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Pakistan fully committed to success of CPEC: PM

Chinese Vice FM calls on COAS, conveys China's satisfaction on CPEC projects' security; Commends Pakistan's peace efforts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar Monday said that Pakistan was fully committed to the success of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and stressed the need for both sides to continue to work closely to ensure timely completion of the ongoing projects.

He was talking to Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong who paid a courtesy call on him.

The prime minister welcomed the Chinese vice foreign minister as well as members of his delegation and said Pakistan deeply valued its all-weather, strategic, cooperative partnership with China.

Recalling his visit to Beijing for the 3rd Belt and Road Forum in October 2023, he said that he was deeply touched by the warm

sentiments of President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang towards Pakistan. He also conveyed his best wishes for the Chinese leadership.

In addition to Pakistan-China relations, the regional situation also came under discussion during the meeting. The Chinese vice foreign minister thanked the prime minister for the courtesy call and briefed him regarding various meetings held during the visit.

He conveyed special greetings of the Chinese leadership to the prime minister. He said China and Pakistan were "iron-brothers". He assured that China would always remain a reliable partner in Pakistan's socio-economic progress.

Meanwhile Vice Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, Sun Weidong Monday called on Chief of Army Staff

(COAS), General Syed Asim Munir here at General Headquarters and conveyed China's satisfaction on security arrangements for CPEC projects. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, during the meeting matters of mutual interest and measures to further enhance bilateral defence co-operation were discussed. The Chinese Vice Foreign Minister said that Pakistan and China are all-weather strategic partners. He acknowledged Pakistan's efforts towards regional peace and stability.

The COAS thanked the visiting dignitary for his warm remarks and said that relations between Pakistan and China are founded on a common understanding of regional peace, stability and prosperity for the people of both countries.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar exchanging views with Sun Weidong, Vice Foreign Minister of the Peoples Republic of China during meeting held in Islamabad.

Caretaker cabinet approves Rs24 bn to pay post-retirement benefits, salaries to COVID doctors

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar presiding over a cabinet meeting approved Rs24.3 billion to clear pension and gratuity liabilities, payment of salaries to COVID-19 doctors and supporting staff and meet expenditures on the maintenance of law and order during the February 8 general elections. The cabinet meeting was held at CM House and was attended by provincial ministers, Chief Secretary Dr Fakhre Alam, Chairman P&D Shakil Mangnejo, Advocate General Hassan Akbar, Secretary Finance kazim Jatui and other concerned officers.

The cabinet was told that due to financial constraints, the budgetary allocations of pension payments were limited there-

fore pending liabilities and the number of retired civil servants waiting to receive their post-retirement benefits have been continuously on the rise.

The waiting time for retired employees to receive their payments on account of commutation, gratuity and LPR ranges between 12 to 18 months. Given the grievances of retired employees, the Caretaker CM directed the Finance Dept to hold open Katcheries in each district to redress their grievances. During the open Katcheries, most complaints received pertained to long waiting times in receipt of payment on account of commutation, gratuity and LPR after retirement.

At present 19537 retired civil servants waiting to receive their dues amounting

to Rs36.942 billion, including 11657 waiting for Rs30.568 billion Commutation, 733 retired employees waiting for Rs0.973 billion Gratuity and 7147 retired employees waiting for Rs5.5301 billion for LPR after retirement as on 30.11.2023 in respect of all districts across the province.

The chief minister, in the wake of the current backlog of post-retirement benefits amounting to Rs36.842 billion for payment of the Commuted value of Pension, Gratuity and Leave Encashment instead of LPR approved Rs.21.558 billion. This includes Rs.0.973 billion being 100 per cent of pending liabilities under gratuity, Rs.5.301 billion being 100 per cent of pending liabilities under LPR and Rs.15.284 billion.

Bilawal says he only needs one term 'not four' to turn around Pakistan

SAHIWAL (INP): With the election fever reaching its zenith, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said Monday he did not need four but only a one-time government to change the fate of the crisis-hit country.

The PPP chairman — an aspirant for the prime minister's slot — took the veiled dig at Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif, who is taking a fourth shot at power after being granted relief from the judiciary, during a power show in Sahiwal.

Addressing the public meeting, Bilawal said: "I do not want four but one chance. If you give me a chance, I will change the fate of the country and solve all the problems [be-

ing faced by the country]." Referring to the skyrocketing inflation, unemployment, and poverty, the PPP leader claimed that his party was the sole solution to these problems.

"Pakistan is going through a default time," Bilawal said, adding that there was a "division" in the society.

The former foreign minister warned that hostile forces could use the "division" to fulfil their nefarious designs. "I am contesting election to bury the politics of hatred and division."

Recalling his mother and Pakistan's first female elected prime minister Benazir Bhutto — who was assassinated in a suicide bomb blast-cum-gun attack in Rawalpindi on 27 December 2007 — Bilawal said.



MANSEHRA: Quaid PML (N) Muhammad Nawaz Sharif waiving toward crowd during a public meeting in connection with general elections.

Nawaz vows to bring country back on dev. track if voted to power

MANSEHRA (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Sharif on Monday vowed that he would bring back the country on the track of development after his party was voted to power on February 8 along with removing the 10 years long sense of deprivation of people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Addressing a big public gathering in connection of 2024 election, Nawaz said the time had come to restart the development works from where the same were left uncompleted in 2017.

He criticized the poor performance of the party that came into power with the slogan of 'change in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa', which had done nothing for the people of the province during its 10-year rule.

The three times prime minister said putting the country again on the path to progress and prosperity would be a difficult challenge, but the PML-N had the ability to put it on road to progress and development.

Nawaz Sharif said that a network of motorways including Hazara Motorway were built by his government that promoted tourism and opened the entire Hazara Division for investment.

Besides construction of the motorways, he said, load-shedding was eliminated with gas and electricity provided to domestic and industrial consumers at affordable rates. He said that a large number of people were provided jobs during the tenure of last PML-N government.



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori talking with mediemen after visiting Bohri Bazar.

138th birth anniversary of Jamshed Nasserwanji, first elected Mayor of Karachi marked

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab while addressing the occasion of the 138th birth anniversary of Jamshed Nasserwanji, the first elected Mayor of Karachi expressed determination that we are responsible for improving Karachi and will Insha Allah make this city the city of Jamshed Nasserwanji.

He said that Jamshed Nasserwanji Mehta was the first elected Mayor of Karachi and along with Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqbal, people like Jamshed Nasserwanji and Yusuf Haroon are also among our heroes.

The ceremony was organized at the Theosophical Hall M.A Jinnah Road Karachi by the Karachi Theosophical Society. He said that we need to support each other

and give hope to the people to bring improvement in Karachi which is no doubt a great city.

Provincial Education Minister Rana Hussain, Ghazi Salahuddin, Mushtaq Ali Chandani, Dinsha Awari, Dr Masuma Hassan, Miss Patel and others were also present on the occasion. Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that Jamshed Nasserwanji Mehta is called the founder of modern Karachi.

The historical building of KMC head office at M.A Jinnah Road has been named after him due to his great services for the city.

He said that Jamshed Nasserwanji Mehta had a brilliant brain and he worked hard for making Karachi the clean and beautiful city of the region.



