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QUETTA: A view of closed shops of commercial centers of the city due to strike against the alleged rigging of the election call by Four Party Ittihad.

PML-N, IPP, PPP, MQM, PML-Q join forces for coalition govt

Asif Zardari vows to extend reconciliation efforts to PTI; Shehbaz says 'war' is against country's challenges; Aleem Khan hopes Shehbaz-led govt will take decisions beneficial for the country; MQM-P's Khalid Maqbool vows 'full support' to Shehbaz to 'strengthen' democracy

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Political leaders from various parties, including the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Pakistan Muslim League, Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), and Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), have announced plans to form a coalition government. This decision emerged following a meeting held at Chaudhary Shujaat Hussain's residence, where leaders discussed strategies for governance. Speaking to media after the meeting, Asif Ali Zardari expressed determination to establish the coalition government. He emphasized the importance of a unified agenda, focusing on economic, defense, and other critical issues to ensure Pakistan's success. Zardari highlighted that despite competing against each other in elections, they are not ideological opponents and can collectively manage the country, adding that reconciliation efforts will extend to include PTI as well. "Thank you, Chaudhary Shujaat, for hosting us all here," expressed Shehbaz Sharif as he acknowledged the gathering. "The election phase has concluded, and Parliament is on the brink of formation," he continued, emphasizing the transition. "It is imperative for the economy to stabilize," he asserted, underlining the significance of financial strength. "National unity is paramount for progress," Sharif remarked, highlighting the need for solidarity among diverse factions. "The recent IMF agreement has bolstered the country's economic standing," he added, acknowledging the pivotal role of international support.

Complete shutdown strike against election rigging continue in Balochistan

QUETTA (INP): A province-wide shutdown strike paralyzed Balochistan, as major political parties protest against alleged rigging in the recent general elections. Business centers remained closed, streets echoed with slogans, and sit-ins sprang up across the region, demanding transparency and accountability. The call for the strike came from a powerful alliance of four parties: the Balochistan National Party (BNP), National Party (NP), Pashtun Khawa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP), and Hazara Democratic Party (HDP). They accuse authorities of manipulating poll results to favor other parties, effectively stealing their victories. In Quetta, the provincial capital, business centers remained shuttered, and major intersections witnessed sit-ins. The Balochistan Bar Council and Anjuman Tajran (Traders Association) extended their support to the strike, further amplifying the movement. Nushki saw a complete shutdown, with markets and shops deserted in response to the four-party alliance's call. People took to the streets, raising their voices against alleged poll rigging and demanding fair results. The BNP's ongoing protest outside the Nushki district returning officer's office entered its third day, blocking the national highway and intensifying pressure on authorities. In Chaman, the Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (ANP) led a shutdown strike, causing businesses to close and essential services to be disrupted. Party workers staged sit-ins for the fifth consecutive day in front of the district returning officer's office, demanding the declaration of results based on Form 45, the official polling station record.

PTI to ally with MWM in Punjab and Centre, with Jamaat-i-Islami in KP

Rauf says Imran has given instructions to make contact with all political parties except PML-N, PPP, MQM-P; Ali Amin Gandapur named KPK CM by PTI founder

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has claimed that the former ruling party, upon directions of its founder Imran Khan, will join hands with Majlis-e-Wahdat-Muslimeen (MWM) to form its governments in Centre and Punjab. Speaking to the media in Islamabad on Tuesday, PTI spokesperson Rauf Hasan said that the former prime minister, while ruling out the prospects of any talks with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), has directed the party to form a coalition with Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) over reserved seats. "Those who have emerged victorious in the [February 8] polls, should be allowed to form the government as it is their right [do do so], he said while conveying Khan's message.



ISLAMABAD: President PML-N Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Co-Chairman PPP Asif Ali Zardari, President PML-Q Chaudhary Shujaat Hussain, MQM's Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and BAP's Sadiq Sanjrani addressing a joint press conference

Solangi says Justified complaints regarding polls to be redressed

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi has said that "justified complaints regarding the polls would be redressed in accordance with the law". According to the report, he told a private TV channel that complaints related to the polls were "being heard at the relevant forum". Solangi said the caretaker government, particularly the interior minister, had fulfilled its responsibility by holding the biggest democratic exercise in the country in a free, fair, transparent and peaceful manner. He said around 18,000 candidates took part in the elections, while 90,000 polling stations were set up that enabled more than 60 million persons to cast their vote.

PML-N ready for opposition if independents show minority: Shehbaz

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif said on Tuesday that independent candidates backed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) can form a government in the Centre if they have the required number of seats. Addressing a press conference at the party secretariat in Model Town, he said that if PTI-backed candidates could show majority in the National Assembly then they were welcome to form a government. "The PML-N is ready to sit in the opposition if PTI-backed candidates prove their majority in the lower house of parliament. The PML-N will accept the government of the PTI-backed independent candidates but if they fail to do so, then the PML-N will use its legal and constitutional right as the PML-N has a majority in Punjab and is the largest in the Centre in terms of party," he added. The PML-N president said that after independent candidates' induction into the party the number of elected members was now 80, adding that more independent lawmakers would join the PML-N in the coming days. He said that despite PML-N failing to secure a majority in the elections, PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif was still the party's candidate for the slot of prime minister. "Nawaz Sharif will become the prime minister for the fourth time," he added. Shehbaz Sharif said that the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz would invite everyone to form a coalition government in the Centre, adding that all stakeholders would have to move forward together in the country's larger interest.

PPP to back PML-N candidate for PM's slot but won't become part of govt in Centre: Bilawal

Says will not put himself forward for the candidacy of prime minister, wants to see Asif Ali Zardari as president.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Tuesday announced to support the candidate of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) for Prime Minister and abstain from joining to be coalition government's federal cabinet. Addressing a press conference here after the meeting of party's Central Executive Committee (CEC), he said that PPP was accepting the election results despite its concerns in the larger interest of the country. He said the reality was that his party did not have a mandate to form the government in the federation, adding that the PML-N and the independents had greater numbers in the Centre. "I will not be putting myself forward for the candidacy of the prime minister," he said.



QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Abdul Wali Kakar, Hassan Darvishvand, Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran-Quetta along with others cutting cake to celebrate the 45th Anniversary of the Glorious Victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the National Day organized by the Iranian National Council.

