System.



RAWALPINDI: SAPM for Human rights and Women Empowerment, Mushahid Hussein Mullick, distributing souvenirs during the opening ceremony of the two day international conference on Transformative Nexus: higher education and women empowerment at Fatima Jinnah University.

Chinese police delegation visits Civil Secretariat

LAHORE (APP): An eight-member delegation from Chinese province of Jiangsu police, headed by Tan Yongsheng, Deputy Director General of the Public Security Department, visited the Civil Secretariat here on Wednesday and expressed resolve to enhance bilateral cooperation.

Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman welcomed the delegates and conveyed good wishes to them on behalf of caretaker chief minister Punjab. He said the chief minister had sent a special message of good wishes to the delegation. He said: "We value the relationship with China and are keen to increase the partnership in education, health, environment and other fields."

He said Punjab wanted to benefit from China's experience to control environmental pollution and smog. Tan Yongsheng said that Punjab is the hub of economic activities. He mentioned that exchange of delegations between the two friendly countries would promote bilateral cooperation.

Iranian CG, KP minister holds deliberations on promotion of tourism

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: The Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ali Banafsheh Khah and KP Minister for Information, Culture and Tourism, Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel held extensive deliberations here on Wednesday.

The meeting underscored the profound historical, cultural, and religious bonds between the people of Iran and the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The meeting emphasized the pivotal role of people-to-people connections, promoting cultural exchange, and unlocking the tourism potential inherent in the rich tapestry of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Iranian cities.

Both dignitaries emphasized the importance of mutual festivals celebrating shared culture, heritage, food, and traditions.

Discussions also delved into avenues for enhancing trade, aiming to fortify economic ties between Iran and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

A central focus of the meeting was the exploration of measures to facilitate travel between Iranian cities and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, utilizing road, sea, and air routes. This included discussions on air flights connecting Iranian cities with Islamabad or Peshawar to cater to tourists and businesspersons from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Minister of Information for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa highlighted the need for joint celebrations and festivities, emphasizing the unique opportunities for religious and eco-tourism in both regions.

Consul General Ali Banafsheh Khah expressed gratitude for the warm reception, acknowledging the historical bonds uniting the two regions.

He highlighted the untapped potential for attracting Iranian tourists to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Minister Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel reciprocated the sentiments, emphasizing the shared commitment to strengthening diplomatic, cultural, and economic ties.



SARGODHA: Director Superior University Prof Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhry and President District Bar Rana Zafar Yaseen leading a solidarity walk with Palestine at superior University at Lahore road.

Govt's top priority to provide quality telecom services to masses: Saif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Dr Umar Saif said on Wednesday that providing quality telecom services to the masses was the government's top priority.

"The government is taking all possible steps to improve connectivity in the country," he said during a meeting with the Group Chief Executive Officer of VEON, along with CEO Jazz, Aamir Ibrahim.

Matters of mutual interest related to the telecom sector were also discussed during the

meeting, said a news release.

During discussions with the VEON delegation, Dr Umar Saif mentioned that the tech-neutral spectrum would be auctioned soon to enhance telecom services for the public.

Vowing to launch 5G, he expressed that the Ministry of IT and Telecommunication would provide every possible cooperation to the telecom industry. Smart mobile phones would be provided in easy installments soon, he added.

Dr Umar Saif informed the delegation

that Pakistan has a conducive investment atmosphere, urging Jazz to invest in e-agriculture, e-education, and e-health sectors.

He also commended the VEON Group for its efforts in the technology field and the provision of smartphones.

VEON, CEO Aamir Ibrahim stated that stable telecom systems are vital for the foundation of the digital ecosystem and the economic stability of the country.

The meeting was also attended by senior officers of the IT Ministry.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Information Technology, Telecommunications Dr. Umar Saif in a meeting with Group Chief Executive Officer of VEON Kaan Teziogly.

KSA extends term for a \$3 billion deposit placed with Pakistan for a year

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Wednesday, informed that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia extended the term for the deposit of US\$ 3 billion placed with Pakistan for another year.

"The Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) on behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has extended the term for the deposit of US\$ 3 billion, maturing on 05 December 2023, for another year," said a statement issued here.

The \$ 3 billion deposit agreement was initially signed through the SFD with the SBP in the year 2021 and the said amount has been placed with the State Bank of

Pakistan on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

It is worth noting that the amount was rolled over subsequently in 2022, after the issuance of the royal directives that reflect the continuation of the close relationship between the two brotherly countries.

The recent extension of the term of the deposit for one more year is a continuation of the support provided by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which will help to maintain the foreign currency reserves of Pakistan and contribute to the economic growth of the country, it concluded.

Senate body on Finance and Revenue convenes

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Meeting of Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue was held here at Parliament House on Wednesday with Senator Saleem Mandviwalla in Chair.

The Senate Committee unanimously passed the "Limited Liability Partnership (Amendment) Bill, 2023" with an amendment, extending the grace period for filing statements of accounts from 30 to 90 days. Senator Shahadat Awan, the bill's mover, emphasized that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are the future of the country and the primary objective of the bill is to boost these

enterprises by providing them a reasonable grace period for filing statements of accounts after establishment.

Furthermore, the Committee deliberated on the non-payment of salary to daily-wage teachers working in the Islamabad Territory.

Mrs. Rabia Waheed, one of the affected individuals, apprised that AGPR has not been paying salaries to teachers and working staff despite having an allocated budget. AGPR officials maintained that wages have been delayed due to non issuance of the 'New Payment Wages' notification which has been issued to AGPR on the 2nd of this month.



ISLAMABAD: SAPM, Jawad Sohrab Malik meets with Ms Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa, Assistant Director General & Regional Director, International Labour Organisation (ILO) at the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis.