SAHIWAL: Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing to public gathering during Election Campaign at Hockey Ground.

Solangi warns of strict action against those targeting SC via social media

Culprits involved in malicious campaign against judiciary to be taken to task, nobody will be victimised

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday said that elements involved in the malicious campaign against the superior judiciary would be taken to task but no group or person would be victimised.

He was addressing a press conference flanked by Director General Pakistan Telecommunication Authority Ahmed Shamim Pirzada and Director General Operations Federal Investigation

Agency Waqar uddin. The minister said that judicial decisions were in the public domain and as per the Constitution and the masses could comment on them.

Condemning the malicious campaign against the superior judiciary and judges on social media, he said that character assassination of someone was a serious violation of the law and the Constitution. He underlined the need to discourage the culture of deceit and intolerance from society.

Care taker PM calls cabinet meeting today

ISLAMABAD (Online): Care taker Prime Minister (PM) Anwaarul Haq Kakar has called federal cabinet meeting today (Tuesday).

According to sources care taker PM will preside over the meeting of federal cabinet taking place today in PM house.

Cabinet will consider the summary for reorganization of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

SIFC has also recommended for elimination of corruption and simplifying tax system. The care taker federal cabinet will review economic situation of the country. Political and economic situation of the country will come under consideration in the country.

Entry of youtubers banned in SC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Guidelines have been issued for court's reporters in connection with entry into Supreme Court (SC).

According to directives issued by SC spokesperson beat reporters from the institutions will be allowed to enter into SC. Cooperation with security staff will be in connection with search process at the time of their entry.

Ban has been imposed on all kind of recording including Youtube program inside SC building. Proper arrangement will be made to show court's proceedings to reporters in court's room who come there in big cases.

Pak-Iran envoys to return by 26 January

ISLAMABAD: Following the telephone conversation between the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, it has been mutually agreed that ambassadors of both countries may return to their respective posts by 26 January 2024. At the invitation of Foreign Minister Jilani Abbas Jilani, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, will undertake a visit to Pakistan on 29 January 2024.

Caretaker Sindh CM, US Ambassador discuss bilateral trade ties

Monitoring Desk
KARACHI: US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome called on Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice retired Maqbool Baqar in Karachi.



The Sindh Chief Minister said on the occasion that the US is helping the provincial government in education, health and nutrition besides restoration of flood affected areas.

Wasi Shah urges proactive role of youth for environmental protection

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Minister of State for Tourism and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs, Syed Wasi Shah on Monday urged youth to actively engage in government's efforts aimed at alleviating impacts of climate change.

He was addressing the closing ceremony of Prime Minister's Green Enovate Conference on liquid and solid Waste Management. The conference was jointly organized by Prime Minister Youth Programme Green Youth Movement (GYM) and

Higher Education Commission Pakistan at IBA University Karachi.

The state minister underscored the need of raising awareness about climate change, its grave implications, measures to subsidize its impacts and engagement of youth for the purpose assured every possible support for the cause of improving the environment.

He hoped that conference will prove a source of inspiration for better and bright future of Pakistan and provide the youth opportunities of moving ahead.



KARACHI: The Caretaker Minister of State for Tourism and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs, Wasi Shah, handing over cheque of the first prize to winner of innovative ideas at the closing ceremony of Prime Minister's Green Enovate Conference on liquid and solid Waste Management at IBA.

Man commits suicide, after killing wife, three children over unemployment

KARACHI (INP): A poverty-stricken unemployed person committed suicide after killing his wife and three minor children here on Monday, police said.

According to SHO Irfan Asif, the incident took place in Falaknaz Apartment near Jinnah International Airport Karachi where a man identified as Ahsan Rizvi gunned down his wife and three children including two sons and a daughter with a 30-bore pistol.

The accused later committed suicide by hanging him to death. A suicide note and pistol were found near the bodies.

The police said that Ahsan Rizvi used to work in the garment sector but was unemployed for a while as his business was shut down and was facing financial issues.

The SSP Malir said that the police confiscated a laptop found in the house for examination.

Security Forces killed seven terrorists in Zhob operation

Independent Report
RAWALPINDI: The security forces on Monday killed at least seven terrorists involved in hostile activities against the armed forces and innocent civilians during a fire exchange that took place during an intelligence-based operation in Sambaza Sector area of Zhob District, near the Pakistan-Afghan border.

According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, the Army troops effectively surrounded and engaged the fleeing terrorists.

The seven killed terrorists remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces as well as the killing of innocent civilians. Arms, ammunition, and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists.

"Sanitization operation is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists present in the area. Security Forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism," the ISPR said.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Asim Munir exchanging views with Sun Weidong, Vice Foreign Minister of the Peoples Republic of China during meeting held at General Headquarters in Rawalpindi.

IGP launches Traffic Ticket Management System

KARACHI (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh Riffat Mukhtar Raja on Monday inaugurated the Traffic Ticketing Management System (TTMS), Traffic Monitoring Cell (TMS) and Traffic Police Cafeteria at the DIGP Traffic Office in Garden, Karachi.

According to a spokesman for Sindh Police, the event featured the disposal of 10,000 pressure horns and non-standard number plates confiscated during a recent traffic campaign.

Accompanied by Additional IGP - Karachi, the IGP Sindh inspected the newly implemented systems

and received a detailed briefing on their functionalities from DIGP Traffic.

A guard of honour welcomed IGP Sindh upon his arrival, followed by a visit to the traffic police memorial for prayers and Fatiha.

In a farewell ceremony for SP Traffic Traffic Central, IGP Sindh acknowledged and commended the retiring officer's dedicated service to the Sindh Police.

Addressing the media, IGP Sindh underscored the importance of an efficient traffic management and regulatory system, prioritizing measures that benefit the public.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Subdued polls

The extent of the damage that has been wrought on the credibility of the upcoming polls is evident in how muted electoral activities have been.

Barely three weeks before the day millions of Pakistanis are expected to head to polling stations to cast votes for parties of their choice, one still cannot tell that a general election is about to take place.

Two of the three major contenders, the PML-N and PPP, have been out canvassing in recent days, yet it seems as if their campaigns are travelling roadshows that pack up and leave with their leaders once the speeches are done and the loud-speakers fall silent.

Among the key leaders, Nawaz Sharif has appeared only briefly before the public for a short address, while Imran Khan remains confined away from the public's eye. Only Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has been travelling from city to city to shore up votes for the PPP.

It is a shame that a nation of 240m seems tuned out of the democratic process. Elections in Pakistan have traditionally been a riot of party colours and blaring anthems, raucous rallies and jumbo jalsas. Despite all the unpleasantness so far, one had still hoped that we would see a celebration of the country's rich social and political diversity as election day neared.

Instead, with the state constantly spoiling the mood with its ongoing, violent crackdown on one of the country's most popular parties, the citizenry is withdrawing from the process and appears comparably less enthusiastic than in previous years.

It also bears mentioning that the youth, who are at the forefront of ground-level campaigns run by parties, appear to be missing from the picture. Many likely do not want to risk the state's wrath, and their rivals have no real competition to fight against.

The weeks leading to elections are usually a busy time for printing presses, which produce the posters, pamphlets, flags, banners and all manner of related election paraphernalia that make Pakistani elections such a colourful affair.

