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RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir chairing the 262nd Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC) at the General Headquarters.

Vows to deal with terrorists with full might No one will be allowed to sabotage elections: Military top brass

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Wednesday said that Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity were sacrosanct and inviolable.

"Pakistan believes in peaceful co-existence with all states, however, there would never be any compromise over country's sovereignty, national honour and aspirations of Pakistani people," he said while chairing the 262nd Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC) at the General Headquarters.

According to an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, the forum paid rich tribute to the supreme sacrifices of Shuhada (martyrs), including officers and men of the Armed Forces, law enforcement agencies and the citizens who have laid their lives for ensuring peace and stability in the country.

The forum resolved that terrorists, their facilitators and abettors, working on behalf of hostile forces to destabilise Pakistan, would be dealt with full might of the state. The conference was briefed on the callous Indian campaign of extra-territorial and extra-judicial killings, perpetuating state-sponsored terrorism and targeting Pakistani citizens. It agreed that blatant violation of international laws by India and its real face be exposed to the world. The international community has already shown serious concerns over the criminal behaviour of India and its use of state apparatus for killing spree around the world," the forum noted.

It reiterated unequivocal support for Palestine and the people of Gaza while noting the extremely negative fallout of the conflict and the potential to spill over in the wider region.

Toshakhana reference:

Imran Khan, Bushra Bibi sentenced to 14 years

Both barred from holding public office for 10 years, fined Rs787m each; verdict comes a day after Imran was sentenced to 10 years in the cipher case; Bushra Bibi 'put under house arrest' as Bani Gala declared sub-jail; Barrister Gohar slams Toshakhana sentence; PTI to move IHC against verdict

RAWALPINDI (Online): Judge Muhammad Bashir of Accountability Court (AC) Islamabad has awarded 14 years Rigorous Imprisonment (RI) each to Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi and fined Rs787 million each in Toshakhana reference. The accused have been declared disqualified for holding any public office for 10 years. Under NAB ordinance the two accused will not be able to make any financial dealing with any bank or financial institution. On reaching jail Bushra Bibi was arrested under court's decision. NAB deputy prosecutor General Sardar Muzaffar Abbasi was present in the court along

with his team. The court ordered at the inception of hearing the two accused be called in the court. Jail authorities presented both the accused in court. The court while addressing Imran Khan inquired Khan Sahb have you prepared statement under 342. Imran Khan replied yes he has prepared. But first let my lawyers and Bushra Begum come. I will file my statement. The court said you should file your statement in the court as we have to move ahead IN the proceedings. Upon former Prime Minister said why the court is in haste. Islamabad High Court has already rejected our plea for stay order. I have been called by assistant su-

perintendent jail for marking my attendance. The PTI founder left for his barrack after saying this. The court sent message for calling Imran Khan again. Assistant Superintendent Jail told the court Imran Khan is not ready to come to court. The court after some time, decided to announce the verdict. Meanwhile Bushra Bibi wife of PTI founder Imran Khan has presented herself for arrest in Toshakhana case. Following the announcement of awarding sentence to Bushra Bibi and Imran Khan in Toshakhana case, wife of PTI founder decided to present herself for arrest in Adiala Jail. She reached Adiala jail

and presented herself for arrest. Women police arrested her. Earlier in the day, Accountability Judge Muhammad Bashir sentenced the former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi to 14 years in jail in the Toshakhana case. The PTI founder has also been disqualified for 10 years while a fine of Rs1.573 billion has also been imposed on the couple. During the hearing of the case the court recorded statement of Bushra Bibi under 342 in regard to questionnaire containing 25 questions. The lawyers for Imran Khan had filed petition to court to restore the right to cross question.

The court rejected the petition for restoration of right to cross examine after hearing the arguments. Imran Khan while addressing Judge Muhammad Bashir of AC had said you had abolished our right to cross examine. I myself wanted to cross question the witnesses. It is my request our right to cross question be restored. Is the announcement for awarding sentence to be made today. Judge Muhammad Bashir said don't worry. Imran Khan told the court real price of Toshakhana gifts has come to us. We were to cross examine due to it. I was to expose false witnesses. You did all in haste.



QUETTA: Balochistan Caretaker Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs Mir Muhammad Zubair Jamali addressing a consultation on gender issue organized by National Commission on the Status of Women.

NCSW holds pre-NCSW 68 consultation with provincial stakeholders: Zubair Jamali reiterates interim Govt's resolve to empower women economically

Chairperson NCSW Ms Nilofar Bakhtiar says females are deprived of fundamental rights of equal opportunities for education, health, and economic growth

Independent Report
QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Zubair Jamali has reiterated the interim government's resolve to empower the womenfolk economically. The Provincial Minister was speaking at the ceremony organized in collaboration with the National Commission on Status of Women (NCSW) here on Wednesday. The Chairperson NCSW, Ms Nilofar Bakhtiar was also present

on the occasion. The consultation was held with provincial stakeholders in Quetta on the preparation of the National report on "Need Analysis for financing and strengthening institutions with a gender perspective for empowerment of Women and girls". This report is aimed to be presented by the commission in CSW68 to be held this year from March 11th to 22nd on the theme: "Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all

women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective. Addressing the gathering, Mir Zubair Jamali said that the women are provided wholehearted opportunity of freedom of expression. He thanked the Chairperson Balochistan Commission on Status of Women and all United Nations partners including UN-Women, UNICEF, UNDP and others for extending cooperation to empower the women.