JI loses three KP seats after vote recount

BAJAUR (INP): Following the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP's) decision to recount the votes, the three candidates of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) from PK-17, PK-20, and PK-21 constituencies lost their seats in the general election 2024. The three JI candidates—Aizaz Ul Malik representing PK-17, Waheed Gul from PK-20, and Sardar Khan from PK-21—initially secured victories in their respective constituencies. However, following a recount ordered by the ECP, they ultimately faced defeat. As per the latest result, Ubaid Ur Rehman, running as an independent candidate, secured victory in PK-17. Similarly, Anwar Zeb Khan, also an independent candidate, clinched the seat for PK-20 with 12,903 votes, and as per the result from the PK-21 constituency, Ajmal Khan, an independent candidate emerged victorious by securing 16,712 votes.

Balochistan voters reject nationalist narratives, demand progress: Jan

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Information Minister Jan Achakzai on Tuesday declared that the recent election results demonstrate the unequivocal rejection of ethnic nationalist narratives by voters, who instead extended their support to mainstream parties like PPP and PMLN. "This resounding rejection should serve as a wake-up call for ethnic nationalist parties to reassess their grievances and their habit of maligning the state," he stated. He criticized the use of "missing persons" and "exploitation of resources" as mere talking points to deceive the electorate and disparage the state. He said that the days of blind faith in their ability to bring positive change are long gone, the people demand tangible results and genuine progress. Minister Achakzai further urged ethnic nationalist parties to abandon disruptive tactics that harm ordinary citizens. "Blocking roads, highways, and essential services is not only counterproductive but deeply unfair to the very people they claim to represent," he emphasized, saying they should pursue legal avenues, like tribunals, to address their concerns.

Ambassadors of Iran, Pak meet in Brussels

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Iran to Belgium and European Union Ali Rohatjazi Tuesday called on Pakistan Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg and the EU Amna Baloch at Pakistan's embassy in Brussels. During the meeting, they discussed matters of regional and global importance. The two sides also agreed to strengthen Pakistan-Iran cooperation in Brussels.



QUETTA: Members of All Parties are holding protest demonstration against alleged rigging in General Election 2024, outside DC office in Quetta.

UN Chief continuing to monitor situation in Pakistan post-elections

WASHINGTON (INP): United Nations (UN) Secretary General Antonio Guterres is "continuing to monitor the situation following the general elections", according to his spokesperson. In a media briefing, the UN chief's spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric said Guterres "calls for the resolving of all issues and disputes through the established legal frameworks and for human rights and the rule of law to be fully respected in the interest of the people of Pakistan". "The secretary general urges the authorities, political leaders to maintain a calm atmosphere and to reject and refrain from all forms of violence and avoid any actions that could increase or inflame tensions," the spokesperson added.

SC rejects Punjab govt report on Jaranwala incident declaring it waste paper

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Supreme Court (SC) has rejected Punjab government report in respect of Jaranwala incident declaring it waste paper in minorities rights case. Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa remarked Punjab government report is liable to be thrown into waste paper basket. Only 18 challans were made during 6 months. They beat the drum of Islamophobia on other places and what they are doing. What treatment is being meted out to non Muslims in India, they want to copy it. Jaranwala incident took place when and how many people have been arrested so far. At what time first church was burnt and Fajar occurs in August at what time. Police watched burning this all before their eyes. The case related to rights of minorities came up for hearing before SC. Punjab government filed progress report about the incident in SC. Additional Advocate General (AAG) Punjab said Jaranwala incident took place on August 16, 2023. 22 cases were registered and 304 persons were arrested. Challans of 18 FIR out of 22 FIRs were filed. The CJP inquired only 18 challans were made. SC rejected Punjab government report regarding Jaranwala incident. The court while adjourning the hearing of case sought reply.

IHC summons PM Kakar in personal capacity in Baloch students non-recovery case

There should be death sentence in enforced disappearances: Justice Mohsin ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has directed caretaker Prime Minister (PM) Anwaar ul Haq Kakar to appear in person in non recovery of missing Baloch students case. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani has remarked there should be death sentence in enforced disappearances. Those involved in enforced disappearances should be awarded death sentence twice. The non recovery of Baloch students case came up for hearing before IHC Tuesday. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani heard the case. During the hearing Assistant Attorney General (AAG) Usman Ghumman requested Attorney General

FM condemns Israel's bombing, offensive in Rafah

ISLAMABAD (Online): Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani has vehemently condemned Israel's recent bombing and offensive in Rafah. In a post on his X handle, he described the Israeli acts against innocent Palestinians as deplorable and a grave violation of international law and human rights. He emphasized that the international community cannot afford to ignore the situation.



QUETTA: Chairman of Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, Khushal Khan Kakar speaks during a press conference.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Economic uncertainty

Pakistan is facing enormous macroeconomic challenges, as evident in its fragile balance-of-payments, weakening growth, and soaring prices. The new government is expected to quickly set about dealing with these issues.

Its most pressing challenge is to formulate a longer-term financing plan to meet Pakistan's growing external debt obligations, beginning with negotiations for a longer and larger IMF bailout as the present \$3bn package ends in April.

Islamabad's ability to secure loans and investments from other commercial, bilateral and multilateral lenders will be constrained without an IMF package. The Fund's support is also required to avoid the prospect of default. Even with such support, the government's willingness and ability to implement politically unpopular reforms will be tested.

Thursday's elections should have reduced the instability in the country. However, the unanticipated results, with no party securing a clear majority in parliament due to the surprise win of a very large number of individuals associated with the PTI, has intensified the uncertainty, which could impact economic stability and efforts to execute structural reforms.

Allegations of rigging have also cast a shadow on the incoming set-up's credibility. Many suspect that the political insecurity might last through the next election cycle, as the split mandate is pointing to the formation of a coalition — most likely between the PML-N and PPP, with smaller parties demanding a share — on the lines of the erstwhile PDM that ruled the country for 16 months after ousting Imran Khan in 2022.

The question is that, given the divergent political interests of its component parties, will the coalition be in a position to deal with the formidable economic challenges the country faces?

The last ruling coalition did not have an enviable track record when it came to taking difficult decisions. The way the PDM coalition government mismanaged the economy is known to all. The price for the mismanagement is now being paid by the people and has cost the PML-N heavily in Punjab in the polls. It is no wonder that many believe a 'weak' coalition government will dampen the prospects of the economic reforms Pakistan so desperately needs to be able to attain sustainable growth. The presence of a strong and noisy opposition in parliament might also impede required legislation, as the PTI is unlikely to accept the legitimacy of a government by its rivals. Some are of the view that the military-backed SIFC will act as the main economic policymaking forum, reducing policy uncertainty despite potential political chaos, and providing some comfort to investors. Yet, that may also lead to an uneven field for investors and frictions between the political and military leadership. So far, the future of the economy appears quite uncertain because of the split mandate following tainted elections.