Event management companies and smaller enterprises that rent out tents, chairs and sound systems also see a boost in business as political activities pick up and parties start rallying their supporters. However, anecdotal accounts and media reports corroborate that these industries are experiencing much less than expected demand. Meanwhile, many are turning to outlets that still offer them an opportunity to express themselves creatively and without restrictions. Social media platforms like X and TikTok have become new fronts in the war of political narratives. Given the trend, there are now fears that they, too, may be restricted closer to the polls.

All in all, it is a rather depressing state of affairs, attributable to the ECP's failure to discharge its duties according to their intended spirit.

'Managing' polls

Huma Yusuf

The year 2024 is the year of elections. That means it's also the year of corruption. Around the world, corruption and elections go hand in hand, with research showing that corruption soars in the run-up to polls. In Pakistan, electoral corruption is perceived as necessary to maintaining a perverse form of political stability; a way of 'managing' democracy to ensure that the institutional status quo is not upended. Despite the orchestration of this year's election, there are signs this tactic may be fraying.

Narratives of corruption are inevitably tied up with Pakistan's electoral process. One candidate is cleared of corruption charges, seemingly to come to power, another faces corruption charges to quash his political potential. Ironically, the perversion of justice, intimidation and censorship required to manage the corruption status of political actors are themselves a form of corruption, executed in the name of eradicating that very evil.

In fragile states like ours, corruption is not only the means to an end, but is also believed to contribute to some modicum of ongoing stability. Back-channel corruption in the run-up to elections is a form of consensus-building around one candidate, and is widespread to ensure there are no challenges to the carefully brokered power equation extending across law enforcement, the judiciary, bureaucracy, "electables", the business community, etc.

To be clear, corruption does not take the form of bribery only, though our electoral history is littered with suitcases stuffed with cash. As Transparency Inter-

national puts it, corruption also includes the abuse or manipulation of state resources, which includes court rulings and electoral policies that favour certain candidates, gerrymandering, vote-buying in the context of patronage politics, media gagging, strategic deployment of security forces on election day, and so on.

It is a familiar story. But it is helpful to go further and recast electoral corruption in the context of 'buying the peace'. Peace buying typically occurs in post-conflict situations; for example, after civil wars. In these contexts, peace builders (global institutions and NGOs) buy off violent actors (ethnic militias, organised criminal groups) in exchange for ending the conflict. This can be through outright payment or through soft agreements about which groups can control certain resources (think of ministries being handed to different factions in a post-conflict scenario). This tactic was used by the US in Afghanistan, with that country's ethno-linguistic groups plundering different state coffers and diverting development aid while Washington turned a blind eye.

For earnest peace builders, a bought peace is at best a short-term arrangement during a transition period, with hopes of ultimately shifting incentives and normalising democratic practice. The tactic fails when stakeholders perceive they are not benefiting equally. Those grievances descend into conflict because the affected group has lost the incentive to remain non-violent.

Applying this frame to Pakistan's poll landscape is helpful. For decades, electoral corruption has worked because all elite stakeholders have benefited from the system. Even those who

lose out in one election bide their time knowing they will enjoy favours the next time polling occurs.

But one key stakeholder has historically been sidelined in these negotiations: the public. At most, they are seen as recipients of patronage — transactional service delivery in exchange for complicity — doled out in the form of subsidies, patchy infrastructure development, tolerance for tax evasion. However, in times of economic and climate crises, resources for distribution through patronage are increasingly scarce. Corruption is breeding competition, not consensus; grievances are mounting.

We can see this in protests across the country: Baloch women demanding the return of their disappeared loved ones, hundreds demanding wheat subsidies in Gilgit-Baltistan, traders protesting in Chaman, fisherfolk rising against Chinese trawlers along the coastline, farmers unionising in Okara, city dwellers burning soaring electricity bills on the streets. It is getting harder to buy the peace now that the public is demanding its share.

It is only by recognising that old tactics cannot work and genuinely transitioning to inclusive democracy that Pakistan can move forward. It seems elections will take place this year, and all is likely to go to plan. A 2016 study by Stefan Dahlberg and Maria Solevid found that voter turnout is not materially affected by perceptions of corruption, particularly where vote-buying is rampant. The day after polls, it may seem as if all is in control, the status quo well preserved. But we should all beware what comes after. -- Courtesy Dawn

Al Shabaab threat

Mohammad Ali Babakhel

Al Shabaab ('the youth') is Al Qaeda's subsidiary in East Africa. It is active in much of southern Somalia and a few pockets in Kenya and Ethiopia. Since 2007, Al Shabaab has been fighting the Somali government and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia. It is believed to be responsible for a surge in attacks since the 2022 re-election of Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who has declared an "all-out war" on Al-Shabaab.

Al-Itihad al-Islami, Al-Shabaab's predecessor, was the incubator for many of its leaders. A younger, hard-line group later split from the elder AIAl, wanting to establish a 'Greater Somalia' ruled under the Sharia. This younger group joined forces with the Islamic Courts Union. In 2006, US-backed Ethiopian forces invaded Somalia and pushed the ICU out of the capital. The majority of ICU fighters fled to neighbouring countries, but others retreated southwards, re-emerging later as a guerrilla group against the Ethiopian forces and seizing territory in central and southern Somalia. By 2008, Al Shabaab had grown from a small-sized group to an organisation of about 9,000.

Al Shabaab developed ties with Al Qaeda in 2008, but formally pledged allegiance in 2012. Onwards, it carried out a few high-profile violent attacks in Somalia's neighbouring countries, including the September 2013 Westgate Mall attacks in Nairobi, in which 68 people were killed, and the Garissa University attack in April 2015, resulting in 148 deaths. In October 2017, Al

Shabaab carried out another deadly truck attack on the busiest intersection of Mogadishu, resulting in 587 deaths. Owing to its capability for lethal attacks, it has been described by the media as the deadliest terror group in Africa.

Al Shabaab dreams of a fundamentalist Islamic state which would include Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya, and Ethiopia. According to its narrative, democracy is a religion for non-Muslims, hence it must be opposed and rejected. It recruits online and attracts youth from Somalia and Kenya. In 2017, the UN secretary general stated that over half of Al Shabaab's fighters may be children, reflecting the group's strategy to replace ageing fighters with younger 'talent'. It is to Al Shabaab's benefit that the majority of fighters are ethnic Somali and from the Sunni sect, which lets it take advantage of both Somalia's nationalism and religion.

Its pledge of allegiance brought Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Al Shabaab closer. The US became their common enemy. Proximity to Al Qaeda provided an opportunity for Al Shabaab to be trained in Afghanistan. Some master trainers moved to Somalia and trained Al Shabaab fighters. Both collaborated on matters ranging from indoctrination and basic infantry skills, to making IEDs, conducting suicide bombings, taking hostages, and assassinations. During this partnership, Al Shabaab also developed skills to use laptop explosives and car bombs.

The group collects tax on transport vehicles and constructs dispensaries in areas under its control. To prove it is environment-friendly, plastic bags have been banned. It encourages feedback from citizens

by placing complaint boxes outside offices to improve administration within its controlled areas. By distributing food, banning drugs, and reducing crime, the group tries to project itself as a welfare organisation to win public trust. Listening to music or shaving beards is also prohibited in areas under its control.

