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Caretaker PM vows to continue making efforts to solve problems confronting country's economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairing a meeting to review various issues of Karachi Electric (K.E), the prime minister said that the caretaker government had resolved major long-standing problems in a short span of time to move the country towards economic stability. He said the caretaker setup also provided all possible facilities on priority to the international investors and business community to attract maximum foreign direct investment in the country. He emphasized that the caretaker government was committed to continue its efforts to resolve the problems facing the country's economy till its last day of working.

The prime minister directed to find out solutions on priority basis to the issues faced by the Karachi Electric. The delegation of K.E thanked the prime minister and his team for resolving the long awaited issues of Karachi Electric. The prime minister also hailed the signing of the interconnection agreement between National Transmission and Distribution Company (NTDC) and Karachi Electric (K.E) held the other day.

The CEO of Karachi Electric paid tribute to the caretaker PM and the government officials for solving the problems faced by the company on priority basis. The prime minister directed that NEPRA and Karachi Electric should jointly find a solution to these problems on a priority basis and submit a report in this regard as soon as possible. Caretaker minister for energy Muhammad Ali, Chief Executive Officer of K.E and concerned high officials participated in the meeting.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a review meeting regarding Karachi Electric.

PTI decides to play opposition's role in Centre, Punjab

Barrister Saif says PTI took this decision as it wants "harmony and environment of reconciliation" in country

PESHAWAR (INP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) decided to sit on opposition benches in the centre and Punjab on directives of the party founder, said Barrister Saif.

Speaking to media persons after meeting Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chief Aftab Ahmad Sherpao, Barrister Saif reiterated that the PTI's mandate was stolen in the General Elections. "As per Forms 45, the PTI has the majority to form the governments in the centre as well as Punjab. Our protest will continue till our constitutional demands are met," he added.

Barrister Saif said that in the meeting with QWP leadership, the PTI delegation conveyed party founder Imran Khan's message. He said that Aftab Ahmad Sherpao was requested to join hands with the PTI to devise a joint strategy against rigging in the elections.

Speaking on the occasion, QWP leader Sikandar Sherpao said that the political situation is getting complicated day by day. "It is a good sign that political parties are engaging with each other," he added.

Uncertainty looms over Pakistan's political future as none of the major political parties - PML-N, PPP or the PTI-backed independent candidates - secured a simple majority in the National Assembly in the February 8 general elections.

Political stakeholders were making efforts to forge alliances and secure 169 seats in the 336-member lower house of parliament.

PTI-backed Independent candidates consolidated their lead in the general elections 2024 over mainstream political parties, especially in the National and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assemblies, throughout the result announcement process. According to the results announced so far, independent candidates have managed to win 101 seats. It is worth mentioning that out of these 101 independent candidates, 92 are supported by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf while nine are general independent candidates.

Incoming coalition govt won't last 10 months, says Pir Pagara

HYDERABAD (INP) - Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) leader Pir Pagara has said the new government will go no longer than eight or ten months and there may be martial law or emergency afterwards.

The Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) on Friday staged a sit-in in Jamshoro against alleged rigging in the general elections held on Feb 8.

Addressing the protesters, GDA leader Pir Pagara said, "If Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder is a thief, then everyone is a thief."

"There has been buying and selling in the election on large-scale."

"Where was the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Feb 8? If you do not give justice to the people, they will take their own decision," Pagara said, adding Pak Army is our own military and we cannot leave it alone.

GDA leader Liaquat Jatoi said Zardari had been given Sindh for the fourth time in the result of rigged elections.

"We are not orphans, we have fought for 15 years against the oppressive system," he stated.

GDA leader Saira Bano said after the mega election rigging, the chief election commissioner should go home.

She said her leadership had spread the message of love but those who saw Pakistan with evil eye, their eyes would be plucked out.

GDA leader Arbab Ghulam Rahim stated the people joined the sit-in as per their own will and wish due to their love for the Pir Sahib.

"They had come all the way from Thar to there on their own expenses and demanding free and fair elections to form a new government," he concluded.



Mr. Murtaza Solangi, Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting inaugurating the publication of the newsletter titled "PTV Times" at PTV centre, Islamabad.



HYDERABAD: Hundreds of thousands of supporters of Grand Democratic Alliance and Hur Jamat participate in a sit-in protest against rigging in general election 2024, at M-9 Motorway near Jamshoro. (Inset) GDA Leader and spiritual leader of Hur Jamat Pir Sahib Pagara addressing to sit in protest.

PTI govt's dictatorial behavior cause of no-confidence motion

QUETTA (APP): Baluchistan National Party (BNP) chief Sardar Akhtar Mengal said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government's dictatorial behavior was the cause of no-confidence motion against it.

In a statement in response to Maulana Fazlur Rehman's revelations, he said PTI's behaviour forced all parties to come together.

None of this would have happened if the PTI government had taken the opposition along with it, he said. He said that former

Akhtar Mengal says: PTI govt's dictatorial behavior cause of no-confidence motion

Army Chief General Bajwa had asked us not to bring no-confidence motion. Sardar Akhtar Mengal claimed that General Bajwa had agreed to dissolve the assemblies and conduct new elections to Imran Khan. Shehbaz Sharif was afraid that if Imran Khan was not removed, he would vote him out of the election, he revealed.

After that, Maulana Fazlur Rehman also organized Iftar at Sindh House and after Iftar, we met General Bajwa, he further revealed. He said Asif

18th Round of Pak-Turkiye HLMDG meeting successfully held from 13-16 February

RAWALPINDI (Online): 18th Round of Pakistan-Turkiye High Level Military Dialogue Group (HLMDG) meeting was successfully held in Ministry of Defence, Rawalpindi, Pakistan from 13-16 February 2024. Lt Gen (Retd) Hamood uz Zaman Khan, Secretary Defence, Government of Pakistan led Pakistan's delegation while Turkish delegation was headed by General Irfan Ozsert, Deputy Chief of Turkish General Staff.