Preventing suicide

Ali Burhan
Mustafa

In a significant stride towards mental health reform, Pakistan decriminalised attempted suicide (later challenged in the Federal Sharia Court) by repealing Section 325 of the Pakistan Penal Code, a change that stands out for its compassion and understanding. The repeal is complemented by the Mental Health Act's Section 49, which introduces mandatory psychiatric assessments to ensure that individuals experiencing mental distress receive the care they need. This reform became possible due to the steadfast advocacy of mental health experts, including those in the Pakistan Psychiatric Society, the efforts of legislators in 2022, and the support of religious and educational groups.

Suicide is a critical global public health concern, accounting for over 800,000 deaths worldwide. Globally, it is the third leading cause of death among 15- to 19-year-olds, and the second leading cause of death among 15- to 29-year-olds. Alarmingly, 90 per cent of adolescent suicides occur in low- and middle-income countries, with recent analyses reporting a pooled suicide rate of 3.77 per 100,000 in these regions.

In Pakistan, where 10.37pc of the population falls in the 15- to 19-year age group, there are no official national suicide statistics due to the absence of vital registration systems. Nonetheless, estimates indicate 130,000 to 300,000 suicide attempts per year, and 13,000 to 15,000 deaths by suicide. It is concerning that the healthcare budget for 2023-24, totalling Rs24.21 billion, lacks designated allocation for mental health, high-

lighting a worrisome gap in mental health funding.

A series of tragic events has shone a harsh spotlight on Pakistan's mental health crisis, marked by the untimely deaths of individuals grappling with severe psychological distress. In one instance, the 40-year-old son of a renowned religious cleric succumbed to a prolonged battle with severe depression. In July 2023, a life was lost to this crisis when a 63-year-old industrialist took his own life, leaving behind a note revealing his struggle with a chronic, undisclosed illness.

Such heart-wrenching incidents followed the shocking deaths by suicide of a 66-year-old psychiatrist from Multan, who ended both his own life and that of his daughter. In addition, there is the still-unresolved suicide of a celebrated actor who met a tragic end from a gunshot wound in 1986.

The concerning rise of 'kala pathar poisoning', caused by paraphenylenediamine, in districts like Rahim Yar Khan and Sahiwal is a significant public health issue, with a high mortality rate of 50.5pc among rural women.

These incidents, often linked to self-harm, emphasise the urgent need for an improved mental health infrastructure and strict regulations regarding dangerous substances. Investigations in Pakistan reveal the high prevalence of suicide attempts through pesticide ingestion and benzodiazepine overdose. The key risk factors among adolescents include mental health disorders, substance addiction, previous suicide attempts, a family history of suicide, and thoughts of suicide and homicide.

According to a 2023 study by Nazish Imran, et al, the ingestion of toxic substances was the suicide method for 50pc of the individuals in their sample (140 out of 279). Hanging was the second most common method. These findings stress the need for prompt intervention and widespread preventive measures.

Recent circumstances have intensified the demand for improved mental health services in Pakistan, a country where psychological autopsies are rarely conducted. These autopsies are crucial as they can illuminate the psychological state prior to death, inform preventative actions, provide comfort to bereaved families, and influence policy reform.

Psychological autopsies involve a detailed postmortem examination of the deceased's mental state through investigations into their life, emotions, and thoughts before death, typically by interviewing those close to them. Outcomes from these autopsies are instrumental in informing suicide prevention initiatives, enhancing mental health support, and deepening the understanding of suicide's multifaceted nature.

Despite evidence that proactive measures can prevent suicide, the unique cultural and religious context of Muslim countries, such as Pakistan, hinders data-gathering, thus emphasising the need for customised research to create effective suicide prevention strategies. As a nation, we must commit to nurturing a society where mental health is prioritised, the stigma attached to mental illness and death by suicide is eradicated, and where every individual has access to the support they need — to not just survive but thrive. -- Courtesy Dawn

Happy workers

Parvez Rahim

Research shows a causal link between happy workers and an increase — 13 per cent — in productivity, while unhappiness at work costs the world \$8.8 trillion. According to a survey conducted by Gallup, there is a "strong relationship between worker happiness and workplace engagement. Happy and engaged employees are much more likely to have a positive relationship with their boss, are better equipped to handle new challenges and changes, feel they are more valued by their employers, handle stress more effectively, and are much more satisfied with their lives".

There are three types of employees within organisations: a) 'engaged employees' who work with passion and feel a deep connection with their organisation. "They drive innovation and move the organisation forward"; b) workers who are 'not engaged' and sleepwalk through their workday, putting "time, but not energy or passion, into their work"; and c) employees who are 'actively disengaged', not only unhappy at work, but also busy acting out their unhappiness. They undermine what their engaged coworkers accomplish.

An employee contributes to productivity, if his supervisor focuses on his strengths or positive traits. At the same time, having a positive interaction with coworkers is also important. Employees who are not happy at the workplace don't maintain a positive relationship with their peers. Engaged employees feel less frustrated at work in comparison to those not engaged or actively disengaged.

Supervisors play a crucial role in workers' well-being and engage-

ment. If the employee feels uncomfortable while interacting with his supervisor, it will adversely affect his morale and performance. Such employees often take home their tension and frustration, which impacts their relations with family and friends.

In her article 'Creating a happier workplace is possible — and worth it', Jennifer Moss describes three steps organisations can take to turn around a negative environment. An expert on workplace well-being, employee happiness and workplace culture, Moss delves into the following three factors for generating happiness at work: flexibility, a sense of belonging among employees, and finding purpose in their work.

Flexibility at work: A 2023 ILO report found that greater flexibility — from staggered start times to shift-sharing, to remote working options — leads to greater productivity and improved work-life balance. A global survey of 28,000 full-time employees by Cisco shows that over 80pc of employees find that their ability to work from anywhere has made them happier.

The Covid pandemic forced organisations to allow some of their employees to work from home. However, post-pandemic, the concept of working from home has not taken root in Pakistan. Few companies here allow flexible work timings. Besides, 60pc of the workforce can't work from home, such as those engaged in the manufacturing process, in running shops, or managing hospitals, etc. Build a sense of belonging: Happiness is negatively impacted at the workplace without social interaction. People should have a sense of belonging to their organisation, which is generated by making friends, who may also be of help in their hour of need. A pleasant work

environment is created when employees contribute meaningfully to shared goals. Having social get-togethers, shared activities, etc, outside the workplace boosts people's attachment to their organisations.