ISLAMABAD: Advisor to PM on Aviation Air Marshal (R) Farhat Hussain Khan called on caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

We don't want to give such order which causes delay in election: SC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) during the hearing of the case related to acceptance of nomination papers has remarked we donot want to give such order which causes delay in the election. Appeal of candidate from PP-224 regarding acceptance of his nomination papers came up for hearing before single bench of SC led by Justice Jamal Mandokhel here Wednesday. Special secretary Election Commission (EC) appeared in the court. The court remarked during the hearing of the case petitioner filed appeal

late by 12 days. Permission for election could have been given had the appeal been filed in time. We donot want to give such decision which causes delay in the election. Justice Jamal questioned from special secretary why the EC has kept schedule for small period. EC should have known that appeals have to be filed. Special secretary EC told the court if nomination papers are accepted at this stage then the election can delay in the constituency. The process of printing of ballot papers has been completed. In several districts the process of sending ballot papers is underway.

Independent candidate for NA-8 Bajaur shot dead

PESHAWAR (APP): Rehman Zeb, an independent candidate for the National Assembly seat NA-8, Bajaur was shot dead by unknown assailants on Wednesday.

Police said Rehman Zeb along with his friends was going for his election campaign in Bajaur when armed men fired at them near Siddique Phatak. Rehman Zeb and his three two friends sustained bullet injuries in the firing and were rushed to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital in Khar where he succumbed to injuries.

Rehman Zeb was an active worker of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf and was contesting from NA-8 as an independent candidate after having some rifts with party leadership for not allotting him the party ticket. A large number of his supporters and relatives gathered in front of Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Khar after hearing the tragic news of Rehman Zeb's death.

PTI terminates party membership of two senior leaders

QUETTA (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Wednesday terminated the party membership of two senior leaders from Balochistan.

As per details, the Information Secretary of PTI's Balochistan chapter Sardar Hasan Shah said that the party membership of Sardar Khadim Hussain and Sadiq Agha have been terminated.

He said that step was taken as both the leaders refused to withdraw from the elections against PTI candidates.

CM seeks report of different subversive acts; directs to improve security arrangements further

Independent Report
QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has sought report of different incidents of terrorism at the election offices of political leaders and public places in different areas of the province. The caretaker Chief Minister directed to the Provincial Home Department to improve security arrangements further. While taking notice of the incidents of terrorism in different areas of the province,



NAROWAL: Senior Vice President PML-N Maryam Nawaz addressing a public gathering in Zafarwal.

Maryam continues to fire salvos at Imran

NAROWAL (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Senior Vice President and chief organiser Maryam Nawaz on Wednesday took jibe at the embattled PTI founder who, she said, spread evil in the country. Speaking to constituents in Narowal, she applauded the large crowd that gathered over there. She said she was eagerly waiting for her visit to Narowal. She said many conspiracies were hatched against Nawaz Sharif, asking

what injustice did not happen to him. She claimed, "One by one all the enemies of Nawaz Sharif are getting exposed as today people see all cases against the PML-N supremo as just conspiracies to keep him out of power." Speaking about Bushra Bibi, she said she was not elated about the arrest of the former premier's wife. She, however, recalled the time when she had spent time in prison emphasising she too was someone's wife.

PPP election offices, candidates attacked with hand grenades in Quetta, Kech and Mangochar

Independent Report
QUETTA: The election offices of Pakistan Peoples' party (PPP) were attacked with hand grenades by unknown assailants in Quetta, Mangochar area of Kalat and Buleda of Kech on Wednesday. According to the reports, five persons were injured when some unknown assailants hurled a

hand grenade at the election office of PPP located on Sariab road. The assailants fled from the scene after hurling the hand grenade. The rescue teams and police reached the spot and shifted the injured to the civil hospital for treatment. An emergency was already declared in the civil hospital.

Those injured in the explosion are stated to be the workers of PPP. Similarly, a hand grenade was also hurled at the PPP election office in Mangochar area of Kalat the same afternoon. The explosive device went off just close to the election office. However, no loss of life was reported in the explosion.

Trials of May 9 cases will be held in jail

ISLAMABAD (Online): Trials of May 9 cases will be held in jail. 367 accused including Imran Khan have been summoned in Adiala jail. Notification regarding jail trial of cases pertaining to May 9 siege and arson, riots has been issued. The accused have been summoned in Adiala jail. According to media reports Sadaqat Abbasi, Umar Tanvir Butt and Wasim Qayyum Abbasi have become approvers. They have recorded their statements under 364. The judicial remand of Sheikh Rashid has been extended upto February 6. Order has been issued to all persons accused in May 9 incident to come to Adiala jail from May 6 in connection with jail trial.

The hearing of May 9 cases against PTI founder and Shah Mehmood Qureshi will also take place in Adiala jail. Notices of jail trial have been issued to SHO and investigation officers of all police stations. Copies will be distributed among the accused in connection with indictment of cases on February 6.



Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is addressing the election rally of Pakistan People's Party in Malakand district.

Bilawal vows to bury old politics of revenge, divisiveness

MALAKAND (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Wednesday resolved to start a process of reconciliation in the country by burying 'old politics of revenge, divisiveness and hatred' if his party is voted to power in Feb 8 elections. Addressing an election rally in Malakand, the former foreign minister hit out at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif for their politics of revenge and divisiveness. He said Mr Sharif had vowed to fight for the sanctity of vote but the situa-

tion was other way around in this election. Bilawal said the former PTI chairman used to call the political opponents thieves, adding that if the people attached to the PTI founder were "angels". He said that former premier was now behind the bars and lamented that his wife had also been jailed. While asserting the democratic values, the PPP chief said he was not celebrating the PTI founder's conviction. While urging people to vote for the PPP in upcoming elections, he said his party believed that it was the right of public to elect their prime minister.



KHARAN: President Balochistan National Party Sardar Akhtar Jan Mengal addressing a public meeting in connection with general elections



GWADAR: Deputy Commissioner Aurangzeb Badini presiding over a meeting regarding arrangement of general elections

Cipher case result

The writing had been on the wall. Given how hastily the special court, appointed under the Official Secrets Act, had been proceeding in the cipher case trial, seemingly without regard for due process, a rushed verdict had been expected.

It was delivered yesterday, a week before the country heads to polls, with sentences of 10 years' imprisonment for both former prime minister Imran Khan and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi. Special Court Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain, who oversaw the proceedings inside Adiala Jail, read out the verdict even as the accused — now convicts — were protesting the denial of their trial rights.

It bears noting that the Islamabad High Court had ordered retrials of this same case on two previous occasions, noting each time glaring procedural irregularities in how it was being conducted. The third attempt doesn't seem to have gone differently, and many observers predict the higher courts may not be charitable towards the special court whenever the verdict goes into appeal. Given the IHC's earlier rebukes, it is worth asking what the special court was seeking to accomplish by concluding the matter so hastily. Considering that the death penalty had been sought against both politicians, the situation called for far more restraint.

Instead, there were some bizarre developments over the weekend: the judge appointed state counsel for the defendants without their consent, and later reportedly denied the defendants their right to cross-examine the prosecution's witnesses. Meanwhile, the legal teams appointed by the two accused complained that they were repeatedly denied access to the proceedings.

To top it off, on Monday, the case was wrapped up at breakneck speed in a marathon session that ran till well into the night. Everything made it seem as if some kind of deadline had been set for the trial to be concluded and a verdict issued.

From Mr Khan waving a paper from the podium as he addressed a large political gathering, claiming that he had unearthed a conspiracy against his government, to his conviction for divulging state secrets, the cipher saga will be remembered as a sorry episode in our diplomatic, legal and political history.

A diplomatic faux pas was needlessly dragged into a political dispute. The immediate fallout saw already soured relations with the US deteriorate further, and for no meaningful purpose.

Politically, the conspiracy narrative proved less useful in bolstering public sympathy for the PTI than its political opponents' failure to manage the precarious economic situation they inherited from its ouster. Lastly, whatever case there may have been against Mr Khan and Mr Qureshi, it was weakened irreparably by conducting the trial in haste. What good did any of it achieve? One can only marvel at the short-sightedness displayed by all actors in this sordid drama.

Changing India

Javid Husain

Two critical developments are radically transforming India, with far-reaching implications for its minorities, the region, and the world at large.

The first and foremost is the transformation of a secular India, as envisioned by its founding fathers, into a Hindu rashtra driven by Hindutva. The second development is the rapid economic growth of India over the past three decades, which has catapulted its economy to the fifth position at the global level.

The growing sway of Hindutva in India under the leadership of the Modi-led BJP, which is closely allied with RSS, gives shrinking political and social space to non-Hindu religious minorities, which are facing increasing difficulties in leading their lives according to their own social and religious customs, besides discrimination generally.

This is not surprising if one looks at the philosophy of RSS as defined by its founder, V.D. Savarkar, and his successors. For instance, M.S. Golwalkar, the second RSS supreme leader, stressed that non-Hindu minorities "must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment — not even citizens' rights".

The statements and policy decisions of the Modi-led BJP government and its leaders clearly reflect this policy of Hindutva in action.

There have been frequent reports of mob attacks on Muslims and their persecution; in some cases, there has been a tragic loss of lives with the connivance of local officials. As chief minister of Gujarat, Prime

Minister Narendra Modi was implicated in the deadly anti-Muslim attacks.

The official consecration of the Ram temple on the site of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya under Modi's leadership is the latest example of the continued implementation of the Hindutva agenda. BJP activists are agitating to replace mosques with temples at many other sites.

The growing sway of Hindutva in India is not only bad news for the Muslims and other minorities in the country, it is also the harbinger of a belligerent approach by New Delhi towards its neighbours in pursuit of its hegemonic designs in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region.

Under Modi, one can expect India to pursue a hard-line policy in handling its relations with Pakistan.

The annexation of occupied Kashmir by India in August 2019, in violation of UN Security Council resolutions, was a clear example of this belligerent approach, as was the earlier Indian air attack on Balakot.