Prior to holding of Plenary Session, General Irfan Ozsert, Deputy Chief of Turkish General Staff had a meeting with Lt Gen (Retd) Hamood uz Zaman Khan, Secretary Defence. During the HLMDG meeting, matters of mutual interest including whole spectrum of bilateral defence cooperation came under discussion. Both leaders expressed satisfaction on the pace of defence cooperation and pledged to take it to new heights. The issues like security, counter terrorism and prevailing regional as well as geopolitical environment also came under discussion. In addition, delegation took stock of the progress made so far since holding of HLMDG meeting in Turkiye last year.



RAWALPINDI: H.E. General Irfan Ozsert, Deputy Chief of Turkish General Staff called on Lt Gen (Retd) Hamood uz Zaman Khan, Secretary Defence, at Ministry of Defence.

Jam Kamal vows to remove Balochistan's sense of deprivation

QUETTA (APP): Former Chief Minister of Balochistan Jam Kamal Khan Alyani, on Friday said PML-N will try its best to work up to the expectations of the people of the province.

Speaking at a state-run news channel, he said Pakistan Muslim League (N) will make concerted efforts to remove sense of deprivation prevailing in Balochistan.

"It is economic and social backwardness that led to sense of deprivation among masses in Balochistan," he said while reiterating party's resolve to live up to the expectations of the common man of the province.

Two terrorists killed, cop martyred in Tank joint operation

PESHAWAR (INP): Two terrorists were killed and two injured but fled while a cop was martyred in joint operation of Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) and security forces in Tank on Friday.

SSP CTD Najamul Hassan said that on an intelligence tip-off regarding presence of wanted terrorists, a joint operation was launched in Tank.

During operation, cross firing took place between the security forces and the terrorists.

In exchange of fire, two terrorists were killed while their two accomplices were injured but managed to escape. A cop Zahid was also martyred in the fire exchange.

The killed terrorists belonging to the banned organization TTP Betni Parake group were wanted by police and CTD in 23 cases.

PPP secures PB-9 victory

QUETTA: In a major electoral victory, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has emerged victorious in the PB-9 constituency of the Kohlu region in Balochistan.

According to unofficial results, Mir Naseebullah Marri secured victory with an impressive tally of 6,279 votes. Independent candidate Gazian Marri came in second with 3,368 votes, while the PML-N candidate Nawab Jangaiz Marri secured the third position with 2,881 votes.

Notably, the electoral process faced delays and challenges, leading to the postponement of voting in seven polling stations on February 8. However, with the completion of the voting process, the final outcome has been determined, cementing Mir Naseebullah Marri's victory in the PB-9 constituency.

85 seats taken away from party 'fraudulently'

ISLAMABAD (INP): PTI Central Information Secretary Raof Hasan said that 2024 would be remembered due to the "biggest voter fraud" in Pakistan's history against the party and its candidates.

"According to our estimates, out of 177 seats which were supposed to be ours, only 92 have been given to us. And 85 seats have been taken away from us fraudulently," he said at a press conference in Islamabad, adding that the party was taking constitutional and legal steps in this regard. "We have verified data about 46 seats and it is being compiled for 39 seats," he said. He said that the party had three ways to ascertain alleged rigging in the polls, saying that there were discrepancies between the Form 45 and the Form 47.

He further said that there was also a huge difference in the numbers of votes polled for National Assembly and provincial assembly seats.

He said that the number of rejected votes, in certain cases, exceeded the margin of victory. PTI's Seemabia Tahir then took the stage and played a video of alleged rigging in the Feb 8 polls.

People's decision to be implemented by summoning NA session soon: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Friday said that the decision made by the people in general elections would be implemented by summoning the first session of new National Assembly (NA).

"We will implement the verdict given by the people of Pakistan and the NA session will be convened as soon as the Election Commission of Pakistan forwards the official results to the Assembly's Secretariat," he said while addressing the launching ceremony of the newsletter of the Pakistan Television (PTV).

He said it was a commendable initiative of the PTV to issue a newsletter that would eventually promote reading and writing habits among the youth. The minister recalled that he started his professional journey with print reporting as part of the launch team of The News that carried his first by-line news story on February 11, 1991.

He said modern trends in journalism had not only created opportunities but also big challenges especially those that were related to voice cloning, deep fake and Artificial Intelligence. Solangi underlined the need for the PTV to align itself with the modern technologies for its progress as well as addressing the challenges associated with such technologies. In addition to live broadcast, the PTV would have to create quality products in the digital landscape, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) leader Hafiz Hamdullah addressing a joint press conference along with PTI leader Barrister Doctor Muhammad Ali Saif after the meeting with JUI F chief Fazal-ur-Rehman at his residence in the Federal Capital.

Maulana Fazl retracts from blaming Gen Faiz for PTI govt's ouster

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Fazlur Rehman on Friday clarified his remarks regarding the role of former Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) chief Lt Gen (retd) Faiz Hameed - the then-Peshawar corps commander - in the no-confidence vote against former prime minister Imran Khan and the PTI government, saying that he had mistakenly uttered the ex-spouse master's name.

Pakistan had seen for the first time in its history the ouster of a prime minister through a vote of no-confidence (VONC), the efforts for which were led by the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), an alliance of parties led by the PML-N.

For its part, the PTI had accused the PDM of colluding with the US and hatching a regime change conspiracy to topple Imran's government and blamed the military, which was led by Bajwa at the time, for letting the then-dispensation in Islamabad go ahead with the alleged conspiracy. The US has repeatedly denied any interference.

Election tribunals formed for Sindh and Balochistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Friday announced the formation of election tribunals for Sindh and Balochistan provinces to address the complaints of election irregularities. The tribunals will consist of judges from the high courts and will hear the pleas of the candidates and parties who have challenged the results of the general elections.

According to the notification, four tribunals have been set up for Sindh province, while three tribunals have been established for Balochistan province. For the Karachi division, the tribunals comprising Justice Muhammad Karim Khan Agha and Justice Adnan

Iqbal Chaudhry will conduct the hearings. Justice Muhammad Iqbal will hear pleas related to Sukkur and Shaheed Benazirabad divisions, while Justice Amjad Ali will deal with electoral issues on Mirpur Khas and Hyderabad divisions. Justice Muhammad Saleem will hear election complaints related to Larkana division. In Balochistan, Election Tribunal One will consist of Abdullah Baloch, Election Tribunal Two will consist of Justice Rozi Khan, while Tribunal Three will consist of Justice Muhammad Amir Nawaz Rana.