Purpose in work: Businesses should responsibly and ethically serve all stakeholders, including employees, communities, and the environment — not just their management teams and shareholders. The hospitality industry suffered the most during Covid. But Hilton Hotels continued to retain recruiters that placed their employees in outside sectors that needed talent. Similarly, they announced a million empty rooms for patients who had to quarantine away from their own homes.

In 1972, I had joined a factory at Kot Lakhpat, Lahore, which was nationalised by the government. Most employees had no sense of belonging to the enterprise nor had any purpose at work to keep them motivated. Their output started to decline after the government takeover and the only purpose left for them to come to work, was their monthly salary. The number of not-engaged and actively disengaged employees started escalating.

Thereafter, I worked in an American and a British multinational company for around 27 years. There, besides a system that ensured lucrative salaries, the companies' leadership would take good care of employees' health, general well-being, fulfilling their personal needs and maintaining a work-life balance by providing recreational activities. The employees in both the above companies remained happy and motivated and delivered greater output in terms of productivity. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Umar Saif distributes Rs 825m to IT companies

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications (MoITT) Dr. Umar Saif distributed Rs825 million as cash prizes to companies playing a significant role in IT and IT services exports during the "IT and ITeS Export Award" organized by the Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), an organization of the Ministry of IT and Telecommunication, here at a local hotel on Tuesday.

Dr Umar Saif said that the IT industry was playing a pivotal role in the country's economy and it deserved maximum incentives, facilities and rewards. "These companies are strengthening the country's

economy by earning huge foreign exchange in return for the services of digital talent of Pakistan worldwide. If the performance of the IT sector continues like this, it is hoped that the target of 10 billion dollars for IT exports will be achieved soon," he added.

The federal minister said that the IT Ministry had decided to encourage companies with a positive growth in IT exports, for which the government had allocated Rs1 billion in the annual budget. He said that due to timely decisions of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) on the recommendations of the Ministry of IT, the overall IT exports in the country have increased by a record 32 percent in the

last 60 days. In the first and second quarters of the current financial year, the performance of many companies in IT exports also showed a positive trend. In such a situation, it was decided to give cash prizes from the allocated fund of one billion rupees to encourage the companies and accelerate growth. Dr. Umar Saif said that out of the Rs1bn fund, Rs825 million had been distributed to 550 companies with positive growth. "For this purpose, six categories have been made; the first top 100 companies awarded Rs 2.5 million, the second 100 companies Rs 2 million, the third 100 companies Rs 1.5 million, the fourth 100 companies Rs 1.25 million.

First plenary meeting for cotton crop to be held today

ISLAMABAD (APP): The first plenary meeting for the cotton crop will be held on February 14 (Wednesday) to discuss and deliberate the ways and means to enhance the output of the crop during the coming season to achieve sustainable agriculture growth and economic development in the country.

The meeting will evaluate the per-maund cotton price during the forthcoming season to ensure a proper rate of return to local growers, besides encouraging the farming community to bring maximum area under cotton cultivation, said Cotton Commissioner in the Ministry of National Food Security and Research Anjum Shahzad.

Talking to APP here on Tuesday, he said that the meeting will also make deliberations to overcome the challenges faced by the cotton growers and suggest innovative measures.



ISLAMABAD: Director (CIMMYT) an international maize & wheat improvement center Dr. Kevin Pixley called the Caretaker Federal Minister for national Food Security & Research.

PSDP 2023-24: Govt releases Rs 507.979b funds in seven months

ISLAMABAD (APP): The federal government has authorized the utilization of development funds amounting to Rs 507.979 billion, out of a total allocation of Rs 940 billion, for various ongoing and new social sector uplift projects of the federal ministries and divisions during the first seven months (July-January) of fiscal year 2023-24 under its Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP).

Out of the total authorized/disbursed amount, the total amount spent so far on the

development projects during the corresponding period stood at Rs 190.443 billion, according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives.

According to the disbursement mechanism of the Planning Division, the development funds allocated in the federal budget are released at the rate of 20% in the first quarter (July-September), followed by 30% each in the second and third quarters, and the remaining 20% in the last quarter (April-June) of a fiscal year.

The detail showed that Rs 127.066 billion out of a total allocated amount of Rs 211.777 billion had been disbursed to corporations including National Highway Authority (NHA), National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) and Pakistan Electric Power Company (PEPCO). For the Aviation Division, funds amounting to Rs 3.270 billion have been disbursed and Rs 668.86 million for the Board of Investment.

Similarly, the government authorized Rs 61.312 billion.

Real estate pain for US regional banks is piling up, say investors

Monitoring Desk NEW YORK/WASHINGTON: New York Community Bancorp's (NYCB.N), opens new tab exposure to commercial real estate has intensified investor scrutiny around regional banks, with some expecting more pain for those with office and multifamily property loans.

Fears about the health of the smaller banks have

escalated again a year after the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank in spring of 2023 triggered a regional banking crisis. NYCB's recent earnings release which sparked a dive of about 60% in its shares has particularly focused investors on combing through portfolios of regional banks, as small banks account for nearly 70% of all commercial real estate (CRE) loans outstanding.

Rupee gains 01 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Tuesday gained 01 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.31 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.32.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.5 and Rs282.25, respectively.

Punjab Governor says: SIFC established to promote investment in the country

Independent Report LAHORE: Continuity of policies is very important for the economic development of any country. Countries that have developed rapidly have one thing in common; there has been continuity of policies for many years. These views were expressed by Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman while talking to the delegation of Pakistan Industrial and Traders Association Front (PIAF) at Governor House Lahore today. The delegation was led by Chairman (PIAF), Senator

Zafar Iqbal Chaudhry. Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman further stated that it is very important to provide a conducive environment to businessmen for the development of the economy.

He said that issues pointed by the delegation are very important in boosting the country's economy.

He said that Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has been established to promote investment in the country, adding that priority has been to the agriculture sector under SIFC.



Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif addressing IT & ITES Export Awards 2024 Ceremony in Lahore

CDNS achieves Rs 1020 billion targets in fresh bond

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has achieved a target of Rs 1020 billion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, from July 1 to February 09, 2023-24. The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, the senior official of CDNS told APP here on Tuesday. The senior official said this was a Rs 200 billion additional annual target than the target of Rs 1300 billion for the previous financial year 2021-22. "The CDNS has

set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the current financial year (2021-22) which will promote savings culture in the country," he said.