Railways upgrade 181 un-manned crossings in country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has converted approximately 181 un-manned level crossings to manned level crossings across the country, out of 550 identified by the department over the entire railway network in over one year. "The relevant provincial government provided the finances to Pakistan Railways for the up-gradation of un-manned level crossings in the country," official sources in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

They said the

department was taking several steps including the up-gradation of unmanned and vulnerable railway level crossings across the country in collaboration with respective provincial governments. The sources said there were two types of level crossings over the Pakistan Railways network, un-manned and manned level crossings, adding that the un-manned level crossings were without gate leaves.

"There is a total of 1,565 unmanned level crossings over the entire railway network.

Railways announces 5pc freight rate hike

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Railways has announced a five per cent increase in freight rates across all categories starting from Friday, December 1. The decision, as per an official notification released on Wednesday, exempts cargo express services 501-Up/502-Dn and 503-Up/504-Dn from the rate adjustment.

The revised freight rates table, detailing the calculated rates per ton for distances up to 5000 kilometers, will soon be disseminated to divisional superintendents. These officials are tasked with facilitating the distribution of the updated rates to all stations that cater to goods traffic bookings.

Rupee gains 14 paise against Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday gained 14 paise against US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 285.38 against the previous day's closing at Rs 285.52.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs 285.4 and Rs 288 respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs 1.10 to close at Rs 313.49 against the last day's closing of Rs 312.39, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

Sustained action amid global recession must to avert financial implication

ISLAMABAD (APP): The experts at an intellectual discourse on Wednesday enunciated multiple crises faced by the country, and suggested a sustained action amid international economic recession to avert its serious implications affecting the in-house drivers of financial instability.

Speaking at the roundtable on "Addressing Pakistan's Inflation Woes," at the 26th Sustainable Development Conference organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Advisor to the Prime Minister on Finance Dr Waqar Masood Khan said that the inflationary situation started with the Ukraine war as the price of oil and other commodities



KUWAIT: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar witnessing the signing of MoUs between private sectors of Pakistan and Kuwait.

Economy recovers, posts growth of 2.13% in Q1: NAC estimates

ISLAMABAD (APP): The economy of the country witnessed recovery during the first quarter (Q1) of the fiscal year 2023-24 and posted a growth of 2.13 percent as compared to the increase of 0.96 percent during the same period of last financial year (2022-23), according to the latest estimates of National Accounts Committee (NAC).

The 107th meeting of the National Accounts Committee (NAC), to review the annual estimates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the years 2021-22 (Final), 2022-23 (Revised) and quarterly estimates from Q1 2016-

17 to Q1 2023-24, was held here under the chairmanship Secretary Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives.

During Q1 2023-24, the overall growth in services was recorded at 0.82% whereas that of Wholesale and Retail Trade, which is based on output of agriculture, manufacturing and imports, has been estimated at 3.05% because of positive growth in agriculture and industry.

Transport sector showed growth of 1.7% whereas Information & Communication, which remained negative in most of the quarters last year has

changed its direction by posting 2.4% growth. Finance and Insurance industry witnessed negative growth of 12.79% because of decline in output of insurance companies, exchange brokers, mercantile brokers and also high growth in deflator.

Public administration (which is based on the budget documents of federal, provincial, district and cantonments/local government) has reported 6.65% negative growth in Q1 2023-24. Further, high deflator also resulted in decline in constant prices while negative growth in both education and human health & social work.

Farmers told to begin sunflower sowing from Dec 1 in south Punjab

MULTAN (APP): Agriculture experts have advised farmers to begin sunflower sowing for spring season from Dec 1, 2023 and complete the process by Jan 31, 2024 in south Punjab to gain maximum yield from the vitamin rich food crop that carry 40-45 per cent oil content.

In a statement issued here Wednesday, agriculture spokesman said that Pakistan spend a whopping Rs 300 billion every year to import edible oil to meet the food needs at home adding that

government was encouraging farmers to opt for oil seed crops to lessen dependence on imported edible oil and save resources.

Spokesman said that sunflower contains vitamins A, B, E and K and experts want farmers to sow this nutrition rich oil seed crop from Dec 1 to Jan 31 in south Punjab districts including Dera Ghazi Khan, Bahawalpur, Rajanpur, Rahim Yar Khan, Multan, Vehari, Bahawalnagar, Muzaffargarh, Layyah, Lodhran, Bahkar and



MULTAN: Vendor displaying tomatoes bags for bidding at Vegetable Market.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was reported at the port where four ships, scheduled to load / offload Rice and Containers, berthed at Multipurpose Terminal and Container Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile five more ships, scheduled to load / offload Rice, Wheat, LNG and Gas oil also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during last 24 hours.

A total of ten ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them, an oil tanker Evridiki left the port on Wednesday morning and four more ships Maersk Cabo Verde.

BISP committed to provide financial support to 10m families: Dr Amjad

PESHAWAR (INP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib here Wednesday said that BISP is committed to providing financial assistance to nearly one core deserving families.

While addressing a gathering of BISP employees at City University Mosque in Peshawar, Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib underscored the moral responsibility to alleviate the financial difficulties of needy families, outlining a strategic approach to lift them out of poverty.

Highlighting BISP's possession of authentic data for deserving families, Dr. Amjad Saqib urged philanthropists to adopt the principles of 'Mawakat', fostering collaboration to support underprivileged families.

He proposed the establishment of an

endowment fund dedicated to the welfare of needy families.

In his address, Dr. Amjad Saqib advocated for linking children from impoverished families to technical skill areas, promoting holistic development. Dr. Amjad Saqib also emphasized the need for dialogue with Point of Sale (POS) agents for stipend payments to ensure transparency.