The tribunals will start functioning from next week and will dispose of the cases within four months as per the law.

SC fixes for hearing petition seeking nullification of Feb 8 election

ISLAMABAD (Online): The petition seeking nullification of February 8 general election has been fixed for hearing in Supreme Court (SC).

A 3-member bench of SC presided over by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa will hear the case on Feb 19.

Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali are included in the bench.

Important legal and constitutional questions have been raised in the petition.

Summon notices have been issued to the respondents.

It is pertinent to mention here a citizen Ali Khan had filed this petition in SC four days earlier.



QUETTA: Former Chief Minister Balochistan Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch meeting with Chairman PkMAP Mehmood Khan Achakzai.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Hiking gas prices

By increasing gas prices by up to 45pc to recover an additional Rs242bn from all categories of consumers, the caretaker government has met another goal of the \$3bn IMF programme. The cabinet approved the price hike recommended by the ECC on Thursday — the deadline for the implementation of the IMF condition. The significant part of the decision is the approval of uniform gas rates for the cash-rich fertiliser companies, largely revoking massive subsidies being pocketed by them for decades. However, the powerful textile industry again got away with a much smaller raise than proposed by the energy minister for already hugely subsidised captive power — despite the condition to make gas supplies for inefficient captive power plants expensive in order to divert the resource to cheaper RLNG power plants for generation. Apparently, the industry minister, a former Aptma chairman, got his way on the pretext that higher captive power gas prices would affect textile exports.

While the increase in fuel prices has been made to ensure the timely release of the last tranche of \$1.2bn under the Stand-by Arrangement facility ending in April, it was also crucial for the gas sector's stability. The new government taking over soon will be constrained to negotiate another longer, bigger IMF bailout to prevent the nation's finances from collapsing and avert a potential sovereign default. It was also crucial to improve the cash flow of the two public gas firms and slow down the increase in the circular debt in the gas sector, as well as discourage the wasteful use of the fuel. Higher gas prices would not only put more burden on the common man reeling under the rising cost of living, it will also potentially raise food and other prices further, and might delay monetary easing. The State Bank, which has maintained its key policy rate at 22pc, last month revised up its inflation projections for the fiscal year to 23-25pc from earlier estimates of 20-22pc. In its last monetary policy statement, it said that the impact of the tight monetary stance to bring down inflation was "diluted by sizeable adjustments in administered energy prices ... The large adjustments have significantly impacted the inflation outturns and its near-term outlook". Unless the authorities undertake serious reforms to address the underlying structural issues in the energy sector to avoid such periodic shocks, price stability will remain elusive.

New realities

Faisal Bari

The state or powerful institutions or people within the state using the law to target individuals and social media to undermine, destabilise and delegitimise individuals, organisations and institutions they think are working against the interest of the state, the country or their own, and using brute power to suppress dissent or alternative points of view with impunity, has become much more common in recent decades and across a wide variety of settings. This is witnessed not just in countries where institutions of democracy and law are weaker; it has been happening in more advanced countries too. In particular, the US has thrown up plenty of examples over the last decade or so. It is true, though, that these instances are more frequent, blatant and egregious in countries with struggling democracies and justice systems. Of course, these activities undermine democracy and the rule of law and justice even more.

We have seen these activities recently, and carried out quite openly, in Pakistan. A journalist went 'missing' for three to four months. Everyone 'knew' he had been abducted but no one can name the agencies who took him away. The courts could not get him out, and police refused to 'find' him. When he got back, there was no inquiry about where he had been, who had taken him and what all they did to him. His physical condition clearly told us that he had not been kept in comfortable circumstances, yet, no law-enforcement or judicial institution tried to step into the space.

On the larger issue of 'missing persons', everyone knows they are not missing and state agencies have even acknowledged as much in the case of some. There has been a judicial commission on 'missing persons' for a long time, and cases have been in courts for years. The relatives of the 'missing' have been protesting on the streets and on social media for years. Yet, there has been no

progress. Every now and then, a judge of a higher court makes a statement but nothing comes out of it. It is all a badly acted drama. Nobody believes that institutions have any intention or power to check the impunity of the state agencies, but the drama continues. Families continue to be devastated at the hands of the 'state'. Recently, we have also seen the more blatant use of legal instruments and the law to target individuals. People are arrested on the basis of trumped-up charges and FIRs so that they stay in police custody or judicial remand for weeks while they try to get bail or the fake cases quashed. But even if they succeed in getting bail in one case or if the case is thrown out by the courts, the law enforcers have them arrested under a different FIR. Sometimes, there are multiple FIRs of the same incident in different jurisdictions, allowing the police custody of the person and the ability to move them around. If the state does not want you to be free and to move about freely or express your mind, it has plenty of ways even within the law (though not in accordance with its spirit) to ensure you no longer have the freedom or ability to enjoy the freedom of movement and expression guaranteed to every citizen in almost every constitution or structure of governance.

Then there is the role of social media, which has made it easier for the government to be able to produce and disseminate information and/or propaganda. State machinery can question, undermine and/or destroy the reputation of an individual or institution by producing, reproducing and disseminating information or propaganda easily. A person or an individual institution, even large institutions, are not able to counter the kind of firepower that a state can muster in the creation and dissemination of propaganda. We have seen many examples of this of late. This can be dangerous. Social media has not only been used for hate-mongering, it has also been used for in-

cluding hate, even violence, against individuals and institutions. Again, we have seen many examples of this.

These things are not happening in Pakistan alone. India, over recent years, gives plenty of examples of this sort of egregious state behaviour. Maria Ressa, a journalist with 40-odd years of experience in the Philippines and the region, and the recipient of the Nobel peace prize for 2021, has documented it for the Philippines in her book *How to Stand Up to a Dictator* (2022).

She was at the receiving end of this treatment by the state in the Philippines. She has a dozen or so cases against her, has been arrested numerous times, her news organisation has borne the brunt of the repression, and all of this for trying to be a good journalist and report truthfully against the state.

The social media campaign against her and her organisation has also made her a target, to the point where she wears a bullet-proof vest when going out in public and has had to increase security around herself and her organisation multiple times. The legal fees alone of fighting the battle with the state almost bankrupted her organisation. But this is not the only example. There are plenty of other documented cases from many countries. What is harder to see is a way forward. How does democracy and the rule of law and institutions of justice survive this new reality? Is the descent into fascism inevitable? One hopes not.