Since its inception, Al Shabaab has been dependent on multiple sources of funding, which includes support from the Somali diaspora. After seizing the port city of Kismayo in 2008, the group earned a hefty amount from exports of charcoal. To dry up this source of income, the UN banned charcoal exports from Somalia in 2012. Reportedly, Al Shabaab also made its expenditure from investments in gold. According to the UN, Al Shabaab has generated up to \$100 million a year from different sources, including fees levied at ports of entry, taxes on goods, checkpoint fees, and extortion.

According to the Global Terrorism Index 2022, 315 attacks that resulted in 784 deaths made Al Shabaab the second-deadliest group in the world.

The deaths attributed to it in Somalia increased by 23 per cent, and the highest proportion of its attacks were directed against the military, followed by civilians. Al Shabaab was held responsible for 97pc (733 deaths) of all terror-related deaths in 2022.

The war against Al Shabaab has dragged on for 17 years. History and ground realities suggest that it cannot be defeated with kinetic options alone. The Somali government needs to explore peaceful options, including negotiations; but the real question is whether Al Shabaab is interested in talks. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Shamshad Akhtar, WB Country Director discuss financing operations in Pak

ISLAMABAD (APP): Income Support Programme (BISP), said a news release here.

The program aims to support the development of a more adaptive social protection system that will contribute to any future crisis resilience among poor and vulnerable households. The second WB-funded operation includes Pakistan: "Resilient and Accessible Microfinance (RAM) Program" worth US\$175.0 million to help enhance access to microcredit and support the resilience of the microfinance sector and its borrowers.

Considering the importance of interventions planned under the CRISP program, Dr Shamshad Akhtar gave go-ahead signal to engage the World Bank additional financing of US\$250 million for the program in principle.

She, however, desired to convene another meeting next week to formalize the program contours. She also desired to invite the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and Security and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) in the next meeting to finalize the program modalities.

PSX turns to bullish trend, gains 657 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Monday, gaining 657.19 points, a positive change of 1.04 percent, closing at 63,939.41 points against 63,282.23 points the previous trading day.

A total of 298,699,061 shares valuing Rs.12,515 billion were traded during the day as compared to 287,310,860 shares valuing Rs.9,320 billion the last day.

Some 335 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 140 of them recorded gains and 171 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 24 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Ltd with 97,700,790 shares at Rs.5.57 per share, Pak Petroleum with 23,338,496 shares at Rs.131.01 per share and PIAC(A) with 21,105,500 shares at Rs.12.07 per share. Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.70.00 per share price, closing at Rs.8,270.00, whereas the runner-up was Mari Petroleum Company Limited with its per share price to Rs.2,428.65.



DOHA : SAPM, Jawad Sohrab Malik signs agreements with Qatar's top companies.

Pak-Qatar agreements to boost job prospects, SAPM meets separately with Qatari Ministers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (SAPM OP&HRD), Jawad Sohrab Malik, led a successful official visit to Qatar, culminating in the signing of several Agreements & Letter's of Intent (LOIs) with top Qatari companies intended to significantly enhance employment opportunities for the Pakistani workforce in Qatar. The signing of these agreements with renowned Qatari firms, including

Qatari Diyar-Saudi Bin Laden Group Construction (QD-SBG), Hamad Bin Khaled Contracting Company W.L.L (HBK), Ali Bin Ali Holding W.L.L., Sheikh Jabor Bin Mansour Bin Jabor Bin Jassim Al Thani (JM) Holding, Tabeeb Care Medical Services, and Al Rawnaq International Commercial Projects, marks a crucial step in strengthening bilateral relations between Pakistan and Qatar in the field of human resource development, a news release said.

In addition to these agreements, the Special

Assistant to the Prime Minister, Jawad Sohrab Malik held a significant meeting with Hamad Saleh Al Qamra, Chairman of Al Qamra Holding, focusing on the recruitment of Pakistani manpower for various company projects. The visit also included a tour of the View Hospital, a part of Elegancia Health Care, where the recruitment of Pakistani health professionals is underway following a recent MoU between Elegancia Health Care and the Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) of Pakistan.

Wheat cultivation grew by 7 % during current Rabi season

ISLAMABAD (INP): Owing to the incentives introduced by the government, wheat sowing in the country during the current season (Rabi 2023-24) increased by 7.5 per cent as compared to the crop sowing of the corresponding period of the last year.

During the period under review, wheat sowing had been completed over 23.69 million acres as against the set targets of 22.22 million acres, said Food Security Commissioner In the Ministry of National Food Security and Research Imtiaz Ali Gopang.

The wheat crop has been sown across more than 23.69 million acres of land in various crop-growing regions during the current season to meet local staple food requirements and maintain strategic reserves throughout the year, he told APP here on Monday.

The wheat cultivation targets fixed for the period under review were achieved by 107 per cent as crop sowing in two major grain-producing provinces Sindh and Punjab gained momentum as both the provinces surpassed their assigned targets for the current season, he added.



SARGODHA: Vendors displaying old shoes to attract the customers at his roadside setup.

SCCI chief demands compensation for affected traders' of Saddar fire

PESHAWAR (APP): Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president, Fuad Ishaq was highly saddened over the horrific fire that broke out at Peshawar's Time Centre and demanded that the provincial government immediately announce compensation for the affected traders' community.

In a joint statement issued here on Monday, Fuad Ishaq, president, Sanallah Khan, senior vice president and Ijaz Khan Afridi, vice president of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and members of the chamber's executive committee said that this

horrific fire in Time Centre Peshawar quickly engulfed 200 shops and small counters of mobiles, accessories and batteries, which completely gutted.

They expressed high grief and sorrow over monetary loss, worth millions of rupees to the trader's community and asked the present interim provincial government to immediately announce special financial assistance.

The SCCI chief Fuad Ishaq and members of his cabinet praised the efforts of rescue teams of Pak-Army, Air Force, Cantonment Board and Rescue 1122 in timely conducting operations.



FAISALABAD: Farmers are busy harvesting radish crop at their field.

Trade and Investment Officers' delegation visits FPCCI

Independent Report LAHORE: A 40-member delegation of newly appointed Trade and Investment Officers (TIOs) visited Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Regional Office here Monday.

Sharing his views regarding the ways and means to enhance country's exports with the TIOs, the FPCCI Regional Chairman and Vice President Zaki Ejaz said that in order to increase Pakistan's exports, the Trade and Investment Officers should play their role in organizing joint ventures, business-to-business meetings, exchange of trade

delegations and single country exhibitions between the Pakistani business community and other countries, besides ensuring timely sharing of information on required certification and value addition with the respective exporters. He suggested that TIOs should also provide quarterly trade data including Pakistan's imports/exports with other countries of the world, arguing that it would enable the Pakistani business community to take advantage of the available trade opportunities by introducing new products and technologies there. Zaki Ejaz added that business community,

Exports increase by 35.33% to Rs 4.3 trillion in 1st half

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports from the country in the rupee term witnessed an increase of 35.33 per cent during the first half of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

Exports during July-December (2023-24) were recorded at Rs.4,300,752 million as against Rs.3,177,893 million during the corresponding period of last year, showing an increase of 35.33 per cent, according to the provisional data released by PBS.