During his visit to BISP Tehsil Office in Peshawar, Dr. Amjad Saqib personally engaged with needy women, instructing staff to provide facilities using available resources.

Dr. Amjad Saqib urged employees to maintain cleanliness standards in offices, displaying kindness to needy women. Emphasizing collective responsibility, he stated, "It is our duty to make the Benazir Income Support Program an exemplary

establishment of an endowment fund dedicated to the welfare of needy families. In his address, Dr. Amjad Saqib advocated for linking children from impoverished families to technical skill areas, promoting holistic development. Dr. Amjad Saqib also emphasized the need for dialogue with Point of Sale (POS) agents for stipend payments to ensure transparency. During his visit to BISP Tehsil Office in Peshawar, Dr. Amjad Saqib personally engaged with needy women, instructing staff to provide facilities using available resources. Dr. Amjad Saqib urged employees to maintain cleanliness standards in offices, displaying kindness to needy women. Emphasizing collective responsibility, he stated, "It is our duty to make the Benazir Income Support Program an exemplary



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research Dr. Kausar Abdullah Malik presiding over 46th Board of Governors meeting of PARC at NARC.

ICCI demands Auto City in the Capital to boost car showrooms business

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of the Motor and Importer Dealers Association led by its President Haji Tariq visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and discussed the issues being faced by their sector.

Raja Amir Karim President of Rawalpindi Region, Sardar Irfan President of Islamabad Region, Muhammad Waseem Abbasi General Secretary of Islamabad Region, Azhar Akhlaq Abbasi Chairman Islamabad Region, Ajab

Gul President of Islamabad Motor Dealers Association and others were in the delegation, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

Addressing the delegation, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that car showrooms provide employment to thousands of people along with promoting business activities, but the action against them not only affects the business of this sector.

NPO to organize webinar on solar system for electricity generation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Productivity Organization (NPO) will conduct a Webinar on 'Solar System for Electricity Generation' on December 05 (Wednesday).

"Energy growth is directly linked to the well-being and prosperity of a country and in Pakistan, the economy is mainly reliant on the electricity being produced by conventional energy resources such as coal, oil, and natural gas," according to an NPO document

shared here.

"Given adequate support, renewable energy technologies can meet the growing demand at lower prices than those usually forecast for conventional energy. Renewable energy technologies like solar, wind, bio, hydro, ocean and hydrogen are clean sources of energy; that have a much lower environmental impact than conventional energy technologies," it added.

The workshop will provide information about renewable energy.



KARACHI: A woman checks used winter clothes at a roadside vendor stall.

Mardan Chamber signs MoU with KP Radio for business industry promotion

PESHAWAR (APP): The President of the Chamber of Commerce Mardan, Zahir Shah and the Station Manager of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Radio Mardan, Aftab Ahmad, signed the memorandum of understanding for business promotion. A special ceremony was held in which a large number of traders participated. Addressing the ceremony, President Zahir Shah said that the purpose of the memorandum of understanding is to resolve the issues of the business industry through the platform of the radio.

He emphasized the

need for business leaders to embrace the demands of the new era beyond traditional methods. He also highlighted the role of social media in engaging youth in business.

Aftab Ahmad, the Station Manager of Radio Mardan said that Radio Mardan serves as a bridge between the public and government and non-governmental organizations, contributing to its increasing popularity.

He mentioned that the memorandum of understanding will further strengthen relations between both institutions and emphasized.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam addressing during a ceremony hosted by Dir Chamber of Commerce and Industry at Lower Dir.

Disease, fueled by Israeli-imposed blockade, could be bigger killer than bombs in Gaza: WHO

UNITED NATIONS (APP): With the brief "humanitarian pause" between Israel and Palestinians so far failing to result in the delivery of sufficient aid in Gaza, UN officials on Tuesday warned that the spread of disease could soon begin killing more Palestinian people than the deadly Israeli bomb attacks.

They said that priorities include transporting fuel to the north of the war-torn enclave, so that it can be used to power hospitals, provide clean water and maintain other vital civilian infrastructure.

Such services have been massively impacted by weeks of Israeli bombardment since Oct 7.

Gazan health authorities have reported that more than 15,000 people, mostly women and children, have been killed in attacks to date.

In an update from southern Gaza, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) spokesperson James Elder said that a doctor from Al-Shifa hospital in the north had told him that the threats to children were "very much from the air and now very much on the ground", in the form of diarrhoea and respiratory infections.

"He was terrified as a medical professional in terms

of the disease outbreak that is lurking here and how that will devastate children whose immune systems and lack of food... is making them perilously weak," Elder added.

As negotiations continue for the release of more hostages in return for a prolongation of the pause in fighting, the UNICEF spoke of his dismay at seeing so many youngsters fighting for their lives, "with horrendous wounds of war, (lying) in carparks on makeshift mattresses, in gardens everywhere, doctors having to make horrendous decisions on who they prioritize".

Another boy whose leg had been blown off in the violence had spent "three or four days" trying to reach the south, delayed by checkpoints, Mr. Elder continued. "The smell (of decomposition) was clear... and that boy had shrapnel all over. Potentially, he was blind and had burns to 50 per cent of his body."

Echoing deep concerns over the scale of needs in Gaza, the UN World Health Organization (WHO) noted that an assessment carried out in the north at the start of the pause in fighting on 24 November had shown that "everybody everywhere has dire health needs".