The people have to think of new ways of organising to be able to counter the state's new tactics. Communities have to think through how interactions among its members can be structured to ensure this abuse of the law does not happen — if the state still makes it difficult, they have to ensure that individuals and institutions have support from others in the community.

It will take time to figure this one out. But a keen awareness of the new reality is the first step.

Cultural change for economy

Shahid Mehmood

The topic of Pakistan's non-ending economic quagmire elicits many proposals, some good, some reworded, and some repetitive. Rarely, if ever, is there a discussion on cultural aspects impinging on economic outcomes.

I argue that, for the economic transformation of the country, cultural change is as important as factors like investment, savings, fiscal policy, etc. Importantly, the argument centres not just on government and governance — which are the usual targets, for good reason — but also on society. What follows is a brief description of where and what aspects need a change.

Let us start with the sensitive topic of religion. When we talk of the economic performance we would like to emulate, one inescapable conclusion is that religion takes a back seat in the affairs of the state and society and has a temperate, minor influence. Pakistan, however, represents the case of a country and society where faith and extreme attitudes are deeply woven into the fabric of society, as shown recently in an excellent survey by Dr Durre-e-Nayab and her team (PIDE Basics Survey).

This leads to several repercussions. Take the example of the institution of insurance, one of the most effective instruments devised to lessen risks surrounding our lives. Pakistan's insurance penetration rate is hardly 0.91 per cent, lower even among regional peers (in contrast, 90pc of households in Japan are covered by life insurance), mainly because the majority consider it to be against their religious beliefs. This, in turn, leads to spillovers that go far beyond economics. The search for physical and financial security to counter risks, for example, often leads individuals into the hands of extractive actors, who use them to get their illegal deeds done.

Ironically, it's a form of slavery that religion prohibits, but the same beliefs are cited as a hindrance to accepting instruments like

insurance or savings accounts. This mental outlook needs to change.

The second aspect where a cultural change needs to take root is the acceptance of divergent points of view. Modern economic growth did not come about merely through erecting cemented structures. In fact, it was a long, protracted battle of ideas from which theories and practices of modern growth emerged. That transformation was underpinned by intellectual humility and tolerance of others' opinion.

Such humility, unfortunately, is largely lacking in Pakistan. Across the country, what one usually encounters is the 'my way or the highway' approach. People frequently give opinions as if they know everything, repulsed by even the slightest impression that they may be wrong on some issue. Sadly, this attitude extends to the economist community of Pakistan (generally speaking), their senseless grandstanding being based on limited reading and understanding of historical circumstances, all the while answering to their own inert biases.

Third, Pakistani society and our governments have to give up their 'let's kill the rich' attitude. There is a dire need to realise that not every person in Pakistan who has made his/her way to riches is a haramkhor. This attitude is anathema to wealth creation. There are enough examples of individuals who have become rich by dint of their hard work, dedication and industriousness.

Yes, there is ample corruption as well as leeches who have accumulated wealth through dubious means. But more often than not, we find that the basis of their accumulation is support from governance structures (subsidies, fat contracts, lax application of laws that help them get away, etc.), which in turn perpetuates a culture of impunity, theft and corruption.

So let's realise that wealth and wealth creation by genuine means is some-

thing to celebrate rather than scoff at.

Fourth, people need to recognise that there is no substitute for hard work (physical and mental). Shortcuts (jugaar) can only take you so far, and are never a good strategy to gain long-term success and credibility. Examples abound, from 'professors' who achieved the position through plagiarising papers to 'double shah'-type characters, but a recent one would do.

Last year, Amazon suspended thousands of accounts from Pakistan for fraudulent business practices. It never occurred to the perpetrators that their behaviour would not only shunt them out of the large-scale online marketplace, but also severely diminish the chances of other honest entrepreneurs/businessmen in Pakistan trying to establish themselves there. Neither did the government attempt to prosecute them for tarnishing the country's already low reputation.

Put another way, the attempted jugaar may have severely dented our access to one of the largest firms in the world (Amazon's market cap stands at \$1.77 trillion). These kinds of jugaars and rip-offs are common across the country, in every sphere of life, and are basically a reflection of a lack of ethical and moral standing upon which a healthy, trust-enhancing society is built.

The points and issues to ponder are many, but I will end by suggesting that both society and the government need to realise that economic growth and change is not merely about endless amounts of cement, steel, brick and mortar.

Nor would merely increasing the Public Sector Development Programme ensure economic prosperity (an issue to be taken up later). Breaking the cycle of economic backwardness has to be complemented by a cultural change that values ethics, morality and emancipation of mind from the clutches of obscurantism and mediocrity.

Commerce News

Govt urged to frame business-friendly policies for economic stability

PESHAWAR (Online): Members of the business community expressed grave concern over rising gas, electricity prices, and retaining policy rate at highest level and economic and industrial slow-down, urging the government to frame business-friendly policies to stabilize the economy.

The concern was taken up during a meeting of delegation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa businessmen led by president of Industrialists Association Peshawar (IAP) Ayub Zakori with Caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar at

PMO, said in a press release here on Friday.

Other members of the delegation include Senator Nauman Wazir, SVP Haris Mufti, and Secretary General Muqtasid Ahsan, Executive members Adeel Rauf, Sherbaz Bilour and Zarak Khan.

During the meeting, Governor SBP, Secretary Finance Division, Chairman NHA and FBR, members FBR Policy custom, IR Ops, Custom Ops, Chiefs of FBR Policy customs and IR Ops were also present.

In the meeting, concerns of industrial sector over economic

challenges, higher energy prices and costs pushed on to consumers, all time high monetary policy rate and cost push inflation, credit lending and loan portfolio issues to private business against provincial bank deposits, and implementation of Axlé load regime which is mother to higher national fuel bill and commodity costs were extensively dissected and discussed.

Ayub Zakori while speaking on the occasion said prices of gas, electricity and fuel along with bringing policy rate to single digit is essential for flourishing business, trade

and industries and stabilization of the economy.