Indian support to terrorist groups in Balochistan and its nefarious designs against Pakistan's security were established by the arrest of Indian agent Kulbhushan Jadhav in March 2016. India has also been following a long-term policy of weakening Pakistan's friendly relations with Iran by attempting to exploit Pakistan-Iran policy differences on Afghanistan, cross-border terrorism, and sectarian issues.

It is unfortunate that both Iran and Pakistan in the past failed to come to grips with the machinations of India and some non-regional powers in exacerbating their bilateral tensions on account of the issue of cross-border terrorism as reflected by the recent exchange of air strikes between them.

Hopefully, the recent visit of the Iranian foreign minister to Islamabad would lead to the strengthening of Pakistan-Iran cooperation in combating cross-border terrorism as announced by the foreign ministers of the two countries.

India's rapid economic growth provides it with the resources for the build-up of its military might and the realisation of its hegemonic designs in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region.

According to IMF estimates, India's GDP was estimated to be \$3.73 trillion in 2023 against \$341 billion only for Pakistan. This enabled India to increase its defence budget to \$81.4bn as against \$10.3bn for Pakistan in 2022, according to the research institute Sipri. The huge and growing difference between the power potential of the two countries could have serious consequences for Pakistan's security.

Pakistan, therefore, cannot afford to lower its guard in the management of its relations with India. We should avoid the mistakes of the two extremes of appeasement, which will merely embolden India, and a high-risk and adventurist policy which will prove to be counterproductive as our Kargil experience shows.

Instead, Pakistan should adopt a long-term approach for the realisation of its own strategic goals based on the synthesis of the political, economic, diplomatic, and military dimensions of policy in facing the enduring threat to its security emanating from India. - Courtesy Dawn

Israel über alles

Mahir Ali

Once the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague endorsed the substance of South Africa's case against Israel (albeit not in its entirety) last week, the Zionist project's international collaborators were as desperate for a distraction as Israel. The latter promptly provided it with the allegation that a dozen UNRWA employees participated in the Oct 7 atrocities in southern Israel.

Led by the US, Germany and UK, a number of Western nations and their allies suspended their crucial funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which was set up in 1949, in the wake of the Nakba, to provide means of subsistence to Palestinian refugees. These include basic education, primary healthcare and other vital services. Its operations stretch from Gaza and East Jerusalem to the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

A secondary distraction was provided by a drone attack that killed three US personnel and injured dozens in Jordan. US media reports suggest the drone wasn't intercepted based on the suspicion that it might be 'friendly' (Israeli), and that the US authorities had no idea where it came from, although they showed no hesitation in blaming 'Iranian-allied' militias and vowing vengeance. That's the latter-day equivalent of the much-mocked command to 'round up the usual suspects', but perhaps the bigger question is why there should be a US military base where Jordan's borders meet those of Syria and Iraq — or anywhere else in the country.

'Guilty until proved innocent' also applies to UNRWA, which has previously been accused by Israel of preaching hatred in its schools — which

mind you, help to place the Palestinians among the best-educated Arab populations. The accusation cannot be taken seriously in a milieu where reciting the true history of Israel as a colonial-settler society is deemed antisemitic, and there is no equivalent focus on the pernicious nonsense drummed into the innocent minds of Israeli schoolchildren.

UNRWA has suspended nine of its accused employees pending an internal probe, and two others are among the dozens of staff killed in Israel's latest invasion of Gaza. It is distressing that the accusations involving 0.01pc of its 13,000 employees, whether or not true, have been deemed sufficient by so many Western states to cut off funding to one of the only organisations that may be able to avert a famine. All too many of them, meanwhile, continue to arm and diplomatically abet the perpetrators of what the ICJ deems a potential genocide.

That impression was consolidated on Sunday when 11 members of the Netanyahu cabinet attended a congregation in Jerusalem tagged the 'Victory of Israel Conference: Settlement Brings Security', which called for the 'voluntary migration' of Palestinians away from the Gaza Strip. That not only defies the ICJ's interim injunction against incitement to genocide, but also reflects the Nazi attitude towards European Jews before the Germans opted for gas chambers.

Notwithstanding the 'never again' slogan of 80 years ago, the Zionists brought with them to the 'promised land' the Nazi concepts of lebensraum and untermenschen — territorial expansion and lesser beings, the first applying to European Jews and the second to Pales-

tinians. The devotion to their would-be exterminators stretched to hiring one of Hitler's leading henchmen, Otto Skorzeny, as a Mossad hitman — after he had, equally deplorably, served as military adviser to Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser.

It was the Nazi regime's expansionism, rather than the related Judeocide, that propelled the British and eventually joint Anglo-American response — although the latter was also instigated by the Soviet advance into Eastern Europe after the Red Army had turned the tide against the Wehr-macht. It remains to be seen how far the Israel Defence Forces will go before any nation other than the dispersed Palestinians steps up to challenge the Israelis.

The resistance so far has been restricted to so-called non-state actors. Saudi Arabia remains keen on establishing formal ties with Israel. Arab and other Muslim states have vaguely backed South Africa's case at the ICJ, but none of them has officially signed up as a party to the dispute, as Germany has disgustingly done on behalf of Israel, even as it staves off its own neo-Nazis.