KUWAIT: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meeting with Kuwaiti Cabinet Ministers during the welcoming ceremony at Bayan Palace



People walk past destroyed buildings, opposite the Grand Mosque of the southern Gaza Strip city of Khan Yunis

US seeks deconfliction areas in south Gaza

News Desk
WASHINGTON: The Biden administration is strongly urging Israel to exercise caution in military assault in South Gaza, and to create areas of "deconfliction" in the south to prevent civilian casualties.

These protected areas would spare United Nations facilities and shelters from active military engagements. The focus is on avoiding a replication of the extensive destruction witnessed in the northern region.

With over two million people concentrated in central and southern Gaza due to displacement caused by Israeli airstrikes, the US emphasises the need to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe.

The proposed strategy aims to protect civilian sites, including electricity and water stations, humanitarian facilities, hospitals, and UN-supported shelters. The recent ceasefire with Hamas allowed increased aid efforts, but challenges persist with over one million Palestinians displaced in Gaza.

A senior US official disclosed the proposed strat-

egy at a news briefing on Monday night, stating: "You cannot have the sort of scale of displacement that took place in the north, replicated in the south."

The US call also highlighted the precarious situation in Gaza, stressing that any significant further displacement would overwhelm existing support networks.

The truce, brokered with Hamas, allowed humanitarian groups to increase aid efforts to address acute shortages of essential supplies. Aid organisations estimate that over 1 million Palestinians in Gaza are displaced, living in overcrowded shelters, which increases risk of communicable diseases. The United Nations, US lawmakers, and advocacy groups want Israel to protect civilians caught in the crossfire. The proposed "areas of deconfliction," distinct from the "safe zones" previously encouraged by Israel in the north.

"What we are talking about are practical arrangements on the ground, multiple arrangements, what you might call areas of deconfliction," the US official who briefed the media clarified.

After 17 days trapped in tunnel, India workers say hope kept them alive

News Desk
NEW DELHI: After 17 days trapped inside a collapsed Himalayan road tunnel they were building, Indian workers described the horror of their ordeal, and the hopes and prayers that kept them strong.

"We were really scared, every moment felt that death was standing nearby," rescued worker Deepak Kumar told AFP on Wednesday.

"We were not sure whether our lives would be saved or not." The men were welcomed as heroes after being hauled through 57 metres (187 feet) of steel pipe on stretchers specially fitted with wheels late Tuesday, the culmination of a marathon engineering operation.

Draped in garlands of

orange marigolds, they were greeted with wild cheers. "The world is again beautiful for us," rescued worker Sabah Ahmad told AFP, describing the heartache of hearing his wife's "worried and hopeless" voice while he was trapped.

"I know it was a difficult moment for those inside and more difficult for families outside," said Ahmad, who comes from Bihar, one of India's poorest states.

"But at last we have come out, and it is the only thing that matters." His wife Musarrat Jahan, speaking to AFP by phone from Bihar, said that "no words" could explain how happy she felt.

"Not only my husband got a new life, we also got a new life," she said.

Gangs, extortion in Bangladesh camps driving Rohingya sea exodus

Lhokseumawe, Indonesia (AFP/APP): Holding his son's hand in a temporary shelter in Indonesia, Rohingya Mohamed Ridoi says he made the dangerous 12-day sea journey from massive refugee camps in Bangladesh to escape the pervasive threats of kidnapping, extortion and murder.

The 27-year-old said he was starting a "peaceful life" in a temporary shelter in Indonesia's western Aceh Province, where more than 1,000 Rohingya people have arrived this month, the largest such influx since 2015.

He and others said they fled escalating brutality in the camps in and around Cox's Bazar, which hold more than one million people and where gangs regularly abduct and torture residents for ransom.

DFP expresses concern over plight of Kashmiri detainees

SRINAGAR (INP): Jammu Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (DFP), a constituent of All Parties Hurriyat Conference, has expressed serious concern over the plight of illegally detained Kashmiris languishing in different jails of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir and India.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the DFP spokesman, Advocate Arshad Iqbal, in a statement issued in Srinagar said the Kashmiri detainees continue to suffer due to non-provision of basic facilities including medical care and hygienic food in the jails. He said on one hand, the Indian government is using detention as a tool to suppress the Kashmiris' legitimate political voices, while on the other, Indian troops are killing innocent Kashmiris with impunity.

The spokesman condemned the continued illegal detention of innocent Kashmiris including party

Govt offices in EU can ban religious symbols

News Desk
BRUSSELS: Government offices in the EU can ban employees wearing religious symbols such as Islamic headscarves, even when they do not have contact with the public, the Court of Justice of the EU ruled on Tuesday.

Such a rule can be imposed "in order to put in place an entirely neutral administrative environment," the court said.

The judgement derived from a case lodged by a worker in a Belgian local government office who challenged a ban on her wearing an Islamic headscarf, feeling that it infringed on her freedom of religion and she was being discriminated against.

The Luxembourg-based court said a prohibition "of any sign revealing philosophical or religious beliefs... is not discriminatory if it is applied in a general and indiscriminate man-

ner to all of that administration's staff and is limited to what is strictly necessary".

The ruling — valid for public sector offices across the EU — backs up previous EU court judgments that found such bans can be legal in private sector workplaces.

It said national courts should decide the applicability of such prohibitions, and that public offices could also have policies limiting such bans to public-facing workers, or decide to authorise the wearing of visible religious or philosophical signs of belief.

"Each Member State, and any infra-State body within the framework of its competences, has a margin of discretion in designing the neutrality of the public service which it intends to promote in the workplace, depending on its own context," it said.

APHC calls for complete shutdown in IIOJK on Friday

SRINAGAR (INP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has called for complete shutdown in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir on Friday.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the shutdown is meant to protest against the posting of a blasphemous video by an Indian student about Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It is also aimed at protesting against illegal arrests, booking of seven Kashmiri students under a draconian law, dismissal of Kashmiri government employees and confiscation of properties of people.