He urged the government to thoroughly review all decisions and frame policies in the best interest of the national economy.

The Caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar assured the KP businessmen delegation of taking proactive steps for early resolution of all issues. In this regard, the interim premier on the occasion directed concerned ministries, divisions, secretaries and institutions to resolve highlighted issues.



GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgi-Balistan Haji Gulbar Khan presiding over the meeting regarding the Dasu Hydro power project effecties issue at CM Secretariat.

Envoy assures cooperation for making ICCI BOC successful in Dubai

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates Faisal Niaz Tirmizi Friday said that his Embassy would extend all possible cooperation to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry in making the Business Opportunities Conference (BOC) a landmark event.

Talking to President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, who called on him, the ambassador lauded ICCI for organizing the next edition of its BOC in Dubai in the first week of March 2024, said a press release received here today.

The Ambassador said that Pakistan and UAE have great potential to strengthen business relations and set up joint ventures. He stressed that a series of BOC-like events should be organized by the Pakistani Chambers of Commerce in UAE to explore all untapped areas of bilateral cooperation and expand economic relations.

He said that his Embassy would extend all possible cooperation to ICCI in making the BOC a landmark event.

Speaking on the

occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that ICCI has already held successful BOCs in Turkey, Malaysia, and Azerbaijan and the Chamber has planned to organize the next edition of BOC in Dubai, which is a hub of business and investment activities.

He said that a 160-member delegation of ICCI representing real estate, construction, IT, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, food processing and packaging, light engineering, logistics, franchising, tourism, and other sectors would attend the BOC and Award Ceremony.

He said that both countries have great potential to further enhance bilateral trade and economic relations.

He hoped that ICCI BOC would provide a good platform for the private sectors of both countries to hold B2B meetings, exchange ideas, develop strong business linkages, and explore opportunities for business and investment collaborations in areas of interest.

Prices of essential kitchen items fall by 0.78 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The prices of essential kitchen items eased as the weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 0.78 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on February 15, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 315.18 points as compared to 317.65 points during the past week.

As compared to the

corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 34.25 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 = 100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs. 17,732, decreased by 0.78 per cent and went down to 307.99 points from last week's 310.42 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs. 17,732-22,888, Rs. 22,889-29,517; Rs.

29,518-44,175 and above Rs. 44,175, decreased by 0.82 percent, 0.72 percent, 0.77 and 0.77 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 22 (43.14%) items increased, 11 (21.57%) items decreased and 18 (35.29%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included eggs (28.82%), chicken (4.23%), onions (3.48%), LPG (2.85%), gur (1.13%), wheat flour (0.32%), tomatoes (0.29%), pulse masoor (0.28%) and mustard oil (0.18%).



HYDERABAD: A labourer arranging threads for dry purpose outside Threads factory.

Textile exports earn \$9.738 billion for Pakistan in 7 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned \$9,738,551 million during exports of textile products during the first seven months of the current financial year (2023-24), the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported here on Friday.

The exports of the product, however, witnessed a decline of 2.99 percent during July-January (2023-24) when

compared to the exports of \$10,038,199 million during July-January (2022-23). The textile commodities that witnessed positive trade growth included raw cotton, the exports of which grew by 353.78 percent, from \$12,286 million last year to \$55,752 million this year. Likewise, the exports of cotton yarn increased by 49.04 percent, from \$449,418 million last year,

SCCI urges govt to review raise in gas price

PESHAWAR (APP): The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) on Friday urged the government review the recent raise in electricity, gas and fuel prices to bring economic stability in the country. The hike in gas tariff would adversely affect the industry and commercial sectors along with business, trade and industrial growth, SCCI President Fuad Ishaq said in a statement.

KP Govt decides establishment of EZs in tribal districts

PESHAWAR (APP): Secretary Industries and Commerce, Mohammad Anwar Khan, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC), Javed Iqbal Khattak and Manager Business Facilitation Centre (Board of Investment & Trade), Iqbal Sarwar, representatives of HA Consultant and other concerned authorities attended the meeting.

The meeting reviewed different aspects of the selected suitable sites for the establishment of economic zones.

The participants of the meeting were given a meticulous briefing on the



HYDERABAD: View of dried part of Indus River as the water level decrease due to acute water shortage which indicating for high risks of shortage of water in future, in Kotri.

ICT admin conducts interviews of childless couples to adopt child

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration on Friday conducted interviews of childless couples eager to welcome a new member into their family through adoption at Deputy Commissioner office here.

As many as twenty-one couples eagerly vied for the opportunity to expand their families through adoption.

Under the guidance of Additional Deputy Commissioner General Muhammad Abdullah Mahmood, the selection committee conducted interviews and scrutinized data to determine the most suitable candidates.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi witnessing the inauguration upgraded OPD blocked at Children Hospital by Blood Cancer affected children Kainat and Abdul Mufti Hanan.

HEC organizes regional round of Universities Debating Championship

PESHAWAR (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) Regional Centre, Peshawar organized the Regional Round of the Pakistan Universities Debating Championship (PUDC) 2023-24.

The event was organized here at M. Hafizullah Auditorium, Khyber Medical University (KMU) and was attended by guests including Vice Chancellor KMU Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq, Vice Chancellor Sarhad University of Science & Technology Peshawar Prof. Dr. Salim ur Rehman.

Salman Raja using pressure tactics: Aoun

ISLAMABAD (APP): Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) leader Aoun Chaudhry on Friday alleged that his rival independent candidate Salman Akram Raja was using pressure tactics to get himself notified as the winner in the NA-128 Lahore election.

Salman Raja even attacked the office of returning officer for the purpose, he claimed while addressing a press conference. Aoun Chaudhry said he had won the NA-128 election and the Election Commission had rightly issued the notification of his success.

HEC, NCHR sign MoU to work on various academic, research activities on human rights

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC), signed on Friday a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) to jointly work under a collaborative arrangement on various academic and research activities in the Human Rights area in the country.

Under the MoU, HEC and NCHR aim to equip academia, researchers, and students with knowledge of human rights laws and instruments, promote literacy through various media channels, introduce courses focusing on marginalized groups, and establish human rights study centers.