Whatever the ICJ's verdict, it is likely to come too late to halt the genocide. It may depend on how far Israel goes henceforth, but its establishment is accustomed to defying UN injunctions — as long as the pecuniary and moral assistance from the US and the rest of the West remains intact. It does not have much to worry about on that score. Its self-conception of uber alles remains intact among its acolytes, whose every action is directed towards enabling Israel to achieve its clearly genocidal and arguably Nazi-like aims. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Gohar urges private sector to help achieve \$100 billion exports target in 5 years

Also says government to increase FDI for boosting country's economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Commerce and Interior Dr Gohar Ejaz on Wednesday said that the government intended to take the exports to US\$ 100 billion in next 5 years and the business community should play an active role in achieving the target. Pakistan needed to boost exports to improve its economy, and for that the private sector should focus on diversification, he added.

The minister was talking to an delegation of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) that called on him led by its Ahsan Zafar

Bakhtawari, an ICCI news release said.

He said that the business community should partner with the government in accelerating the economic development. The business community should also take an active part in corporate social responsibility activities to address issues of the poor segments of the society and promote welfare activities in the country, he added.

Gohar Ejaz assured that he would cooperate in resolving the key issues of the businessmen to facilitate them in business promotion. Speaking on the



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Interior, Commerce, Industries, Overseas Pakistanis and Investment, Dr. Gohar Ejaz addressing to foreign and local investors at Overseas Chamber of Commerce and Industry Karachi.

Ambassador Blome says: US, Pakistan working together for climate-smart agricultural practices

ISLAMABAD (Online): U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Donald Blome said on Wednesday that the United States and Pakistan are collaboratively striving to provide farmers, ranchers, and foresters with innovative revenue streams.

"Joint efforts aim to assist farmers in adopting climate-smart agricultural practices while expanding market options and ensuring fairer prices for their produce," he said while

addressing an event organized to celebrate the Pakistan Agricultural Development project, a 20.9 million dollar US Department of Agriculture-funded initiative with a wide array of impressive accomplishments.

"Together, we provided 63,000 farmers with training on using Good Agriculture Practices. We introduce new production techniques and improved post-harvest storage and processing," he added.

He said, "We established model plots with select farmers and private sector service providers to demonstrate the benefits of these practices. Jobs have been created for 600 women in Khairpur and Sindh through the establishment of three date-pitting centers," he added.

Pakistan Agricultural Development grants enabled farmers to build high-efficiency drip irrigation systems.

ADB committed record climate finance of almost \$10 billion in 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Asian Development Bank (ADB) committed a record amount of climate finance in 2023 to help its developing member countries (DMCs) in Asia and the Pacific cut greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of a warming planet. The ADB committed \$9.8 billion in climate finance from its own resources last year — \$5.5 billion for mitigation and \$4.3 billion for adaptation — a more than 46% increase on its 2022 climate financing commitments.

"The bank's climate adaptation finance commitments in 2023 mean that the ADB has provided more than \$10.4 billion in



ISLAMABAD: A woman is buying flowers at flower market in sector F-6 during rainy weather in the Federal Capital.

Atif Ikram says: Saudi Arabia is most potential market for Pakistan's exports

ISLAMABAD: The Commercial Session of Pakistan consulate General Jeddah organized an



interactive session with Pakistani businessmen based in Saudi Arabia and Saudi Importers on the occasion of visit of Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) to Saudi Arabia. Mr. Khalid Majid, Consul General of Pakistan alongwith other senior Officials of the Consulate and Commercial Section were also attended

Rupee gains 04 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Wednesday gained 4 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.50 against the previous day's closing of Rs 279.54. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.8 and Rs 281.5 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 35 paise to close at Rs 302.33 against the last day's closing of Rs 302.68, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.89, whereas a decrease of 59 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 354.26 compared to the last closing of Rs 354.85. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 02 paise each to close at Rs 76.09 and Rs 74.52.

Macroeconomic stabilization leads to improvement: Report

ISLAMABAD (APP): The country's economy experienced a notable stabilization during the first half of the current fiscal year (2023-24), owing to implementation of effective measures and prudent policies by the interim government that played a pivotal role in achieving this milestone.

"The first half of FY2024 has ended with economic stabilization. The government's effective measures and prudent policies helped stabilize the macroeconomic situation, leading to a gradual improvement in economic activities," says Monthly Economic Update and

Outlook for January 2024 released by finance ministry here Wednesday.

According to the report, this persistent uptick in economic indicators has resulted in improved GDP growth of 2.13% in the first quarter of FY2024, with expectations for continued growth in the second quarter.

It is apparent from better growth prospects in the real sector visible in month-on-month (MoM) increase in Large Scale Manufacturing (LSM) growth, an improvement in high-frequency indicators and better crop prospects. Despite the challenges, external stability has been

observed as evident from a surplus in the current account in December, it says adding on the fiscal side, the revenue performance is encouraging, however, there is significant pressure on expenditures attributed to higher markup payments.

"Despite this, the government is taking measures to manage non-markup spending, which is evidenced by continuous improvement in primary surplus," it adds.