Given the current market trend in the country, the ambitious target had been set to improve the savings culture further, he said. The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in CDNS and new reforms and innovations were being introduced. "At this time Automated Teller Machine (ATM) has also been introduced in CDNS which will provide enough facilities to the users."



KARACHI: A stock broker watches share prices during a trading session at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) in the Provincial Capital.

SCCI to organize conference to highlight business community issues

PESHAWAR (APP): President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Fuad Ishaq announced organizing a conference titled "Watan Kay Maimar Tajir Aur Sanatkar" (Builder of Nation, Trader and Industrialist) in the first week of May.

He said the conference aims to introduce current economic turmoil and business community problems in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before the federal and provincial governments and frame a

charter of the economy. Political leaders, high government officials, important dignitaries and members of the business community would be invited to the conference. Fuad Ishaq announced while chairing a meeting of SCCI's executive committee held here at the chamber house on Tuesday.

The meeting was attended by the chamber Senior Vice President Sanaulah Khan, Vice President Ijaz Khan Afridi, former Presidents Zahidullah Shinwari, Riaz Arshad.

CM chairs 40th cabinet meeting, approves provision of 10,000 interest free e-bikes to students

Independent Report
LAHORE: The 40th session of the provincial cabinet, convened under the chair of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi at his office, commended the police, administration, and law enforcement agencies for their commendable efforts in ensuring peaceful conduct of the general elections on February 8.

The CM conveyed his congratulations to the chief secretary, IG police and others for successfully overseeing the elections in a tranquil manner, emphasizing the effective role played by the caretaker government. He noted that voters exercised their democratic right in a calm atmosphere, electing their representatives

through transparent and free voting procedures. Expressing gratitude for the achieved objectives, he stated that the caretaker government made earnest endeavors to provide immediate relief to the populace. He further asserted the team's satisfaction in having dedicated themselves to serving the public to the best of their abilities.

It was decided to provide seven thousand electric bikes to male students and three thousand to female students on interest-free and convenient terms through The Bank of Punjab to mitigate the issue of smog. Additionally, the formation of an appellate committee for the Punjab Charity

Commission was approved, along with the allocation of funds for business facilitation centers. Furthermore, the installation of automated external defibrillators in Rescue 1122 ambulances for the prompt treatment of heart attack patients received the cabinet's nod. Approvals were also granted for the appointment of chairpersons for drug courts in Bahawalpur, Lahore and Multan, alongside the endorsement of decisions made in the 16th meeting of the standing committee on law and order. Provincial ministers, advisers, chief secretary, advocate general Punjab, IGP, Chairman P&D, SMBR and others were also present.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi presides over the 40th Provincial Cabinet meeting.

Revolutionary reforms made in Punjab's Sehat Sahulat Program: Minister

Independent Report
LAHORE: Professor Dr. Javed Akram, the Caretaker Punjab Health Minister, has spearheaded transformative changes in the Sehat Sahulat Program, emphasizing the welfare of the people.

During a recent meeting of the Cabinet Standing Committee for Universal Health Insurance, Dr. Akram highlighted the significant improvements made under the guidance of Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi.

Addressing the challenges faced by the program, Dr. Akram emphasized the

government's commitment to allocating health facility cards exclusively to the deserving populace of Punjab. He revealed efforts to rectify deficiencies and streamline operations, including the establishment of a comprehensive database.

Notably, Dr. Akram highlighted the staggering daily expenditure of Rs 260 million on Sehat Sahulat cards prior to the reforms, underscoring the need for fiscal responsibility. Through innovative initiatives, costs have been slashed by up to 50 percent, alleviating the financial burden on Punjab's residents.

KP Governor to launch innovative online campus management system

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali is set to introduce a groundbreaking 'Online Campus Management System' through the Governor's official portal. This initiative has been designed to enhance transparency and accountability in the education sector which will provide comprehensive compliance details, including adherence to the 2% minority quota in education and the 5% employment quota.

This announcement was made by Governor KP, Haji Ghulam Ali in

recent meeting with Program Manager Qamar Naseem here on Tuesday.

The governor reiterated the government's commitment to safeguarding the rights and entitlements of all communities, particularly vulnerable groups. He underscored the importance of this campus information management system in realizing the said objectives. The online system will offer a wide array of information, such as the number of teachers, students, and persons with disabilities, gender-segregated data, and financial details including

revenue, budget, grants, and expenses.

This system marks a significant step forward in streamlining campus management and ensuring that educational institutions comply with government quotas and regulations. Furthermore, Governor Haji Ghulam Ali also announced the imminent launch of an online complaint redressal mechanism. This platform also aims to offer swift responses to aggrieved students regarding quota issues within ten days and ensuring that grievances are addressed promptly and efficiently.



PESHAWAR: Governor KP Haji Ghulam Ali and Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ali Banafsheh Khah along with other officials cutting cake during 45th National Day of Iran last night.

Funeral prayers of Ali Amin Gandapur's father offered

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): The funeral prayer of Major @ Aminullah Khan Gandapur, father of former Federal minister Ali Amin Gandapur was offered at Besaki ground in Dera Ismail Khan on Tuesday.

The funeral prayer was attended by many prominent figures and large number of people belonging to different walks from DIKhan division and it's neighbouring towns amidst tight security.

Major (Rtd) Aminullah Gandapur was passed away on Monday due to a heart attack.

Aminullah Khan Gandapur had served as a former provincial minister as well. He has left behind two daughters and three sons including former Federal Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, Former Provincial Minister Faisal Amin Gandapur, and Tehsil Mayor Umar Amin Khan Gandapur.

KP Minister inaugurates child protection unit in Abbottabad

ABBOTABAD: Provisional Caretaker Minister for Social Welfare, Special Education, and Women Empowerment, Justice retired Arshad Qaiser on Tuesday stated that the government is determined to fulfill its international and national responsibilities for the protection of children.

He expressed these views while addressing the inauguration ceremony of the Child Protection Unit in collaboration with UNICEF, under the supervision of the Department of Social

Welfare, Special Education, and Women Empowerment Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The minister said that establishing Child Protection Units in every district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and strengthening the Child Protection Help Line 1121 are among the priorities of the government for the welfare of children.

Arshad Qaiser said that the inauguration of the Child Protection Unit in Abbottabad is a crucial milestone in strengthening the child protection system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

RWMC ensures cleanliness of Tehsil Gujar Khan

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) was ensuring the cleanliness of all tehils of the district including Tehsil Gujar Khan.