On a year-on-year basis,

the exports during December 2023 increased by 54.59 per cent and were recorded at Rs.799,588 million compared to the exports of Rs.517,240 million in October 2022.

On a month-on-month basis, the exports increased by 8.86 per cent when compared to the exports of Rs. 734,541 million in November 2023. The main commodities of exports during December, 2023 were rice other than Basmati (Rs.124,040 million), knitwear (Rs. 103,898 million), readymade garments (Rs. 84,569 million), bed wear (Rs. 64,119 million).

Gold rates dip by Rs.600

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.600 and was sold at Rs. 215,700 on Monday compared to its sale at Rs. 215,300 on last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs. 514 to Rs. 184,071 from Rs. 184,585 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.169,731 from Rs.169,203, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram Silver remained stagnant at Rs. 2,600 and Rs. 2,229.08 respectively.

Govt committed to support pharma sector: Nadeem Jan

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan has emphasized the government's proactive efforts to enhance support for the pharmaceutical industry, marking the commencement of a new phase with the establishment of a Pharma Park in Pakistan.

Addressing the ground breaking ceremony of two pharma units of Zenith Group of Companies at Sundar Industrial Estate, here on Monday, he expressed optimism that the production from these units would significantly elevate the country's exports, underlining the government's steadfast commitment to prioritizing and enhancing export-driven initiatives.

Dr. Nadeem Jan highlighted the initiation of a new era with the Pharma Park in Pakistan, emphasizing that these units are set to commence Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) production within the next six months. He articulated that these initiatives aim to bolster local production, ensuring a steady supply of essential ingredients for pharmaceuticals within the country.

The minister emphasized that local production is poised to not only fulfill the country's needs but also drive exports, anticipating a reduction in medicine prices. He highlighted the government's comprehensive strategy to enhance the permanent supply of medicines,

emphasizing the imperative to boost the productive efficiency of pharmaceutical units through the adoption of modern technologies.

Dr. Nadeem Jan affirmed that, in line with the government's promotion policy, manufacturers of APIs are receiving support through avenues such as accessible loans, tax concessions, and technical assistance. He expressed confidence that this policy commitment would significantly elevate the country's pharmaceutical industry.

He expressed his anticipation of inaugurating similar pharmaceutical development projects in Karachi in the coming days, as part of the Pharma Park initiative.



PESHAWAR: Chairperson, National Commission on Status of Women presenting shield to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam during a function organized by the National Commission on Status of Women.

Women's socioeconomic development guarantee for country progress: Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Monday said that the share of women in Pakistan was about 52 percent in the country's population and their socioeconomic development was guaranteed for speedy progress and prosperity of the nation.

Addressing a function organized by the National Commission on Status of Women held at a local hotel here as a chief guest, the Governor said the increase

of girls students compared to boys students in educational institutions of KP was a solid proof of women's education development.

The Governor said the status of women in Islam was very high, adding our religion has given the right of property to them and nobody could change it.

Haji Ghulam Ali said that women were given highest respect by our society being a mother, sister, wife and daughter and

it was the responsibility of the government to ensure provision of all rights to them.

He said close liaison with politicians for enactment of legislation for protection of rights of women was imperative for safeguarding their rights legally and constitutionally. The governor assured full support to the national commission on status of women for progress, autonomy and development of women besides other organizations in this regard.

Traders announce to support JUI-F candidate in elections on PK-113

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): A traders union has announced support for Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl-u-rehman (JUI-F) candidate for provincial assembly seat PK-113 in the upcoming general elections scheduled to be held on February 08, 2024.

The Markazi Anjuman Tajran made this announcement during a public meeting held here at a local hotel and vowed to support the JUI-F candidate for PK-113 Kafeel Ahmad Nizami besides running door to

door campaign for him.

The JUI-F candidate for PK-113 Kafeel Ahmad Nizami was the chief guest of the event which was also attended by Markazi Anjuman Tajran President Sohail Ahmad Azmi and other renowned traders including Chaudhry Jameel Ahmed, Haji Muhammad Ramzan, Javed Akhtar, Muhammad Saeed, Janabat Khan Mehsud, Naeem Qureshi, Sher Muhammad Mehsud, Haji Muhammad Khalid, Haji Tahir Sharif, Amjad Karim, Muhammad Sohail and others.

LDA demolishes illegal constructions

LAHORE (APP): On directions of Commissioner Lahore and DG LDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa, LDA teams demolished and sealed more than a dozen illegal constructions and commercial buildings in Johar Town, BOR Society, Wapda Town, Lahore Avenue and OPF Housing schemes on Monday.

During the operation LDA teams took action against Plot No. 25 A, 25 B in BOR Society and 19E in Rahman Society. An operation was conducted against Plot No. 337 Block E, 154 Block E One in Johar Town, Plot No. 71 in Wapda town and Plot.

Kristin Hawkins praises Naqvi's work ethics

LAHORE (APP): The United States (US) Consul General to Lahore Kristin K. Hawkins has praised work ethics, hard work and dynamism of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi. In a meeting with the Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi at the latter's office here on Monday, Ms. Hawkins lauded the people friendly initiatives of Mohsin Naqvi, adding that Mohsin Naqvi's omnipresence is felt everywhere and all are awed by his work and dedication to service.

Hailing the caretaker provincial cabinet, she said the caretaker government

under the dynamic leadership of Mohsin Naqvi has set new standards of public service, adding that he is seen working round the clock. Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, speaking on the occasion, said that the Punjab government wishes to benefit from the expertise of the Americans in the agriculture sector especially in the methods to get more wheat yield.

He further said that Punjab government wishes to undertake town house projects like California, adding that it is also interested in affiliation of local educational institutions with California.

5420 Itr illegal Diesel seized in DI Khan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): The district police have recovered 5420 litres of Diesel during the ongoing crackdown against illegal fuel agencies across the district, said a police spokesman on Monday.

He said that a crackdown was launched against illegal fuel agencies across the district following the directions of District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani.

During different operations conducted in this regard, the police recovered 5420 litres of illegal Diesel.



LARKANA: Regional Director Colleges Larkana Region, Professor Bashir Ahmed Rajpar presides over the meeting regarding 6th Sindh College Games 2024, at his office in Larkana.

CM inspects Band Road project, directs early completion

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has intensified efforts to ensure the timely completion of the "Controlled Access Corridor Band Road Project".

The Chief Minister conducted a comprehensive inspection of the project, spanning 8 kilometres. Assessing various locations, he noted that 55 percent of Package 2 (Babu Sabu to Sagian) and 74 percent of Package One (Sagian to Niazi Chowk) have been successfully executed.

During the inspection, Chief Minister Naqvi

closely monitored the ongoing work on Package Two and Package One, emphasizing the need to expedite the construction process. He specifically directed the acceleration of Package Two's progress, urging the deployment of additional labor for prompt completion. Chief Minister Naqvi directed the completion of asphalt work on both packages by the first week of February, emphasizing the utilization of all available resources to open the corridor for traffic.

Chairing a meeting at the Sagian site office, Mohsin Naqvi received a detailed briefing on the project's status.



LAHORE: Leader of Pakistan People's Party Sharjeel Inam Memon addressing a press conference in Provincial Capital.