The APHC in a statement urged the people of the occupied territory to make the strike a success. It also asked them to hold protest demonstrations on Friday against the posting of blasphemous video by the non-Kashmiri Hindu student.

It is to be mentioned

here that the students at the National Institute of Technology (NIT) in Hazratbal area of Srinagar were a massive demonstration, yesterday, after an Indian student studying at the institute posted a derogatory video clip on social media about the Holy Prophet (PBUH). The Indian police booked seven students of the Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology in Ganderbal district of occupied Kashmir on Monday under black law Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for celebrating Australia's win against India in the World Cup final. Also, while continuing the arrest spree, the occupation authorities are terminating the Kashmiri government employees and confiscating the properties of the people to punish them for their affiliation with the ongoing freedom movement.

Can Hamas locate remaining hostages in mayhem of Gaza war?

News Desk
GAZA: Ever since it seized more than 200 people in the deadly rampage through southern Israel that triggered the Gaza war, Hamas has hoped to use hostages as bargaining cards with Israel in order to win freedom for Palestinians in Israeli jails.

But as mediators try to secure extensions to a truce between Israel and Hamas to enable more hostage releases, the Palestinian militant group may struggle to locate more captives in the chaos of the conflict, Palestinian and Egyptian security sources familiar with the talks said.

While Hamas planned and launched the Oct. 7 attack, other militants quickly joined in, pouring into Israel and seizing more people. Hamas says it is working to locate them in a Gaza Strip shattered by weeks of Israeli bombardment.

Hamas may also be holding back information, the sources said. Mediator Egypt believes Hamas is concealing some of what it knows, and saying it needs to do so for security reasons and as a negotiating strategy, Egyptian security sources said.

Hamas has said the hostages were being treated well, in line with Islamic teachings. They are believed to be in a vast network of tunnels that Hamas has

built over the years. But the Israeli air strikes, which flattened entire neighbourhoods, may have cut off passages between tunnels, making it difficult for Hamas to find hostages.

One Palestinian source said the bombardment "complicated" the situation in the field.

The bodies of at least two hostages have been recovered by Israeli forces in Gaza and Hamas has said that more than 60 hostages were missing due to Israeli air strikes.

Islamic Jihad, another Iran-backed Palestinian militant group, has said they have more than 30 captives, indicating there could be 20 who might be held by members of smaller groups.

The hostages ranged from a baby and young children to grandmothers and soldiers, some taken from kibbutzim, others from a music festival.

Both Hamas and Islamic Jihad took part in a prisoner swap on Tuesday, which suggests that Hamas may be collecting hostages from other groups.

One Israeli source with knowledge of the issue said Hamas was estimated to be holding 90% of the hostages.

"It's their responsibility to find the other 10%," the source said.

'Powder keg': Georgians fear Russian army at separatist frontier

Ergneti, Georgia (AFP/APP): Sitting among fading rose bushes in her yard in northern Georgia, Lia Chlachidze said locals live under "a permanent threat" from Russian troops stationed nearby in the separatist Tskhinvali region.

The 70-year-old's village of Ergneti lies just metres from a Russian checkpoint at the border of the breakaway enclave, which Moscow has controlled since it invaded in 2008.

"The locals' number one challenge is the problem of security. Russian soldiers could come at any moment and arrest us," Chlachidze told AFP.

Her concerns—echoed in villages throughout the region—were validated this month when authorities announced that Russian troops had killed a 58-year-old civilian.

They said the man, Tamaz Ginturi, along with several other villagers, went to pray in a church that Russian soldiers had denied Georgians access to earlier this year.

Authorities in the capital Tbilisi say that hundreds of ethnic Georgians have been detained by Russian troops since the five-day

war 15 years ago. In a particularly egregious incident in 2018, one of the detainees, a 35-year-old vegetable seller Archil Tatumashvili, was tortured to death in a South Ossetian prison.

His mutilated body was only returned to his family after weeks of diplomatic negotiations by Western countries.

"We're afraid of the Russians. They're too close," said Levan Iluridze, 58, a resident of the village of Tirdznisi.

Tskhinvali sits in the autonomous South Ossetia enclave—created by the Bolsheviks upon Georgia's annexation in 1921 due to the largely Ossetian population.

Russia invaded Georgia in August 2008 after Tbilisi launched a large-scale military offensive against South Ossetian militia who were shelling Georgian villages.

After routing Georgia's small army in just five days, Russia officially recognised the pro-Kremlin authorities in Tskhinvali and in another secessionist Georgian region, Abkhazia, and stationed military bases there.

Moscow still controls the breakaway regions, where Russian is widely

spoken, even though the territories are recognised internationally as part of Georgia.

Since 2008, Russia's military has been building barbed wire fences between the enclave and the rest of Georgia, with the aim of transforming the line into a "state border."

The process has been dubbed "illegal borderisation" by international observers and has forced almost a quarter of the local population to move deeper into Georgia.

"As the line divides communities and families, the fence along it produces an array of difficulties for people living on both sides," the International Crisis Group said last year.

"For years, no child was born in Ergneti, living conditions are dire here, the village is dying out," said Chlachidze.

"But I can't leave this place, I feel like something terrible would happen, that there will be the end of the world if I leave," she added.

While Chlachidze's house was burned down during the war, in 2014 she opened a makeshift "museum of occupation" in the wine cellar of her rebuilt home.