Pak mother languages literature festival unveils cultural tapestry

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a celebration of linguistic richness, the 'Pakistan Mother Languages Literature Festival' (PMLF) kicked off on Friday in Islamabad, drawing together a diverse array of writers, poets, artists, and language enthusiasts from across the country.

The event organized by the Indus Cultural Forum (ICF) and co-hosted by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), the festival promises a vibrant exploration of Pakistan's linguistic and cultural diversity, with more than 120 participants representing over 20 languages.

International News

Authorities say Alexei Navalny, Russia's opposition leader, is dead

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Alexei Navalny, Russia's most famous opposition leader, died on Friday after collapsing and losing consciousness at the penal colony north of the Arctic Circle where he was serving a long jail term, the Russian prison service said.

Navalny, 47, rose to prominence more than a decade ago by lampooning President Vladimir Putin and the Russian elite whom he accused of vast corruption, avarice and opulence.

The Federal Penitentiary Service of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District said in a statement that Navalny "felt unwell" after a walk at the IK-3 penal colony in Khatanga, about 1,900 km (1,200 miles) north east of Moscow.



Protesting farmers demanding guaranteed crop prices for their produce sit on train tracks at a railway station in Rajpura, India.

Top Israeli ministers reject Palestinian statehood as part of post war plan

Monitoring Desk
JERUSALEM: Top ministers in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government rejected Palestinian statehood on Thursday following a Washington Post report that Israel's main ally the United States was advancing plans to establish a Palestinian state.

"We will in no way agree to this plan, which says Palestinians deserve a prize for the terrible massacre they carried out against us: a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital," Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said.



Governor Oleh Sunyiehubov, firefighters examine the site of Russia's missile attack that hit an apartment building in Kharkiv Region, Ukraine.

Russia has already fired 24 NK-made ballistic missiles on Ukraine

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Prosecutor General Andrii Kostin, quoted by Interfax-Ukraine, said: "So far, at least 24 ballistic missiles, previously produced in North Korea, have been used during Russian missile attacks on the territory of Ukraine.

In total, between 30 December 2023 and 7 February 2024, the enemy launched at least 12 attacks on seven oblasts of Ukraine with this type of missile.

Ukraine's Zelenskyy signing security agreements with Germany, France as Kyiv shores up support

Monitoring Desk
BERLIN: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a bilateral security agreement with Germany and planned to sign another with France on Friday, securing a strong signal of long-term backing as Kyiv works to shore up Western support nearly two years after Russia launched its full-scale war.

Zelenskyy met in Berlin with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who said Berlin was providing another 1.1 billion-euro (\$1.2 billion) package of military aid, including 36 howitzers, 120,000 rounds of artillery ammunition and two more air-defense systems.

UN estimates 17,000 Gaza children left unaccompanied amid Israel's war

GAZA (Online): UN estimates 17,000 Gaza children left unaccompanied amid Israel's war. More than one million children in the besieged Gaza Strip now require mental health support, UNICEF says.

The United Nations says that at least 17,000 children in the Gaza Strip have been left unaccompanied or separated from their families.

Spokesman for the UNICEF in the Palestinian territories Jonathan Crick told a media briefing in Geneva, via video-link from Jerusalem that mental health of children in Gaza is severely affected by the war.

Greece breaks ground as first Orthodox nation to legalise same-sex marriage

Monitoring Desk
ATHENS: Greece's parliament has shattered traditional norms by legalising same-sex marriage and adoption, positioning the nation as a pioneer among Orthodox countries. The historic decision, championed by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and the New Democracy party, comes despite strong opposition from the influential Orthodox Church. The parliament approved a bill that not only legalizes same-sex marriage but also adoption by same-sex families. The bill received overwhelming support with 176 votes in favour out of 245 MPs present, following two days of impassioned debates.

Global Leaders Converge at the 60th Munich Security Conference

MUNICH (Online): As the frost of February blankets Munich, the city gears up to host the 60th Munich Security Conference, a gathering that over the years has become a cornerstone for global diplomacy and security discussions.

This year, the conference is set against a backdrop of escalating conflicts, shifting alliances, and a world grappling with the post-pandemic order.



RAWALPINDI: Secretary Defence, Lt Gen (Retd) Hamood uz Zaman Khan, and General Irfan Ozsert, Deputy Chief of Turkish General Staff, chairing 18th Round of Pakistan-Turkiye High Level Military Dialogue Group (HLMMDG) meeting.

Aneeq acknowledges Saudi ambassador's role in pilgrim services

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed, extended gratitude to Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Saeed Al-Maliki on behalf of Pakistani pilgrims for the co-operation and excellent facilities provided by Saudi Arabia. Minister Aneeq Ahmed and Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Saeed Al-Maliki discussed finalizing arrangements for Hajj 2024 and expanding the 'Road to Makkah' project during a meeting at the Saudi Embassy.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Pakistan Hajj Mission are maintaining continuous communication with Saudi authorities to ensure timely completion of Hajj arrangements.

Inviting US to interfere in country election is against sovereignty: Marriyum

LAHORE (Online): PML-N leader Marriyum Aurangzeb has said invitation to US to interfere in country election is against sovereignty of Pakistan.

"Imran Khan has said come US and help us. His slogan of absolutely not and we are not slaves has gone where."

Maulana Fazlur Rehman is respectable for us and his alliance with PTI does not seem to become possible, she said this while addressing a joint

press conference here along with Atta Tarar here Friday. She said if some one has objection over result of election one should resort to election commission. Propaganda is being launched about incomplete result run in media. We are not spokesperson of election commission but these are laws. PTI is spreading anarchy and chaos. PTI was fomenting anarchy at the time when Chinese president was coming to Pakistan on visit.



ISLAMABAD: Senior leader of Jamaat-e-Islami Liaqat Baloch talking with PTI leader Asad Qaisar and others during a meeting at Mian Aslam residence in the Federal Capital.

JUI-F's Fazl benefited most from no-confidence move against Imran: Kundi

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has strongly rejected the allegations levelled by Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazi (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman that former army chief General (retired) Qamar Javed Bajwa and then ISI DG general Faiz Hameed asked the PPP to initiate no-trust move against PTI founder chairman and then-prime minister Imran Khan. Addressing a news conference in Islamabad on Friday, PPP leader Faisal Karim Kundi said that General Faiz Hameed had nothing to do with the no-confidence move against then PTI government. He said at the time of vote of no-confidence Faiz Hameed was not ISI director general, he was Corps

Commander Peshawar. He further said that Maulana Fazl was the head of the Pakistan Democratic Movement at the time and could have stopped the no-confidence move, adding the JUI-F chief benefited the most from the move.