Sindh wins title of 2nd Essa lab Sindh-Balochistan bilateral men softball series in style

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh men's softball team won the title of the 2nd Essa Laboratories Sindh Balochistan bilateral softball series in style.

In the third and decisive match of the series played at the KMC Sports Complex Kashmir Road, Sindh scored 10 runs in their allotted 5 innings. Faraz Aijaz, Samir Zulfiqar and Arbaza Ijaz scored 2 runs each. Balochistan team managed to score 5 runs in five innings. Captain Ahmed Yar Khan and Osama bin Shuja scored 2 runs.

Sindh won the series

2-1 in style. In the prize distribution ceremony, chief guest Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Saleem Rajput along with Sindh Softball Association President Dr. Farhan Essa and Secretary General of Softball Federation of Pakistan Asif Azeem distributed trophies, awards and certificates to the players of both teams.

Shiraz Asif was the best catcher of the series, Osama bin Shuja, was the best batter, Faraz Ijaz, the pitcher and Hafiz Moez were declared the best fielder of the event.

International News

Israeli plan to destroy Hamas not working, peace talks needed - EU's Borrell

BRUSSELS (Internews): Israel's plan to destroy Islamist Palestinian group Hamas in Gaza is not working and the European Union must pursue efforts to create a "two-state solution" despite Israeli opposition, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Monday.

Israeli Prime Minister had on Sunday reaffirmed a hard line against any Palestinian state as it would pose "an existential danger" to Israel. He said Israel would keep insisting on full security control over all territory west of the Jordan River, which would include Gaza and the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Borrell spoke at the monthly gathering of EU foreign ministers, attended this time by counterparts from Saudi Arabia, Egypt

and Jordan and the Arab League secretary-general. The talks will focus mainly on the consequences of Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel and Israel's retaliatory offensive in Gaza. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz and Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki were making separate appearances at the meeting, which was also taking stock of the war in Ukraine.

Alluding to Israel's stated objective of annihilating Hamas in its devastating three-month-old war in the Gaza Strip, Borrell told reporters: "What are the other solutions they have in mind. Make all the Palestinians leave? Kill all of them? The way they are destroying Hamas is not the way to do it. They are sealing the hate for generations."

Borrell said he wanted to press ahead with international efforts to create a process that would lead to a Palestinian state co-existing alongside Israel. The last talks to that end collapsed a decade ago amid mutual mistrust and intransigence.

Israel's massive aerial and ground offensive in small, densely populated Gaza has killed more than 25,000 Palestinians, according to Hamas-run enclave's health authorities, flattened built-up areas and left most of its 2.3 million people homeless.

Israel has said the war could go on for "many months" and it would not rest until Hamas was eradicated, all Israeli hostages freed and the Gaza Strip posed no more security threat.



Displaced Palestinians use a donkey cart for transportation at a camp in Rafah near the border with Egypt in the southern Gaza Strip.

Dozens buried, 8 killed in southwest China landslide

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: Dozens of people were buried and eight confirmed killed when a landslide struck a remote and mountainous part of southwestern China on Monday.

The pre-dawn landslide buried 18 homes and sparked the evacuation of more than 200 people when it struck in Zhenxiang County, Yunnan province, state media said.

Eight people are confirmed dead and rescuers have extracted four, according to a report by state broadcaster CCTV at around 5:30pm (0930 GMT), though the condition of the four was not immediately clear.

Two hundred rescue workers have been dispatched as well as dozens of fire engines and other equipment, CCTV said.

Protesters call for change to Netanyahu government

Monitoring Desk
TEL AVIV: Thousands of Israelis gathered in Tel Aviv to protest against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, accusing the veteran leader of mishandling the nation's security and calling for a new election.

Anti-government protests that shook the nation for much of 2023 ceased after the attacks by Hamas in southern Israel on Oct 7. Political rifts were set aside as Israelis rallied behind the military and the families of those killed or taken hostage.

But with the devastating war in Gaza in its fourth month and opinion polls showing lagging support for Netanyahu, calls for leadership changes are growing stronger, though there is no indication that his position is under any imminent threat.

This was reflected in Saturday night's turnout in a central Tel Aviv square where many of last year's protests took place.



Liberia's president-elect Joseph Boakai, who defeated President George Weah in a runoff election gives a speech after he was sworn in as president during the inauguration ceremony in Monrovia, Liberia.

Gaza deaths top 25,000 as Israel pushes offensive

Monitoring Desk
GAZA STRIP: Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry on Sunday said the death toll in the war-torn Palestinian territory breached 25,000 as Israel pushed its southward offensive and renewed bombardment in the north. Israel is pressing its push against Hamas in southern Gaza as it seeks to destroy the group responsible for the deadliest attack in the country's history. In early January, Israel's military said the

Hamas command structure in northern Gaza had been dismantled, leaving only isolated fighters.

But witnesses told AFP that Israeli boats were bombarding Gaza City and other areas in the north early Sunday. Hamas has also reported heavy combat in the north. "Dozens are still under the rubble," the Hamas government's media office said, adding that the dead and injured "could not be transferred to hospitals due to the continued artillery shelling on.

US Navy declares two SEALs missing in Gulf of Aden as deceased

FLORIDA (INP): Two U.S. Navy SEALs who went missing in the Gulf of Aden earlier this month during a raid on a boat carrying Iranian weapons have not been located following an exhaustive search and their status has been changed to deceased, military officials said on Sunday.

The SEALs were reported missing after boarding the vessel in a Jan. 11 operation near the coast of Somalia, the U.S. Central Command said on X.

UK taking election threats 'very seriously'

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: The UK is taking threats of foreign interference elections expected later this year "very seriously", the defence minister said on Sunday, after a warning from a counter-terrorism official. "Obviously, that's something that we take very seriously," Shapps told the Sky News channel.

Counter-terrorism bodies and other institutions would "be looking very carefully at that", he said.

Strike on busy market kills 25 in eastern Ukraine

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: A strike on a crowded market in the Russian-occupied city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine left at least 25 people dead and 20 wounded on Sunday, Moscow-backed officials said.

Both Moscow and Kyiv have accused each other of a sharp escalation in attacks on civilian areas in the past two months. Shattered storefronts and broken glass could be seen in videos shared by Russian state media, along with what appeared to be bodies lying on the ground nearby.

"At the moment, information about 25 dead has been confirmed. At least 20 more people have been injured," said Denis Pushilin, head of the region's Russian-controlled administration.

western suburb of the city, less than 15 kilometres from the eastern front. Local resident Tatiana said she heard an incoming projectile overhead, and hid under her market stall.

"I saw smoke, people screamed, a woman was crying," she told a local media outlet.

"Where is there anything military here? It's just a market," another resident named Tatiana told the same outlet. "This is one of the strongest blows in recent times," she said.

The toll marks one of the deadliest in Donetsk since Moscow launched full-scale hostilities against Ukraine in February 2022. Donetsk, occupied by Russia and its proxy forces since 2014, has been repeatedly targeted by what Moscow has called indiscriminate Ukrainian shelling. Moscow called Sunday's attack a "barbaric terrorist attack" that showed the need for its "special military operation" in Ukraine.