Luxembourg PM Luc Frieden, Portuguese PM Antonio Costa, President of the European Council Charles Michel, French President Emmanuel Macron, Dutch PM Mark Rutte and Estonian PM Kaja Kallas pose during an informal dinner with European Union (EU) leaders on the EU's strategic agenda, at the Elysee Palace in Paris

US military aircraft crashes in sea off Japan

News Desk
TOKYO: A U.S. military aircraft carrying six people crashed into the sea in western Japan on Wednesday, killing at least one crew member with the condition of at least two hauled from waters unclear.

Japan's coast guard said it found what appeared to be wreckage from the tilt-rotor V-22 Osprey and one person who was later confirmed to have died some 3 km (2 miles) from Yakushima island.

Fishing boats in the area found three people in the surrounding waters, a representative of a local fisheries cooperative said, adding their condition was unknown.

Another Osprey landed safely at the island's airport on Wednesday afternoon around the time of the crash, a spokesperson for the local government said.

U.S. forces in the region were still gathering information, a spokesperson said.

The United States has about 54,000 U.S. troops in Japan, many in the strategically important southern island chain, amid growing Chinese military assertiveness in the South China Sea.

Nikki Haley's getting buzz, but faces tough math to beat Trump

News Desk
WASHINGTON: Nikki Haley is having a moment: The 2024 Republican presidential candidate is seeing a swell in media coverage, new interest from big-dollar donors and increasing chatter that she is poised to make a real run at Donald Trump.

But there is buzz, and there is reality. The reality is that Haley, 51, faces a massive uphill battle to take down the former president and gain the Republican presidential nomination — but the sooner the race can be whittled down to her and Trump, 77, the better her still-remote chances.

"I don't think you can look at the numbers right now and see much of a path for anyone other than Trump," said Kyle Kondik, an elections analyst at the University of Virginia Center for Politics.

Trump, according to aggregates of national opinion polls, holds about a 50-percentage-point lead over her, with Florida Governor Ron DeSantis also in the mix. Trump also has large leads in early Republican nominating states such as Iowa and New Hampshire.

Still, Haley has been gaining ground in some polls on the back of strong performances in debates. The polls show her tied with DeSantis in Iowa and surpassing him in New Hamp-

shire. "There is a narrow path" to victory for Haley, said Republican pollster Whit Ayres.

That path involves top-tier finishes in both Iowa and New Hampshire and perhaps a victory in her home state of South Carolina, where she served as governor.

That would provide Haley with the things she would need most to have a chance against Trump: momentum, media coverage and money flowing in from anti-Trump donors.

From there, it would be a matter of trying to compete in the larger states later in the calendar such as California and Texas, which award large swaths of delegates. "Momentum matters a tremendous amount in these things," Ayres said. "So much of it depends on who does well in early states. That has a dramatic effect on later states."

Opinion polls suggest winning South Carolina, her home state, will be a tall order: According to RealClearPolitics, which aggregates poll numbers, Trump has a 30-point edge over the field there with Haley in second place.

Trump's edge in Iowa is also about 30 points, where Haley is running third behind DeSantis, and a 27-point edge over Haley in New Hampshire.



Pushkar Singh Dhami, Chief Minister of the northern state of Uttarakhand, greets a worker after he was rescued from the collapsed tunnel site in Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand, India

President directs bank to refund Rs 344,600 to fraud victim

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi, upholding the orders of Banking Mohtasib, has directed Allied Bank Ltd (ABL) to pay Rs 344,600 to a customer as the amount fraudulently transferred from his account.

The bank had committed maladministration by opening the fund transfer facility without the consent of customer which caused him financial loss, the President House said Wednesday.

Deciding upon a representation filed by ABL against the decision of the Banking Mohtasib, the president held that the bank failed to discharge the

burden and statutory liability cast upon it under the law and that it had committed basic irregularity and non-compliance by activating Internet Banking/Electronic Funds Transfer (IB/EFT) channel without customer consent.

In his decision, he observed that although the complainant received a phone call from a number similar to the bank's helpline, after which, a sum of Rs 344,602 was transferred from his account, however, if the IB/EFT facility had not been opened by ABL, the customer could have been saved from the financial loss caused to him with no fault on his part.



KUWAIT: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Interior of Kuwait Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah witnessing the signing of MoUs regarding cooperation in various fields between the two countries.

Interim govt appoints over 200 people on deceased quota: Qadir Bakhsh

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Caretaker Minister for Education Prof. Dr. Qadir Bakhsh Baloch on Tuesday said that the interim government has appointed over 200 educated people on deceased quota in the education department during the short period of two months.

Dr. Qadir Bakhsh Baloch said that everyone will have to play a role in the promotion of education in Balochistan. The teachers and other staff in the education department have a heavy responsibility to deliver besides supporting the government in the development and prosperity of the province.

He expressed these views while addressing the ceremony of distribution of appointment orders to 96 people who were recruited on the quota of deceased employees in the education department.

Dr. Qadir Bakhsh Baloch said many people were disappointed that the appointment on the deceased quota was not being implemented.

He said the caretaker government has ensured the placement process on merit in a very short period of time.

He added that the appointment on deceased quota was a big challenge for the education department.



QUETTA: Provincial Secretary Information Imran Khan and DGPR Muhammad Noor Khethran expressing their views during meeting of National Forum of Information Commissioners organized in collaboration with CPDI.

Level playing field is this he and Nawaz Sharif are appearing in courts: Shehbaz

LAHORE (Online): Former Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif has said level playing field is this he is appearing in the courts of Lahore and Nawaz Sharif is appearing in the courts of Islamabad.

"No one knew it that the then PTI would turn into devastation movement and it will stoke devastation in the entire country, he said this while talking to media men outside Accountability Court (AC) here Wednesday.