According to a RWMC spokesman, the company had deployed additional workers in evening shift in Gujar Khan to ensure the sanitation of the rural areas.

He informed that camps were being organized across the district to create awareness about the importance of cleanliness. He said that cleanliness was necessary to eliminate smog and dengue and urged the residents not to burn waste or any chemical.

PFA shuts down four bakeries, fines two food outlets

LAHORE: Punjab Food Authority's enforcement teams on Tuesday shut down four bakeries and levied fines of Rs200,000 on two food business operators (FBOs) during the inspection of bakeries and their production units in different areas of Lahore.

PFA Director General Muhammad Asim Javaid said that food safety teams thoroughly inspected several bakeries in Sundar Industrial Estate, Bhotatian, Jalo Park and on Defence Road. He said that the purpose of the inspection was to ensure the provision of food in the market as per the food safety standards and

quality parameters defined in the Punjab Pure Food Regulations. The PFA also served warning notices for improvement on four bakeries besides discarding inferior quality of khoya-poor quality of food flavours, 40kg of substandard flour and more than 20kg of prohibited food ingredients. Moreover, PFA confiscated 5,000 gum base, 720kg of fruit pulp and 150 litres of essence (Arq), he said.

Muhammad Asim further said that the provincial food regulatory body had stopped the production of four bakeries and cake shops by imposing emergency prohibition orders (EPOs).

4,199 Polio teams to administer drops

RAWALPINDI (APP): A week-long anti-polio drive will commence in the Rawalpindi district on February 26. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of District Health Authority Dr Ejaz Ahmad told APP that as many as 4,199 polio teams would go door-to-door and administer polio drops to 10,15,262 children less than five years of age in all tehils and union councils of the district during the campaign.

The CEO said 243 Union Council Medical

Officers and 858 area incharges would also participate in the drive. In addition, "361 fix centers will be set up to administer the drops". Ejaz added that anti-polio drops would also be administered at 182 transit points while teams would also be deputed at toll plazas so that no child could miss immunization.

He said that the second campaign of the year was being started after the detection of positive sample of Polio virus circulating in the area.

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International News

India, UAE sign pact on trans-continental trade corridor

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: India and the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday signed an agreement on a trade corridor that aims to connect Europe with India through parts of the Middle East by sea and rail, an ambitious plan backed by the US and the European Union.

His trip comes ahead of India's national election which is expected to begin in April.

Modi was due to inaugurate the Middle East's largest Hindu temple on Wednesday, a day after he addresses thousands of expatriates in a community event

in the capital Abu Dhabi. The visit is largely focused on galvanising the diaspora, according to experts, even though Indians in the UAE can't vote from abroad. The UAE is home to about 3.5 million Indian nationals—the largest expatriate community in the Gulf country.

Today, Modi met the UAE president Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, according to the Indian foreign ministry and local state media, their fifth meeting in eight months.

They inked several deals, including a bilateral investment treaty, building on a Comprehensive Eco-

nomie Partnership Agreement signed in 2022, India's foreign ministry said.

"This would build on previous understandings and cooperation on this matter and foster India and the UAE cooperation furthering regional connectivity," the ministry statement said.

The corridor, announced last September on the sidelines of the G20 summit in New Delhi, aims to extend from India across the Arabian Sea to the United Arab Emirates and through Saudi Arabia before connecting through Jordan and Israel to Europe.

The UN-appointed independent expert, Francesca Albanese, said last week she disagreed with French President Emmanuel Macron's description of the attack as "the biggest anti-Semitic massacre of our century".

fighting to recapture territory while Putin will only be satisfied with Kyiv's full surrender, analysts and diplomats say.

Putin may have signalled in last week's interview with right-wing US talk show host Tucker Carlson that Russia was interested in negotiations but this would be so much on Moscow's own terms that Kyiv would not countenance such talks. "I don't see any negotiations taking place any time soon," Fyodor Lukyanov, head of the Kremlin-linked Council on Foreign and Defense Policy think tank in Moscow, told. "There's nothing they can negotiate about."

Two years into Russia-Ukraine war, negotiations a distant prospect

MOSCOW (INP): After two years of war in Ukraine, there is no prospect of negotiations to find a breakthrough as Russian President Vladimir Putin, emboldened by the erosion of Western support for Kyiv, girds for a long conflict. 2024 will be another year of war as Ukraine is determined to keep on

fighting to recapture territory while Putin will only be satisfied with Kyiv's full surrender, analysts and diplomats say.

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During the meeting, the two resistance leaders discussed the latest devel-



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi walks next to the President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan during a ceremonial welcome upon his arrival in Abu Dhabi for a two-day visit to the UAE.

Israel bans UN expert's entry over 'oppression' remarks

Monitoring Desk
JERUSALEM: Israel announced on Monday a visa ban on the United Nations special rapporteur for the occupied Palestinian territories over recent comments denying Hamas's Oct 7 raid was "anti-Semitic".

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"No", Albanese wrote in French on social media platform X. "The victims of 7/10 (Oct 7) were not killed because of their Jewishness, but in response to Israeli oppression." Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz and Interior Minister Moshe Arbel called her online remark "outrageous" and said in a statement she was now "denied entry to the state of Israel". The immigration authorities had been instructed not to issue Albanese a visa, they added, also calling for her dismissal.

North Korea tests new rocket launcher control system

PYONGYANG (INP): North Korea said on Monday it had developed a new control system for a multiple rocket launcher that would lead to a "qualitative change" in its defence capabilities.

Pyongyang's Academy of Defense Science successfully carried out a "ballistic control test firing of 240-mm caliber multiple rocket launcher shells" on Saturday to develop a "controllable shell and ballistic control system" for the launcher, state news agency KCNA reported.

Gunman kills three at Greek shipping company

Monitoring Desk
ATHENS: A former employee of a Greek shipping company shot dead three people including its owner before killing himself on Monday in a coastal suburb of Athens, police said.

The shooter, 70, broke into the company's building in Glyfada and killed two men and a woman on the first floor before barricading himself inside.

"We heard gunshots and I hid under my desk before police officers helped us out of the building," another employee of the company.

IMF, WB warn Gaza conflict and Red Sea attacks may imperil global economy

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: The IMF and World Bank warned on Monday that the Gaza conflict and the related attacks on shipping through the Red Sea pose threats to the global economy.

The conflict in Gaza, raging since October, has already hit the Middle East and North Africa region's economy, said the International Monetary Fund's managing director Kristalina Georgieva.