Germans protest against 'mass deportation' plan of far right

Monitoring Desk
MUNICH: Tens of thousands gathered across Germany again on Sunday to protest the far-right AfD, after it emerged that party members discussed mass deportation plans at a meeting of extremists.

The influx of demonstrators was so large in Munich that organisers were forced to cancel a planned march and ask people to disperse for safety reasons. Organisers said some 50,000 people had turned up to the demonstration, twice as many as were registered for the event. An earlier estimate announced to the crowd had put the figure at 200,000, according to a journalist. Police estimated a figure somewhere in the middle, around 100,000, according to the German daily Sueddeutsche

Zeitung. Those who made it to the site of the planned protest carried signs saying "Nazis out" and "never again is now".

Some 250,000 people had already gathered in cities across the country on Saturday, according to AfD estimates. Demonstrations were called in some 100 locations across Germany from Friday through the weekend, including in Munich, Berlin and cities in the east of the country where the AfD has its strongholds.

The wave of mobilisation against the far-right party was sparked by a Jan 10 report by investigative outlet Correctiv, which revealed that AfD members had discussed the expulsion of immigrants and "non-assimilated citizens" at a meeting with extremists.

Pakistan, China for enhanced cooperation in IT, agriculture, HR development

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and China on Monday reiterated their desire for enhanced cooperation in the areas of economy, information technology, agriculture, and human resource development for the mutual benefit of the two friendly countries.

This was discussed in a meeting between the visiting Vice Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China Sun Weidong, who along with his delegation called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong, was also present during the meeting, a President House press release said.

Welcoming the delegation, the president said that China was a very dear friend that had always supported Pakistan during difficult times.

He highlighted that CPEC projects had contributed to the economic development of Pakistan, be-

sides helping meet its energy needs.

The president stated that Pakistan was fully committed to the high-quality development of CPEC, adding that the Chinese support in the next phase of CPEC would be crucial for Pakistan's industrial development.

He remarked that economic cooperation between the two friendly countries would further cement bilateral ties. He appreciated the Chinese support in stabilising Pakistan's economy.

The president said that Pakistan wanted to learn from the Chinese experience in IT, education, health, agriculture, and poverty alleviation for its socio-economic development.

He remarked that Pakistan and China held similar views on various regional and international issues and cooperated at different fora.

He reiterated that Pa-

kistan would continue to support China on all core issues, including the "One China" Policy, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, Xinjiang, and the South China Sea.

He said that Pakistan was grateful to China for supporting Pakistan's national development and its principled stance on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

The visiting Vice Foreign Minister of China said that Pakistan and China had a long history of friendly relations which would continue to grow stronger.

He said that CPEC had yielded fruitful results and that both countries had huge potential for increasing cooperation in various fields.

He also thanked the president for visiting China during the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, saying that his support to express solidarity with China would always be remembered.



ISLAMABAD: President, Dr. Arif Alvi exchanging views with Sun Weidong, Vice Foreign Minister of the Peoples Republic of China during meeting held at Aiwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad.

FM Jilani, Chinese Vice FM discuss bilateral ties

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani Abbas Jilani and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong on Monday here reaffirmed the All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership and held an in-depth discussion on the entire gamut of bilateral relations including CPEC and bilateral economic and financial cooperation.

The Foreign Minister appreciated the contributions of the Chinese Vice Foreign Minister in deepening Pakistan-China friendship and commended China's unflinching support to Pakistan on all issues.

Expressing satisfac-

tion at the steady development of CPEC, Foreign Minister Jilani emphasized the significance of CPEC for Pakistan. He said that Pakistan would continue making efforts for the realization of CPEC's full potential for shared benefits. He appreciated China's readiness and support for all CPEC projects in Pakistan.

Thanking the Foreign Minister for the generous hospitality, Vice Foreign Minister Sun highlighted that as iron brother and a reliable friend, China accorded immense importance to Pakistan in its foreign policy and looked forward to even deeper cooperation in all fields.

Pak-Belarus inter-govt commission on defence meets at MoDP

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Pakistan and Belarus "Inter-Governmental Commission on Military and Technical Cooperation", established since 2015, met at the Ministry of Defence Production on Monday.

Three sessions of the Commission have been conducted so far, including the last held in Minsk, Belarus in April, 2021, while the fourth one was being held in Pakistan from January 22-24, a news release said.

Rassalalai Viachaslau, Deputy Minister SAMI, is heading the Belarus delegation while the Pakistan side is led by Secretary Defence Production Lt Gen Humayun Aziz.

During the meeting, progress on previous agenda points was reviewed. Both sides agreed that there exists a potential for Pakistan and Belarus to increase their collaboration in the relevant areas of mutual interest.



A Belarus delegation headed by Mr. Rassalalai Viachaslau, Deputy Minister SAMI, held a meeting in Ministry of Defence Production with Pakistan delegation headed by Secretary Defence Production, Lt Gen (Retd) Humayun Aziz HI (M).

KE directed to resolve public complaints, pending cases

KARACHI (APP): The Regional Office of Wafaqi Mohtasib Karachi on Monday directed K-Electric to properly activate its Integrated Business Centres (IBCs) to resolve complaints of the general public.

The Senior Advisor, Regional Office of Wafaqi Mohtasib Karachi, Syed Anwar Haider in a meeting with the K-Electric Executive Director, Director and senior officers while reviewing the implementation of orders of Wafaqi Mohtasib and complaints of the general public at the Regional office, said that KE must activate IBCs to provide relief

to its customers. He said that approximately 100 cases were pending with the power entity and those needed implementation.

While stressing the need for implementation reports by KE, he said that the reports could be shared with the regional mohtasib office through an online system.

He said that KE customers faced problems, which must be resolved.

KE representatives on the occasion, assured the Senior Advisor of their full cooperation in resolving the problems of the people and appreciated the efforts of the regional office of wafaqi mohtasib in this regard.

Bilawal grieves over death of PEMRA chairman's brother

KARACHI (APP): The Chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has expressed his grief and sorrow over the death of PEMRA Chairman Mohammed Saleem Baig's brother.

In a condolence message on Monday, he condoled with Mohammad Saleem on the death of his brother Zafar Baig. He also prayed for the departed soul.

IGP commits support for special children's sports initiatives

KARACHI (APP): A four-member delegation, led by Pakistan Blind Sports Association President Waqas and Punjab Blind Sports Association President Usman Saeed, met with IGP Sindh Riffat Mukhtar Raja at the Central Police Office (CPO) Karachi.

The meeting extensively discussed the engagement of special children in sports activities and the importance of fostering their participation, said a news release on Monday.

The delegation conveyed to IGP Sindh their association's plan to conduct sports events for special children in Karachi in the near future, seeking support and encouragement.

Pak foreign policy played crucial role in defusing tension with Iran: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday said the foreign policy pursued by Pakistan post-January 16 had played a crucial role in de-escalating the tension with Iran.

The minister, in an interview with a Turkish broadcaster, TRT, the minister said that the whole region was concerned by tension between Pakistan and Iran that had significantly been reduced.

He said Pakistan's leadership had overcome the issue to a greater extent, and lauded the constructive role played by brotherly countries, including Turkey and China, for defusing the tension.

He said Pakistan greatly valued Turkey's goodwill for it and its people. Both countries enjoyed all-weather relations that were a "precious asset of Pakistan".