Facilitating those who are facilitators of May 9 incidents is anti state step, he added. Treason was committed against this country and heinous bid was made to conduct a coup in army. The entire Pakistan condemned it. This should be kept in mind the democracy does not tolerate treason.

He went on to say "first thing we always respected the judiciary. We think it our duty to appear in the court indiscriminately for the sake of justice. They all are respectable for us. The second thing is this whatever difficulties

and hardships have been suffered by Nawaz Sharif, Sharif family and PML-N leaders are part of the record. He underlined Nawaz Sharif went to jail, he was handcuffed and he saw his daughter arrested before him. He went to exile twice. He has returned to country now a days. He has surrendered himself before law. He claimed only Nawaz Sharif governments were toppled and not some one else. Nawaz Sharif was overthrown in 2017. Not only federation but Balochistan government which was working good was too overthrown. This was done only for the sake of enmity with Mian Nawaz Sharif so that the journey of development and uplift could be blocked.

Then you saw where is Pakistan today, he added. He remarked if Nawaz Sharif wanted he could form coalition government in KP along with other governments after 2013 election. He not only refused but said it is requirement of democracy which is the single largest party should be given opportunity.



QUETTA: Caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan co-chairing through video link the national meeting of steering committee about the rehabilitation projects after the last year's devastating floods in Balochistan held in Islamabad.

Caretaker CM calls for implementation on projects of rehabilitation under World Bank project without delay

Caretaker Federal Minister Planning and Special Initiatives assures wholehearted cooperation for implementation on WB's rehabilitation project in flood hit areas of Balochistan

Independent Report
QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has called for implementation on the projects of rehabilitation in flood affected areas of the province without delay under the World Bank Programme.

He also stressed the need to ensure early release of the funds of Rs. 400 million approved by ECNEC for rehabilitation in different sectors in the flood affected districts.

The Chief Minister regretfully noted that the

grant of Rs. 10 billion announced by the then federal government for relief and rehabilitation of the flood affected people has not been received yet.

He supported the proposal of increase in the financial compensation of the houses completely or partially damaged in the flood hit areas. However, it should be ensured to pay the compensation to all affected.

The caretaker Chief Minister was co-chairing through video link the national meeting of steering

committee about the rehabilitation projects after the last year's devastating floods in Balochistan held in Islamabad on Wednesday.

The caretaker Federal Minister for Planning, Planning and Special Initiatives, Muhammad Sami Saeed presided over the meeting of steering committee.

The Additional Chief Secretary Planning Abdul Saboor Kakar, Secretary Finance, Babar Khan, Principal Secretary to CM, Rashid Razaq, Special Secretary, Asfandyar

Baloch also participated in the meeting from Quetta through video link.

Speaking on the occasion, the caretaker Chief Minister noted that almost all districts of Balochistan were affected due to the devastating floods last year.

He also mentioned that large number of houses, institutions of health and education as well as roads infrastructure and communication system were also destroyed due to the floods.

Moreover, almost 50 bridges were partially or

Tosha khana case: Hearing of chairman PTI bail plea adjourned

RAWALPINDI (Online): Accountability Court (AC) Islamabad has adjourned the hearing of bail plea of chairman PTI Imran Khan till December 6 in Al-Qadir trust case and Tosha Khana case. The interim bail of Bushra Begum wife of chairman PTI has been extended till December 06 in Toashkhana case. Chairman PTI and Bushra Begum were present in the court.

Sardar Latif Khosa, Intizar Panjtho, counsels for Chairman PTI, NAB prosecutor Sardar Muzaffar along with his team appeared in the court.



RAWALPINDI: Lt Gen (Retd) Hamood uz Zaman Khan, Secretary Defence and H.E. Datuk Seri Ishak, Secretary General, Ministry of Defence, Malaysia signing Minutes of Meeting (MoM), at Ministry of Defence.

Pakistan Navy special services group participates in bilateral Exercise AYYILDIZ in Turkiye

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Navy Special Service Group (SSGN) participated in the 13th bilateral Special Operations Forces (SOF) Exercise 'Ayyildiz 2023' with Turkish Su Altı Taarruz (SAT) in Istanbul, Turkiye on.

The exercise is regularly conducted in Pakistan and Turkiye alternately, a Pakistan Navy news release said on Wednesday.

The aim of the exercise was to strengthen mili-

tary relationships, improve coordination and interoperability and exchange of professional expertise in the Special Operations Forces (SOF) domain. During exercise, several basic to advanced level exercises were conducted.

Exercise AYYILDIZ-2023 proved highly beneficial to enhance the professional acumen of SOFs and is a testimony to the long-lasting brotherly relations of the two countries.



QUETTA: Tehreek-e-Insaf District President, Abdul Rahim Kakar addresses to media persons during press conference, at Quetta press club.

Gwadar varsity' students distribute water filters to unprivileged community

QUETTA (APP): Students from the BS Management Sciences and Commerce department at the University of Gwadar (UoG) have distributed more than 50 water filters to unprivileged communities across the city of Gwadar and its surroundings.

A handout issued by UoG said on Wednesday, the campaign, aimed at raising awareness about the importance of pure drinking water.

Filters were distributed with financial assistance by the well-off families mainly by local administration and law enforcement authorities.

This collaborative initiative underscores the community's commitment to tackling essential issues that impact the well-being of its residents.

Pro Vice-Chancellor Dr. Manzoor Ahmed, Dean Dr. Jan Muhammad, Registrar Dolat Khan Chairman Management Sciences Fida Hussain appreciated and encouraged the students for such social activity.

Vice Chancellor UoG, Prof Dr. Abdul Razaq Sabir, also praised the students for their proactive approach to fulfilling their societal responsibilities.