Kundi claimed maximum benefits of the no-confidence move were cherished by the JUI-F chief but now the Maulana had realized that the PTI chief was punished wrongly. The PPP leader claimed that Maulana Fazl was a "spent cartridge" in the politics. He said public saw big change in PTI and JUI-F when both parties made compromises on their stances and joined hands to protest together against the alleged irregularities in general elections.

Mushaal concerned over deteriorating health condition of Yasin Malik

ISLAMABAD (INP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick has vociferously condemned Indian authorities' inhuman behaviour towards her husband Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front Chairman Mohammad Yasin Malik.

Mushaal Mullick in a statement issued in Islamabad said that Yasin Malik's health has deteriorated to an alarming level after he stopped taking medicines in protest in human behavior of authori-

ties for their delaying tactics to take him to the hospital for proper medical treatment, despite court orders.

She said the expired and outdated pacemaker implanted in him had now gone ineffective, endangering his life. She said in addition to his heart problems, Yasin Malik is also suffering from kidney ailment. She further said that according to confirmed reports his body weight had also dropped to a great extent, which was a great cause of concern.

President directs Rs3.46m payment to heirs of two insurance policyholders

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has directed two private insurance companies to pay the death insurance claims of Rs 3 million and Rs 4,60,000 to the legal heirs of the deceased policyholders. He issued these directions while deciding two separate representations, filed by Adamjee Life Assurance Company Limited and EFU Life Assurance Limited against the decisions of Wafaqi Mohtasib, asking them to pay the death insurance claims to the respective claimants, a President Secretariat press release said.

As per details, Zahid Nasreen's deceased sister had obtained an insurance policy from Adamjee Life Assurance Company for the sum assured of Rs 3 million against an annual premium of Rs300,000 in

2021. After her sister died in 2022, the company refused to pay the death insurance claim on the pretext that the deceased had hidden her pre-insurance ailment of acute kidney injury and chronic liver disease at the time of obtaining the insurance policy.

Similarly, Memoona Naeem's husband obtained an insurance policy from EFU Life Assurance Limited for the sum assured of Rs 460,000 against an annual premium of Rs 23,000 in 2015. Her husband died the same year and when she filed the death insurance claim, it was repudiated on the ground that the deceased had not disclosed his pre-insurance ailment of hypertension at the time of obtaining the policy.

Feeling aggrieved, the complainants separately

approached the Wafaqi Mohtasib to seek relief, which passed the orders in their favour and directed the respective insurance companies to honour their claims. Later, the companies filed separate representations with the President against the decisions of the Mohtasib.

The President after perusing the material facts of the case and hearing the parties, rejected both the representations. He held that the companies had failed to produce any evidence establishing the pre-insurance ailments. He said the onus to prove the pre-insurance ailments rested upon the companies and the repudiation of death insurance claims required unimpeachable evidence to prove the ailments and their knowledge on the part of the policyholders.

Govt continues crackdown against smuggling

ISLAMABAD (Online): The relevant government departments are continuing crackdown against smuggling. According to the latest statistics, 9458.4 million tons of sugar, 247.02 metric tons of flour, 3007.96 metric tons of fertilizer, 23904 bags of clothes and 2.951 million liters of Iranian oil have so far been recovered.



KARACHI: U.S. consul general Conrad Tribble addressing during 15th Karachi Literature Festival inauguration ceremony at a local hotel in the Provincial Capital.

Asad Qaisar says: PTI not in favor of any external interference in internal matters of Pak

ISLAMABAD (Online): PTI has made it clear that it is not in favor of any external interference in internal matters of Pakistan.

PTI leader Asad Qaisar said in his message on social media website X that the media has presented out of context media talk by him and barrister Saif after his meeting with Imran Khan in Adiala jail. Due to it a wrong impression is being taken.

I want to say in unequivocal terms my party has objections on election

results. They want justice from election commission and courts.

He held his party is not in favor of statements by foreign elements related to internal matters of Pakistan and election. PTI demands justice only from election commission and Pakistan judicial system.

Earlier Asad Qaisar had said during a press conference that Imran Khan demanded of US to raise voice against the rigging committed in general election in Pakistan.

Six independent candidates join PML-N

LAHORE (Online): Six more independent candidates, who emerged victorious in the General Elections 2024 announced to join the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

According to details, MNA-elect from NA-92 Rasheed Akbar Noorani and five newly elected members Punjab Assembly met PML-N Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz and expressed 'full confidence' in the Nawaz Sharif-led party. The MPAs-elect who joined the PML-N included Irfanullah Khan Niazi from PP-90, Muhammad Amir Inayat from PP-92, Muhammad Akbar Hayat from PP-205, Asghar Hayat from PP-212 and Rana Abdul Manan from PP-272. Maryam Nawaz welcomed all the independent candidates in the PML-N's fold. She said that the people of Punjab

have given mandate to the PML-N, vowing to carry out 'exemplary' development works in the province.

The PML-N senior vice president said that only her party could take Pakistan out of crises. Earlier on February 14, six independent candidates who emerged victorious on Punjab Assembly seats in the General Elections 2024 have announced to join the PML-N. The MPAs-elect announced their decision of joining the PML-N in a meeting with Maryam Nawaz in Lahore.

Independent candidate who joined the PML-N included Sultan Bajwa from PP-132 Nankana, Shazia Tareen from PP-225 Lodhran, Mahmood Qadir Laghari from PP-289 Dera Ghazi Khan, Hanif Pitafi from PP-288 Dera Ghazi Khan, Taimoor Ali from PP-94 Chiniot and Ali Asghar from PP-283 Layyah.



LAHORE: Independent Candidate from Punjab announcing to join PML-N during meeting with Mariam Nawaz Chief Organizer PML-N and nominated candidate for CM Punjab.