Its knock-on effects could impact the world the longer the fighting drags on, Georgieva told the World Governments Summit, an annual gathering of business and political leaders in Dubai.

"I fear most a longevity of the conflict because, if it goes on and on, the risk of spillover goes up," she said.

Indian police fire tear gas as protesting farmers march to capital

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: Indian security forces fired tear gas on Tuesday to stop thousands of farmers demanding minimum crop prices from marching on the capital New Delhi after talks with the government failed.

Local broadcasters showed thick clouds of tear gas fired to disperse protesters near Ambala, about 200 kilometres north of the capital, with police also dropping canisters from the air by drones.

Police have set up a fearsome blockade of metal spikes, cement, and steel barricades on the highways from three surrounding states leading to New Delhi. "Maximum numbers have been deployed," Ranjay Atrishya, assistant commissioner of Delhi Police, told AFP. Public gatherings of more than five people have been banned in the city. Farmers in India have political heft due to their sheer numbers, and the threat of renewed

IMF, WB warn Gaza conflict and Red Sea attacks may imperil global economy

"Right now we see a risk of spillover in the Suez Canal," she said, as Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels have attacked Red Sea shipping leading to the crucial maritime passage.

The Houthis say they are targeting what they consider Israeli-linked shipping in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza, pushing some cargo carriers to take longer and more expensive routes to avoid attacks.

The UN Conference on Trade and Development warned late last month that the volume of commercial traffic passing through the Suez Canal had fallen more than 40 percent in the previous two months.

Georgieva said that if there are other "consequences in terms of where the fighting goes, it could be more problematic for the world as a whole".

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protests comes ahead of national elections likely to begin in April. Two-thirds of India's 1.4 billion people draw their livelihood from agriculture, accounting for nearly a fifth of the country's GDP, according to government figures.

Farmers have called for a "Delhi Chalo", or "March to Delhi", echoing January 2021 when farmers breached barricades and marched into the city on Republic Day during their then-year-long protest.

"The farmers are peaceful, but tear gas is being used against us through drones," Sarwan Singh Pandher, a top farmers' union official from Punjab, told reporters. "The protest will continue till the government agrees to our demands."

"Indian broadcasters showed columns of hundreds of tractors moving towards the capital from the surrounding states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, with some using their machines to drag barricades off the roads.



Geneva-based doctor Raouf Salti holds 17-month-old Zeina, next to 16-year-old Yusef, both of whom were evacuated from Gaza to Switzerland to receive medical treatment, at Geneva airport, Switzerland.

Civilian vessel attacked off Yemeni coast - UK Navy

LONDON (Online): A civilian ship has come under fire off the coast of Yemen, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) has confirmed. No casualties or significant damage have been reported.

Since the start of Israel's military operation against Hamas in Gaza, Houthi militants controlling large swaths of Yemen have been targeting merchant ships traversing the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The Shiite group

had initially focused on vessels they believed to be linked to Israel, claiming they were acting in protest over the country's actions in Palestinian territory. However, after the US and the UK conducted a number of strikes on Houthi facilities, the group said it would now also attack ships affiliated with either nation.

On Monday, the UKMTO, which is a monitoring service operated by the British Navy,



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Dr. Gohar Ejaz chairing a briefing at NADRA headquarters.

PSL 9 trophy unveiled at Lahore's Polo Ground

Sports Desk
LAHORE: The PSL 9 trophy has been unveiled at the Polo Ground of the Race Course Park in Lahore in the presence of PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi, franchise owners, and star cricketers.

The trophy is "The Orion Trophy" and will be a source of motivation for all the teams participating in the tournament. The trophy embodies the spirit of the Pakistan Super League where each team shines brightly as they strive for glory.

Mohsin Naqvi said: "It is a pleasure to announce that PSL is entering its ninth season, and I am proud to say that PSL continues to be a success story for Pakistan cricket."

"Today, as we unveil this Orion trophy, we look forward to a month-long celebration of the beautiful game of cricket and the excitement and drama that accompanies it."

"PSL connects to the hearts of people of Pakistan, who cherish every

thrilling moment of the game. Be it towering sixes, high-intensity bowling, and top-notch catches, PSL offers an emotional rollercoaster."

"I would like to thank the title sponsor of the league, they truly have uplifted the game of cricket in our country through their support and have become synonymous with the name of the league. All the successes over the past eight years are a testament to commitment of the Pakistan Super League."



LAHORE: Captains of PSL teams poses with PSL-9 trophy during inauguration ceremony of PSL-9 in Provincial Capital.

Ashrafi condemns India's role in Israeli attacks against Palestinians

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative for Religious Affairs and Pakistani Diaspora in Middle East and Muslim Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Tuesday accused India of complicity in the violence against Palestinians.

Addressing a press conference, he said according to reports, Israel was utilizing Indian-made drones to perpetrate attacks on the innocent people of Rafah, a claim that has stirred international concern.

Ashrafi who is also the Chairman of Pakistan Ulama Council (PUC) condemned the alleged collusion between India and Israel, stating that while India continued to oppress Kashmiris, it was also practically involved in the bloodshed of Palestinian civilians. He pointed fingers at Adani-Elbit, suggesting

that the conglomerate was facilitating the provision of drones to the Israeli government, thus exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Palestine.

The recent Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) special summit convened to address the Palestine issue resulted in a decision to exert pressure on countries supplying weapons to Israel. Ashrafi called upon Muslim nations to sever financial and economic ties with such countries if they fail to adhere to the OIC's directives.

He urged for a boycott of Indian products, similar to the ongoing boycott of Israeli goods, in response to India's alleged complicity in the attacks on Palestinians.

Expressing grave concern, Ashrafi warned of dire consequences if Rafah continued to be targeted, emphasizing the potential ripple effects on neighboring Muslim nations.



QUETTA: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Agriculture Muhammad Asif Dummar meeting with Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Amir Muhammad Khan Jozgezi.

WAPDA to divert River Swat at Mohmand Dam Project in April

PESHAWAR (APP): Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) is going to divert River Swat in April this year at the under construction Mohmand Dam, as diversion system of the project is steadily heading towards completion in accordance with the timelines.

In this connection, Chairman WAPDA, Engr Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (Retd) visited Mohmand Dam, being constructed across River Swat in Mohmand district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, said a press release issued here on Tuesday.