He emphasized that universities play a vital role beyond education and should actively contribute to the betterment of society.

MQM-P, PML-N discuss electoral alliance, seat adjustment

ISLAMABAD (INP): Mutahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) on Wednesday held another round of talks on electoral alliance and seat adjustment ahead of the general elections 2024, citing sources.

The fresh round of talks was held at PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal's residence.

The session was attended by MQM-P's central leaders Dr Farooq Sattar, Mustafa Kamal, Syed Aminul Haque, PML-N's Ahsan Iqbal, Zahid Hamid, Bashir Memon and Khawaja Saad Rafique.

Both sides mull over different options for political alliance, seat adjustment and others.

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi records statement before Faizabad sit-in commission

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz disgruntled leader, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Wednesday recorded his statement before the Faizabad sit-in probe commission. The federal government formed the inquiry commission under the chairmanship of retired Inspector General (IG) Akhtar Ali Shah in the case after the Supreme Court rejected the fact-finding committee report.

After being summoned by the commission, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi recorded his initial statement in the Faizabad sit-in case.

Talking to newsmen, after appearing before the commission, Abbasi said he had recorded his initial statement before the commission and added he did not see the agreement made with the TLP protestors to end the sit-in.

Court confirms bail of Sheikh Rashid

ISLAMABAD (Online): District and Sessions Court Islamabad has confirmed the bail of former interior minister Sheikh Rashid in the case registered against him in Kohsar police station.

Sheikh Rashid said he would come to know on December 20 from Lahore High Court (LHC) how many cases have been registered against him.

The bail plea of Sheikh Rashid came up for hearing before additional district and sessions judge Tahir Abbas Sipra Wednesday.

Sheikh Rashid appeared in the court along with his lawyers.

The court confirmed the bail of Sheikh Rashid in the case registered against him in police station Kohsar.

Talking to media men outside the court Sheikh Rashid said his bail has been confirmed by the court here.

Pakistan-Iran railway service restored

CHAGAI (INP): Railway service between Pakistan and Iran has been restored following suspension after heavy rainfall in the area on Tuesday, railway officials on Wednesday.

The rail freight service between Quetta to Iran and Quetta has resumed. The good trains from Pakistan left for Iran, the railways authorities said.

The railway track was drowned under the rainwater, which suspended goods trains traffic Iran, Pakistan Railways officials said.

"A goods train carrying sulfur cargo from Iran was stopped midway," officials further said. "An Iran-bound train from Quetta was also stopped at

Dalbandin".

The train service between two neighboring countries used to remain suspended mostly owing to poor railways infrastructure causing derailment a routine.

Earlier in July, a goods train, destined for Iran from Quetta, was derailed near Padag resulting in suspension of the train service.

Before it, a freight train coming from Zahedan was derailed in Dalbandin in Chagai district.

The sources cited the tracks' dilapidated condition as the cause of the accident.

Pak-Iran freight train service was restored after completion of repair and



QUETTA: Iranian Ambassador Reza Amiri meeting with Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki.

Caretaker CM approves payment of educational, other expenses of Palestinian studying in BMC

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has approved the summary of payment for the educational and other expenses of the Palestinian students studying in Bolan Medical College Quetta.

According to an official hand out issued here on Wednesday, the Chief Minister approved the summary sent by the Provin-

cial Health Department to him.

It may be mentioned here that the Chief Minister had announced to bear all expenses of the 17 students belonging to Palestine and Ghaza and studying in BMC Quetta.

The notification issued by the Health department mentioned that the government would bear the educational and guardianship expenses of Palestinian students.

PPP to form next govt, Shah claims

QUETTA (APP): The Secretary General of Pakistan People's Party Syed Nasir Hussain Shah has said the next government will be of Pakistan People's Party.

He alleged due to the wrong policies of PTI, Pakistan has suffered international isolation for almost 16 months.

He expressed these views during his visit to the Sailani Welfare Trust Quetta here on Wednesday.

PPP General Secretary said Bilawal Bhutto

Zardari and Asif Ali Zardari will participate in the historic political show to be held in Quetta.

He said PPP's top leadership will address the foundation Day of the party.

However, he stressed that special care should be taken regarding the rights of the people who are returning to their native country.

Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said that Sailani Welfare Trust is doing a good job all over the country.



QUETTA: Muslim League (PML-N) Provincial General Secretary, Jamal Shah Kakar addresses to media persons during press conference, at Quetta press club.

PPP determines to build progressive society: Zardari

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was the promise to every citizen of provision of "Roti, Kapra Aur Makaan", adding "We are still firm on that philosophy."

Asif Zardari vowed to create a Pakistan based on the ideology of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, one free of class exploitation.

Significant legislations in place to protect and empower Women: Mushaal

RAWALPINDI (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister for human rights and women empowerment, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, has said that higher education is not just a pursuit of knowledge but a gateway to critical thinking and skills acquisition.

It provides individuals, especially women, with the necessary resources to navigate an ever evolving world.

She was addressing the opening ceremony of the two-day international conference at Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi. The two days international conference would bring together distin-

guished guests, scholars, and policymakers to explore the nexus between higher education and women empowerment.

Mushaal Hussein Mullick threw light on the systematic obstacles women had faced in accessing higher education in the past. She said that though some milestone in this regard had been achieved, challenges such as gender bias, cultural norms and economic disparities are still hindering women's educational access.

SAPM said that Zainab Alert Response and Recovery Act, 2020; Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act 2020.



QUETTA: Balochistan Caretaker Minister for Education Dr. Qadir Bakhsh Baloch distributing appointment orders on deceased quota in education department.