According to the report, Pakistan has recently received a tranche equivalent to US\$ 705.6 million, following the successful completion of

the first review by the Executive Board of International Monetary Fund (IMF) under Stand by Arrangements (SBA), which is providing market confidence and exchange rate stability.

The report predicted that economic activities would further strengthen during second half of FY2024 — contingent on the continuation of sound and prudent economic policies which will gear toward achieving the set growth target for the current fiscal year.

The report highlights the performance of agriculture sector saying, wheat crop for Rabi 2023-24 has been cultivated on an

estimated area of 9.160 million hectares, surpassing the sowing target of 8.998 million hectares by 1.8 percent to achieve the production target of 32.12 million tonnes.

During Jul-Dec FY2024, the agriculture credit disbursement reached to Rs 1105.8 billion as compared to Rs 842.4 billion last year, an increase of 31.3 percent. According to the report, Large Scale Manufacturing (LSM) during November 2023, increased by 1.6 percent on YoY basis against the decline of 4.9 percent in the same month last year. While on a MoM basis.

Chinese envoy lauds PAF's steadfast determination for balance of power in region

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Jiang Zaidong, called on Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu here on Wednesday.

The Chinese ambassador lauded the steadfast determination of PAF leadership to ensure balance of power in the region.

During the meeting, matters pertaining to evolving geo-strategic environment and regional developments were discussed, a Pakistan Air Force (PAF) news release said.

broad contours of the PAF's modernization drive in order to transform Pakistan Air Force into a Next Generation Air Force through induction of niche technologies with a special focus on indigenization and revamping of training.

Highlighting the significance of the longstanding strategic partnership between the two countries, he emphasized that the PAF leadership wished to further deepen the existing aviation cooperation and exchanges with China in the fields of human resource and technol-



The dignitaries underscored the necessity of revitalizing the framework for operational training across all domains, emphasizing the paramount importance of preparedness and seamless coordination in the face of evolving security challenges. The Air Chief shared

so as to jointly address shared security challenges.

He further said, "Pakistan values its strong diplomatic, economic, defence relationship and time-tested friendship with China which are based on convergence on all important issues relating to regional peace."

Shehbaz says: PML-N high on popularity graph

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif has claimed that his party's popularity graph among people is still high, despite its active participation in the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government in the past.

Talking to digital media representatives here on Wednesday, he emphasised the importance of February-8 elections and highlighted its vitality for the country's economic and social fabric. Amid numerous challenges confronting Pakistan, Shehbaz believed that general election was finally going to be held on the scheduled date, wherein the fate of Pakistan would be determined by its people through their constitutional right to vote.

He called upon all

stakeholders to learn from country's political history and set aside their personal interests and make collective efforts for achieving the unmet developmental goals of Pakistan by exploring its great potential in various fields. Shehbaz Sharif cited that hardworking nations find a niche at international level, asserting that keeping in view Pakistan's current internal and external challenges, "we all have to get united to face these challenges firmly".

He claimed that during the PML-N government in 1990s, Pakistan had been outperforming India in various fields, and called for assessing all those factors which landed the country in the current situation.

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QUETTA: Additional Chief Secretary Home Zahid Saleem meeting with caretaker Home Minister Captain (ret'd) Mir Muhammad Zubair Jamali.

Zubair Jamali says War against terrorism to remain continue till restoration of peace

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs, Mir Muhammad Zubair Jamali has condemned the hand grenade attack at Sariab road Quetta.

In an official condemnation statement issued here on Wednesday, the caretaker Minister Home said that the miscreants can't weaken the morale of general public by carrying

out such terrorism incidents.

He pledged that our war against terrorism would remain continued till complete restoration of peace in the province.

The Minister Home said that no one would be allowed to spoil the law and order situation in the province. Mir Zubair Jamali prayed for early recovery of those injured in the Sariab road blast.

Sardar Jozgezi thanks TNFJ for supporting PPP in election

QUETTA- (APP)-Pakistan People's Party (PPP)'s Balochistan Information Secretary Sardar Sarbuland Jozgezi said that the doors of PPP were open to all political parties.

No single political party can form a government in Balochistan. After the elections, the People's Party will form a joint government with other political parties, the PPP will win in the elections to be held on February 8, he said.

He also thanked Tehreek Nafaz Fiqia Jafaria (TNFJ) for supporting the candidates of the PPP.

He expressed these views on Wednesday while addressing a press conference at the office of the PPP Hazara Town along with Information Secretary

Sardar Tariq Ahmad Jafri.

Provincial Leader of PPP, Engineer Hadi Askari, Information Secretary of Tehreek Nafaz Fiqia Jafaria Balochistan, Ghulam Mustafa, President of Tehreek Nafaz Fiqia Jafaria Balochistan and other were also present on this occasion.

Tehreek Nifaz Fiqia Jafaria Balochistan Information Secretary Sardar Tariq Ahmad Jafari said that the chairman of the PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari met with the central leaders of the movement and appealed to support the candidates of the party.

On which Tehreek Nafaz Fiqia Jafaria announced its support for the candidates of Pakistan People's Party.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the convocation of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) at Jinnah Convention Centre.