US shows 'concern' over reports of intimidation, voter suppression in Pakistan

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States is "concerned" over reports coming out of Pakistan in terms of intimidation and voter suppression and is watching the situation "very closely," Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council in the White House John Kirby said.

Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan, who accused Washington of orchestrating ouster of his PTI government, on Thursday sought America's help through a special message to the US that it should play a role and voice concern about his country's "rigged" general elections. It was a purported

diplomatic cable - the cipher - that Imran Khan, 71, had waived at a public rally in March 2022 claiming that the US wanted to oust his government, soon after which his political journey took a downhill stormy leading to incarceration, conviction in multiple cases and even being disbarred from contesting the polls.

After a meeting of party leaders at the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi on Thursday, where Imran Khan has been lodged since September last year, PTI leader Asad Qaisar conveyed a message from the former prime minister for the US, which was the highlight of Asad's presser. "Imran Khan has

given a message that the US should raise its voice against the alleged rigging in elections. He also gave a special message with regard to America that the US had not played their role accordingly," Asad Qaisar said. Claiming that Imran Khan's message is that "the US has an opportunity and should keep an eye on rigging in the elections," Asad Qaisar said, "If they are champions of democracy, then they should voice it if they think the elections in Pakistan were not fair."

PTI's counsel Barrister Saif, who also addressed the media with Asad Qaisar, said: "America should take a tougher stance over these elections."



QUETTA: Activists of Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are holding protest demonstration against alleged rigging in General Election 2024, outside High Court.

Elections 2024: IPP wins NA-88 Khushab seat after re-polling

ISLAMABAD (INP): Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) has grabbed the NA-88 Khushab seat, according to unofficial and unconfirmed results after re-polling. IPP's Gul Asghar Khan was declared the winner by RO with 82577 votes. With the win from NA-88, the number of IPP seats in NA has jumped to three. Meanwhile, according to unconfirmed and unofficial results of PK-90 Kohat, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed candidate Aftab Alam Afridi emerged as victorious, with 45358 votes.

Re-polling at the 53 polling stations in Khushab, Kohat and Ghotki was held on Thursday after the angry mob snatched and burned the ballot papers on February 8.

NASA to launch new mission to study ultraviolet sky, stars, stellar explosions in 2030

ISLAMABAD (INP): The new mission of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to survey ultraviolet light across the entire sky with an aim to learn how galaxies and stars evolve will be launched in next six years, the agency said.

The space telescope, called UltraViolet Explorer (UVEX), was targeted to launch in 2030 as NASA's next Astrophysics Medium-Class Explorer mission.

In addition to conducting a highly sensitive all-sky survey, UVEX will be able to quickly point toward sources of ultraviolet light in the universe.

This will enable it to capture the explosions that follow bursts of gravitational waves caused by merging neutron stars. The telescope also will carry an ultraviolet spectrograph to study stellar explosions and massive stars, according to NASA, China.org reported.

Capt Safdar 'welcomes' PTI getting closer to Maulana Fazl

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Captain (retired) Safdar Awan said on Friday that it was a good omen the PTI has realized that JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman is a political force. In the past Imran Khan humiliated the Maulana on the stage but now PTI was sitting in his feet. Talking to media men in Islamabad, Safdar said political people meet each other, this is the beauty of democracy. He said he was happy that PTI restored the honour of a religious leader.

Railways all set to restore Akbar Bugti Express in March

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Railways is set to restore one more passenger train 'Akbar Bugti Express' from Quetta to Lahore to facilitate the passengers of the routes and generate more revenue for the department.

"The decision to restore Akbar Bugti Express train has been taken on the directions of the caretaker Minister for Railways Shahid Ashraf Tarar," an official in the Ministry of Railways said.

He said the train would facilitate the people of Quetta and Punjab provinces to travel to Balochistan and vice versa.

Currently, the Jaffer Express is the only operational passenger train in Balochistan being run between Quetta - Peshawar, besides local Chaman and Humai trains.

To a question, he said in a bid to accommodate passengers, Pakistan Railways expanded the network of its express trains to 96 last year, running all over the country to better facilitate the commuters.

"Before completing the network of 96 trains over the entire railway network, the last year the figure of trains is 86 which will be improved after the concentrated efforts of the department," he added. He said he said the facilities being provided to the passengers at railway stations include waiting rooms, vending stalls, station restaurants, wheelchairs, an information desk, computer reservation facilities, public address system to inform the public about the arrival/departure of trains, provision of paramedics and 1st aid facility, online reservation facility, passenger insurance service and revival of help desks at stations facilities in trains.

About punctuality, he said the overall punctuality ratio of trains has improved from 76 to 93 percent in five months owing to close monitoring and stern measures taken by Pakistan Railways at the divisional and ministry levels.

"With the punctuality of trains and concrete measures taken by the department in the last five months, the number of passengers has increased by over 20 million, which is ample proof of the department's achievement," he added.



NASEERABAD: Activists of Jamhoori Wattan Party (JWP) are blocked road as they are holding protest demonstration against alleged rigging in General Election 2024, at Rabi Bridge.

Mushahid appreciates Russian President's stance on Islamophobia

MOSCOW (Online): Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed on the invitation of United Russia Party (Ruling and Largest political party in RF) paid a visit to Moscow to participate in the Constituent Meeting of the Forum of Supporters of the Struggle Against Modern Neocolonialism Practices for the Freedom of Nations. As part of the visit program Senator MHS participated as a panelist in the Forum and held a tete-a-tete with Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of Russia/Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Global Forum Against Neocolonialism and for Freedom of Nations Mr. Dmitry Medvedev (Former President of Russian Federation), says a press release issued here Friday.

During the visit Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed also delivered a lecture at the Russian Diplomatic Academy. The topic of the talk was Pakistan and the changing regional scenario. Senator Hussain during his talk also highlighted the growing relations between Pakistan and Russia especially in the field of energy, connectivity, regional security including Afghanistan and cooperation at multilateral fora including SCO and UN. He also appreciated President Putin's stance on Islamophobia. The lecture was followed by a question and answer session from the students of the diplomatic academy. Senator Chizhov of the Russian Federation Council also graced the occasion. Post the lecture the Senator held a meeting with the Rector of the Diplomatic academy to exchange views on the emerging trends in global politics as well as on bilateral cooperation.