He visited in detail construction sites of the spillway, the diversion tunnels and the power house

to review construction activities going on there. Advisor (Projects) WAPDA, GM and PD Mohmand Dam Project and the Consultants and the Contractors were also present during the visit. Later, the chairman also presided over a progress review meeting at the project office. At present, construction work is continuing on 12 sites.

The project team gave a detailed briefing about diversion scheme, concreting and slope stabilization at the spillway, slope excavation and support works at the power house, excavation at the irrigation tunnels, construction of structures across the irrigation canals and finishing works at the permanent access roads.

JIP debunks alliance with PTI

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Professor Mohammad Ibrahim Khan, has refuted claims of allying with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). In response to a statement by PTI spokesman Rauf Hassan, Professor Ibrahim Khan, in a released statement from Markaz-e-Islami, asserted that while PTI has the authority to form a government with any political party, it lacks moral justification to associate JIP with their efforts. Professor Ibrahim Khan clarified that JIP has not reached a decision regarding alliance formation with PTI and criticized PTI for using their party's name in the process without consent. He deemed such actions as inappropriate and immoral, emphasizing that JIP will not extend its support.

ECC approves Rs.7.4 bln 'Ramzan Relief Package'; tariff rationalization

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet here on Tuesday approved Rs.7,492.75 million proposed Ramzan Relief Package-2024 to provide relief to the general public during the upcoming holy month of Ramzan.

The package is aimed at providing subsidy to the targeted beneficiaries of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) with net amount of Rs. 7,492.75 million, which is provided for in the budget for 2023-24, according to a press statement issued by the fi-

nance ministry. The ECC meeting was presided over by Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue, and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar.

The ECC meeting was attended by the Minister for Privatization and Inter-Provincial Coordination, Fawad Hasan Fawad; Minister for Interior, Commerce & Industries, Gohar Ejaz; Minister for Energy and Petroleum Division, Mohammad Ali; Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Sami Saeed; Minister of Maritime Affairs, Communica-

tion and Railways, Shahid Ashraf Tarar; Deputy Chairman Planning Commission, Dr. Muhammad Jehanzaeb Khan; Advisor to PM on Finance, Dr. Waqar Masood, federal secretaries, and other senior government officers of the relevant ministries. The committee approved a summary of the Ministry of Commerce (Tariff Policy Wing), regarding "Individual Tariff Rationalization Proposals for Different Sectors for Review of Custom Duties" and advised that tariff rationalization should be coordinated with the trade policy. ECC also approved a proposal regarding "Permission to Import Wheat and Export of Wheat Flour under Export Facilitation Scheme 2021" presented to the forum by the Ministry of Commerce and directed the relevant Ministries to prepare comprehensive proposals for enhancing the opportunities for valued added exports. The ECC also approved a summary of the Power Division regarding the "Commissioning of 1263 MW CAPP Punjab Thermal Power (Pvt) Limited, Jhang (PPTL)".

Alvi writes to Swiss President for gift of documents related to Quaid-i-Azam's brother

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has written a letter to the President of the Swiss Confederation, seeking assistance in providing copies of archival documents about the life of Ahmad Ali Jinnah (brother of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah) to Pakistan.

The documents, currently in possession of Zurich's City Archives, are a compilation of photographs, history and details of the life of Ahmad Ali Jinnah and related to late Fatima Goepfert Jinnah, niece of the Founder of Pakistan, a President Secretariat press release said.

The President, in the letter, stated that given the status and importance of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, having access to these documents was a matter of national value and interest for Pakistani people.

President Alvi conveyed that First Lady Samina Alvi had visited Zurich Archives in January 2024, and after reading most of the documents, had taken a personal interest in the matter.

The President has requested Switzerland to gift this historical document collection to the National Archives of Pakistan.



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Health, Dr Nadeem Jan presides a meeting of DRAP at Central Drugs Laboratory.

Caretaker Interior minister visits NADRA headquarters

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Interior Dr. Gohar Ijaz on Tuesday visited the National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) headquarters along with the Secretary Interior and Director General FIA.

Solangi reads news bulletin to give message govt considers radio important communication medium

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Tuesday created new history by reading English news bulletin on Radio Pakistan on World Radio Day.

The minister read 1.00 pm news bulletin on Radio Pakistan and gave an important message that the government considered radio as an important medium of communication.

NADRA Chairman Lieutenant General Munir Afsar welcomed the Minister in headquarters, said in a press release.

Solangi also participated in Radio Pakistan's podcast program and expressed his views on various issues.

A detailed briefing on the institution was given to the minister by NADRA officials.

The minister said that the government was committed to strengthen Radio Pakistan and make it a more effective and dynamic medium of communication.

The Minister said that concerted steps had been taken to make the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) public friendly.

This move by the caretaker information minister also indicated that the government was committed to promoting radio broadcasting in the country.

The facility of testing medical equipment was now available in the laboratory, he said adding that the registration and licensing system in DRAP had been digitized.

The government was also working to promote digital radio broadcasting in Pakistan, he maintained.

He said that coordinated measures to promote merit and transparency had been ensured.

"Radio Pakistan is the oldest and largest broadcasting organization in the country with a wide audience in different languages. This initiative of the minister would strengthen Radio Pakistan as a national broadcaster and help promote digital radio broadcasting in Pakistan."

Drug app launched to ensure availability of medicines: Dr. Nadeem

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Federal Minister for National Health Services Dr. Nadeem Jan on Tuesday said that a drug app had been launched to ensure availability of the medicines.

He said that his ministry took measures to ensure registration of sugar, blood pressure and life-saving medicines on emergency basis.

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Dr. Nadeem Jan said that it was his priority to

keep the cost of medicines within the reach of the commonman.

He said that the Caretaker government would not allow the sale of sub-standard medicines and hoarding of the medicines.

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NADRA Chairman Lieutenant General Munir Afsar welcomed the Minister in headquarters, said in a press release.

The minister read 1.00 pm news bulletin on Radio Pakistan and gave an important message that the government considered radio as an important medium of communication.

A detailed briefing on the institution was given to the minister by NADRA officials.

The government was also working to promote digital radio broadcasting in Pakistan, he maintained.

The facility of testing medical equipment was now available in the laboratory, he said adding that the registration and licensing system in DRAP had been digitized.

The government was also working to promote digital radio broadcasting in Pakistan, he maintained.

He said that coordinated measures to promote merit and transparency had been ensured.

"Radio Pakistan is the oldest and largest broadcasting organization in the country with a wide audience in different languages. This initiative of the minister would strengthen Radio Pakistan as a national broadcaster and help promote digital radio broadcasting in Pakistan."

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