Aneeq Ahmed says: Holy Prophet (SAWW) Seerah must for Quran's comprehension

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed on Wednesday stressed for following the Seerah of Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAWW) in true sense in order to have a full comprehension of the Holy Quran.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the Seerat Chair at Federal Urdu University, he said that truth was the basic trait of Seerat. Follow the truth, speak the truth and its implementation in every sphere of life were the lessons derived from the Holy Prophet's Seerah, he added.

The minister said the establishment of the Seerat Chair at the Urdu University was a commendable initiative for guiding the new generation.

The greatness of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) would continue to be articulated until the Day of Judgment, and familiarity with

his life was essential for leadership, he added.

Those doing the job of preaching Islam should align their conversations and discussion with the Holy Quran and Seerat Tayyiba, as both had been leading the human mind and would continue to do till the end of time, he added.

"Today, we must reflect on whether we are loyal to our Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). Our religion is complete, containing solutions to all issues. Knowledge and action are both necessary," he said, adding that students must be made aware of challenges such as secularism, artificial intelligence, and contemporary issues. Minister Aneeq said it was imperative to include a Seerat book in the curriculum from primary's to master's level.

Vice-Chancellor Dr. Rubina Mushtaq, Dr. Mustafaez Ahmad Alvi, Dr. Ahtesham-ul-Haq, and Dr. Hafiz Abdul Rashid also spoke at the event.

Dr. Mustafaez Ahmad Alvi, Head of Department of Islamic Thought and Culture at NUML, highlighted that the descent of the Holy Quran and the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) transformed the course of the world.

He mentioned that the purpose of establishing the Seerat Chair was to help students to follow the Seerat Tayyiba in their practical lives. "Accepting religion and adopting Seerat are one and the same," he added.

Dr. Rubina Mushtaq, Vice-Chancellor of Federal Urdu University, remarked that the Western culture was having negative impacts on young generation.

She said teaching the Holy Quran and Sunnah was essential for all departments of Urdu University.

Shields were presented to the dignitaries at the conclusion of the event.



QUETTA: Inspector General of Police Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh enquiring about health of policemen injured in Mach attack.

PTA intensifies crackdown on illegal issuance of SIMs

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) in close collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) cyber crime circle, conducted raid against the BISP outlet at Sharpur involved in activation of SIMs illegally.

During the raid, 28 active SIMs were discovered. The FIA team confiscated active SIMs along with 01 HBL Connect device as evidence, said a news release.

In the joint operation, a person was apprehended by the FIA team. FIA is currently investigating the matter.

PTA had filed a complaint regarding illegal issuance of SIMs by the sale channel. The raids are part of PTA's ongoing efforts to prevent the circumvention of the Multi-Finger Biometric Verification System (MBVS). This unwavering commitment underscores the authority's dedication to eradicate illegal issuance of SIMs, the news release added.

He expressed these views along with ANP leader Dawood Khan Achakzai while talking to journalists on the occasion of visiting the worker who was injured in civil hospital after the shooting incident in Mezai Stop.

Engineer Zmarak Khan Achakzai said that political opponents fired on our party workers in Mezai Stop, as a result of which one worker of ANP Zahoor Ahmed martyred and another Moin Khan were seriously injured.

He said that since the election campaign has started, there have been four attacks on our workers and camps. He also demanded the Election Commission, federal and provincial government to take notice of attack on ANP workers in order to control such incident in future for interest of peace. In response to a question, Engineer Zmarak Khan Achakzai said that the recent firing incident was an attempt to suppress the ANP saying that however, we wanted to inform the opponents that we would not be intimidated by such high tactics.



QUETTA: Peoples Party (PPP) Leader, Ali Madad Jattak addresses to media persons during press conference, in Quetta.

Death of candidates Elections postponed in 3 constituencies of KPK

By M.Ilyas PESHAWAR- Notification of postponement of elections in 3 constituencies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been issued due to the death of candidates.

Due to the postponement of the elections, a notification was issued.

According to the details, due to the murder of independent candidate Rehan Zaib Khan in NA-8 and PK-22 Bajaur and the death of ANP's Asmatullah Khattak in PK-91 Kohat, the notification was issued to postpone the elections.

It has been reported that the Returning Officer has issued a formal announcement of the cancellation of the election because under Clause 73 of the Election Act, the election is

postponed due to the death of the candidate after the issue of election marks.

It is learned that 13 candidates including Asmatullah Khattak were participating from PK-91 Kohat and former senator Abbas Afridi is also a candidate from PK-91 Kohat. On the other hand, Rehan Zaib Khan, an activist of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and contesting as an independent candidate from NA-8 and PK-22 Bajaur killed, police sources say that Rehan Zaib Khan was shot by unknown persons near Siddiqabad, as a result of the firing. Rehan Zaib Khan was seriously injured, Rehan Zaib Khan was shifted to the hospital in critical condition.

President Dr. Alvi says Youth may play active role for overall progress & development

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday said youth could play a pivotal role in transforming the destiny of the country through optimum utilization of intellect, morality and education.

He said the country required strong leadership and appropriate use of intellect and expressed the optimism that youth was fully capable of playing an active role in the overall progress and development.