The minister said the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), which was the only institution en-

trusted with holding free, fair and transparent elections, had been fulfilling its responsibilities efficiently.

He said the caretaker government, born out of a constitutional process, was performing its duties under a legal cover. It would extend all-out support to the ECP for holding the elections, he added.

To a question, the minister said that it was a political culture that some political parties were airing complaints regarding the level-playing field.

There was no restriction on politics in the country and measures were taken to ensure a level-playing field for political parties, he emphasized.

Solangi said that the caretaker government had no favourites and none of the family members of its ministers was taking part in the elections.

Solangi said at present, the printing of ballot papers was underway while postal ballots were being dispatched, however, a lot remained to be done till the election day.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi addressing a press conference along with the officials of Pakistan Telecommunication Authority and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) at PTV Headquarters.

Inflation makes common man's life extremely miserable: Mian Zahid

KARACHI (INP): Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, President All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain HAS said that the continued high inflation has made the life of common man extremely miserable.

Talking to business community on Monday, he claimed that it was incorrect to attribute the inflation to the IMF's requirements because numerous state-run businesses were partly to blame for the current state of affairs.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that we should take responsibility for our own economic shortcomings as they were the cause of the lender's strict requirements. The electricity, gas, and oil prices have increased tremendously, he said adding at the same

time, interest rates were also raised to a record level of 22%, which badly affected people and the business community.

However, these measures improved the country's financial affairs, which were on the verge, he added.

The business leader said that the government should have taken some steps to relieve the commoner, but this did not happen.

Indirect taxation was also a problem for the man on the street, he said and added that the share of these direct taxes in total revenue is still between 75 and 80 percent.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the indirect tax was easy to collect but increases inflation and poverty, while collecting direct tax was difficult but does not affect people experiencing poverty.



JAMSHORO: VC LUMHS Prof, Dr Ikram Din Ujjan addressing during day one ceremony / Orientation day 2023, 2024 at LUMHS.

Rs. 1.5 million looted from cattle traders

Independent Report

MIRPUR MATHELO: In Mirpur Matheho, robbery of Rs. 15 lakhs from cattle traders in broad daylight, two motorcycles were stolen and escaped, injured on resistance.

They stopped the cattle traders Didar Hussain Korai and Ghulam Hussain Korai and robbed them of Rs.15 lakh. Both the injured were immediately

shifted to DHQ Hospital Mirpur Matheho.

Hundreds of people protested outside SSP Ghotki's office against this incident. He said that the police of District Ghotki has completely failed to establish law and order due to which thefts and dacoities have become a daily routine due to which the citizens have become insecure.

Two-day workshop on "Science Communication, Diplomacy in Agriculture" begins at SAU

HYDERABAD (APP): A two-day training workshop on "Science Communication and Diplomacy in Agriculture" in collaboration with OIC-COMSTEC hosted by the Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) Tondojam began on Monday.

Speaking at the opening ceremony experts and researchers said that it is very important to convey science simply and attractively because the role of science has become very important in the present

era, and we cannot deviate from the fact that the progress of science and research has brought great changes in life in the last century.

The SAU vice-chancellor Dr. Fateh Mari expressed that the present time is the era of artificial intelligence, inventions and competition of ideas, and our life is incomplete without science. He emphasized that youth should expand scientific activities so that they could walk side by side with the world.



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori being briefed by Chairman Karachi Intermediate Board during his visit to board office.

MQM-P organises election rally at Bagh-i-Jinnah

KARACHI (APP): The Muttahida Qaumi Movement- Pakistan (MQM-P) has organized a public meeting here at Bagh-i-Jinnah on Sunday night and vowed that the people of the mega city have decided in favour of MQM by warmly participating in our Jalsa.

Addressing the election rally, MQM Pakistan's Convenor Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui criticized the PPP for allegedly neglecting the urban areas of Sindh.

While addressing Bilawal Bhutto- Zardari, Dr

Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said that the PPP Chairman should stop dreaming

of becoming the prime minister as they will also take away the chief minister's chair from the People's Party.

In the election of February 8, the opponents will be defeated in Karachi, Hyderabad and other districts of the province as the people have woken up, Dr Siddiqui said and claimed that with the support of allied parties not only in cities but from the village's PPP will be washed out.

PPP committed to public welfare: Kundi

DI KHAN (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Information Secretary Faisal Karim Kundi pledged that the PPP is committed to the public welfare. Talking to a private news channel, he declared PPP's 10-point election manifesto as a public welfare agenda.

He said that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari was appearing in the people's court with his party's manifesto. He said Bilawal's 10-point manifesto was the public welfare manifesto.

PPP's election manifesto reflects the party's focus on addressing the issues of unemployment, poverty, health and free education for the citizens, he added. PPP information secretary proposed to Nawaz Sharif to hold a public debate with Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on national tv. He was of the view that the former three-time prime minister does not stand a chance to win the debate with Bilawal.

PPL funded Women Vocational Training Centre in Punjab commences operation

KARACHI (APP): The Pakistan Petroleum Limited- financed Women Vocational Training Centre in district Okara, Punjab has commenced operation.

According to a press release issued here by the PPL media wing on Monday, an amount of Rs 50 million has been allotted by PPL for the project over five years with the first tranche of Rs 10 million already handed over to Behbod Association of Pakistan (BAP), the implementing partner.

The project will impart vocational training to 3000 women, enabling them to earn a livelihood through the sale of their products.

Election Commissioner takes notice of absent polling staff during training

KARACHI (APP): The Provincial Election Commissioner of Sindh Sharifullah on Monday expressed his concern over the lack of interest and absenteeism of the polling staff during the training for upcoming general elections.

While taking notice, he issued strict instructions to the district returning offic-

ers and returning officers across Sindh to take strict legal action against the absent staff and asked them to ensure attendance of the staff in the training.

Sharifullah said that any type of negligence would not be tolerated in the process of free, fair and peaceful conduct of the elections.



LAHORE: A group photo of Central Leader Peoples Party, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari with PPP workers after a meeting at Bilawal House in Lahore.

Stress main reason for increasing cholesterol: Dr.Ghulam Hussain

HYDERABAD (APP): Physician Doctor Ghulam Hussain Baloch of Agha Khan Maternal and Child Care Centre Hyderabad on Monday said that cholesterol is responsible for heart attacks and its level is increasing in the human body due to stress.

Talking to APP, he said stress is one of the main reasons for the increasing cholesterol level in the human body, high blood pressure, diabetic and cholesterol were the main causes of heart attacks in the past but nowadays there are so many risk factors leading to heart diseases.

Dr.Ghulam Hussain said stress is not an emotion but a process by

which individual responds to environmental conditions and events perceived as threatening or challenging.

He said systolic blood pressure, diastolic blood pressure and heart rate were found to have increased due to stress and added that psychological stress had long been thought to be associated with the coronary artery disease (CAD) as a risk factor that developed arteriosclerosis in the event of a heart attack, he added.

He further informed that cholesterol is also present in some foods including eggs, butter and cream, liver and kidney.



KARACHI: Senior Advisor, Regional Office of Wafaqi Mohtasib, Syed Anwar Haider during a meeting with KE Executive Director and senior officers at Regional office of Wafaqi Mohtasib.