Addressing the convocation of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU), the president said education and health had a vital role in the robust development of Pakistan ought to follow the Chinese model to materialize the goals of rapid development.

Calling the passed-out AIU graduates as elite of the country, he said they had the distinction to secure a graduate degree in a country where 44% or more than 26 million children were still out of school. He pointed out that all the regional countries had 98% ratio of school-going children.

"In order to accommodate all out-of-school children, the government will have to build 50,000 additional schools which is not an easy task, keeping in view the resource availability," he added.

He pointed out that around 300,000 mosques in the country could be utilized to educate the out-of-school children.

President Alvi regretted there had been no sense of sympathy with humanity though the developed world posed itself as champion of democracy.

He said the world was now just going after the vested interests, as zero sympathy was being shown by the West amid the atrocities with innocent people of Gaza.

He said Pakistan intended to get the Kashmir issue resolved at United Nations platform but despite the lapse of over 70 years, the issue still remained unresolved.

He called for an end to

the exploitation of wealth in the world to ensure a person his due right, eventually leading to peace and unity.

He advised passed-out graduates to continue the struggle for the pursuit of knowledge in practical life.

He also asked the women graduates to opt for the practical life even after getting married.

He said in today's era of technology, women could simultaneously manage their jobs and family life.

The president said Pakistan was declared as world's 5th best-performing country during COVID-19 due to timely and prudent strategies of the government.

Recalling the leadership's decision to establish the AIU in 1970s, the president said the university had been playing a key and leading role in imparting education to the people, especially in remote areas.

Earlier, the president conferred degrees and medals to the fresh students.



WASHINGTON: Raja Nasir Ali Khan Maqpoon, Minister for Planning & Development Gilgit-Baltistan called on Ambassador to the United States Masood Khan in Washington DC.

Pak pavilion at New York's tourism show captivated visitors: Masood

WASHINGTON (APP): Pakistan's Ambassador to the U.S., Masood Khan, Tuesday congratulated the visiting Gilgit-Baltistan's Planning Minister, Raja Nasir Ali Khan, over the success of Pakistan pavilion at the weekend's 'Travel & Adventure Show' in New York, saying it would take the country's rich tourism potential to the next level. During a meeting with the minister at Pakistan Embassy, Ambassador Masood Khan said the pavilion, which he inaugurated on Saturday, captivated the global community and evinced keen interest in Pakistan's rich cultural and tourism potential, according to an embassy press release.

"It augurs well not only for the tourism industry but also for the image building of the country," he said.

"Tourism industry of Pakistan can play a significant role in cultivating better people-to-people ties and linkages between Pakistan and the United States," the Pakistani envoy added.

Raja Nasir Khan thanked the Ambassador for the support provided by the Consulate General in New York and Pakistan Embassy, Washington, in successfully showcasing the tourism potential of the country.

The GB planning minister said that US tourists were the second highest in numbers visiting Gilgit-Baltistan annually for eco- and adventure-tourism, among others. He also said that various steps were being taken to improve infrastructure and facilitate foreign visitors.

In this context, the minister said that GB Government was focusing on establishing IT parks, incubation centers, vocational institutes and winter sports for the youth. Equal attention was being paid to girls' education, providing them with sports facilities.

Mach attack martyrs funeral prayers held, says ISPR

RAWALPINDI (APP): The funeral prayers of the Mach attack martyrs were held at Headquarters FC Balochistan (North), Quetta who embraced martyrdom while fighting the terrorists in Mach, Bolan on the night of January 29 and 30.

The funeral prayers of martyred soldiers identified as Lance Naik Rehmat Ullah, age 30 years, resident of district Dera Ghazi Khan and Sepoy Muhammad Zaman, age 28 years, resident of district Tank were offered in Headquarters FC Balochistan (North), an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said on Wednesday.

NAB Balochistan lucky to have hard working staff, says Director General

QUETTA: Conservator of Forest Monitoring Upscaling of Green Pakistan Program Umar Farooq Kakar presenting a shield to Director General Public Relations Balochistan Muhammad Noor Khetran.

General Accountability Jaffar Raza Khan, Director NAB Dr. Muhammad Rashad, Officers of NAB and other employees participated in the ceremony.

The Director NAB Dr. Muhammad Rashad, in his inaugural speech, welcomed the audience and shared the run of events of the ceremony. Thereafter, Director General NAB, in his address, appreciated the efforts of NAB officials. He said that development of any department is directly linked to the performance and hardworking of its employees.

NAB (Balochistan) is very lucky that it has very hard working staff. He said that merit is the scale to measure capability of any individual.

Collier dies after landslide hits Duki coalmine

DUKI (INP): A collier was killed by a landslide in a coalmine in Duki, a district of Baluchistan, on Wednesday.

According to rescue sources, the body of the deceased miner was shifted to the Civil Hospital in Duki for necessary procedures.

The deceased miner was identified as Naseebullah son of Abdul Kareem, resident of district Qila Saifullah, hospital sources said.

The DG NAB (Balochistan) Zafar Iqbal Khan, Deputy Prosecutor



QUETTA: Director General NAB Zafar Iqbal Khan and Director NAB Dr. Muhammad Arshad addressing an appreciation certificate distribution ceremony among employees on their best performance in 2023.