

Independent

dailyindisb@gmail.com Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah www.dailyindependent.com.pk Islamabad

Vol. XIV No. 43 Reg. mails-B / ID-445 Thursday February 22, 2024, Shaban 11, 1445 A.H. Ph: 2158688, 2158997 Pages 4: Rs. 12

SC rejects petition seeking annulment of general elections

Three-member bench headed by CJP Isa imposes Rs500,000 fine on petitioner for skipping hearings and requesting withdrawal of plea; barred from adding 'brigadier' before his name

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Wednesday dismissed a petition seeking to annul the February 8, 2024 general elections and imposed a fine worth Rs 500,000 on petitioner for non-appearance.

A three-member bench presided over by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali, announced the verdict.

The order read, "The application for withdrawal of the petition is allowed and the case is dismissed as withdrawn with costs of five hundred thousand rupees which are directed to be paid equally to the Pa-

kistan Bar Council and to the Supreme Court Bar Association within thirty days, failing which they be recovered from the petitioner as arrears of land revenue."

It said, "We trust that the government will be ensuring that the petitioner does not use the rank of a Brigadier or Ex or former Brigadier with his name."

The order said, "This petition has also consumed valuable court time, which is to be spent on deciding the cases of genuine litigants; not use the media for ulterior and nefarious purposes. The petitioner got prominent coverage and then the petition was abandoned and the petitioner left the

country. Responsible media will undoubtedly want to disclose this order and the petitioner's conduct to redress the damage done."

It further stated, "The petitioner did not disclose the fact of being court martialled and mentions the rank which he held before being court martialled. He misused the rank which he had previously held in the Army which he could not do so. The petitioner must have used his rank to attract publicity and to ensure that the contents of his petition are widely broadcast in the media and published in the newspapers. And after having achieved such purpose, the petitioner immediately

bought a ticket (on February 13, 2024) to catch a flight out of the country. The usual practice is to buy a return ticket, but the petitioner bought a one-way ticket. He also did not disclose when he will return to Pakistan. The petitioner also did not disclose CUO 18/24 4 the reason for his sudden departure from Pakistan nor why he had to go to Bahrain. It is also not disclosed why, just one day after filing the petition, he sought its withdrawal. The petitioner's conduct demonstrates that he wants to undermine the credibility of constitutional bodies, which is neither in the citizens nor in the country's

interest."

The order said that, "The Fixation Branch of this Court has informed that they had received an e-mail dated 19 February 2024, wherein the petitioner stated that 'I am ex-Brigadier Ali Khan' and that he had sought withdrawal of this petition by filing withdrawal application (CMA No.1211/2024).

The e-mail confirms that 'I don't want to pursue the said petition anymore as I am currently out of the country. The copies of the petitioner's passport with exit from Pakistan stamp of FIA Immigration dated 17 February 2024, board-



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Miracle Salt Collective Inc called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

Govt jacks up prices of 146 life-saving medicines

Price hike targets primarily essential medications crucial for treating conditions such as cancer, vaccines, and antibiotics

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a major blow to the inflation-hit people of the country, the caretaker federal government on Wednesday increased the prices of 146 life-saving medicines.

The decision, according to a notification issued today, primarily targets essential medications crucial for treating conditions such as cancer, vaccines, and antibiotics. The prices of life-saving medicines crucial for treating heart disease diabetes, physical pain, epilepsy and injections were also increased.

It is pertinent to mention that the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) had sent a summary to the caretaker government to increase the

prices of 262 drugs. However, the government opted to implement adjustments exclusively for 146 medicines vital for saving lives.

Of the medicines listed for price increments, 116 are slated for price adjustments to be executed by pharmaceutical companies themselves.

In a bold policy shift, the government has deregulated drug prices, granting pharmaceutical companies the autonomy to independently raise prices. This move underscores a paradigm shift in the governance of pharmaceutical pricing, potentially reshaping the dynamics of the healthcare industry.

Under the proposals, prices of medicines other

than essential medicines in the national list would be exempted from the Drugs Act, of 1976 and necessary amendments will be made in the Drug Pricing Policy 2018.

Meanwhile the notification regarding fixation of price of medicines has been challenged in Lahore High Court (LHC).

The petition has been filed by a citizen Muhammad Aslam making federal government and others respondents.

The petitioner took the plea the care taker government issued notification against law for fixing the prices of medicines. The prices of medicines will increase after notification.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi in a group photo with a delegation of military officers from friendly countries undergoing training at Command and Staff College Quetta, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

IHC rejects unconditional apology of DC Islamabad, stops him from going abroad

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has rejected unconditional apology of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon in contempt of court case besides restraining him from going abroad.

Justice Babar Sattar has remarked "Mr Memon you did not know about the order of court. Will the benches be constituted on your will. Delay in this case was caused due to your lawyers. Give the reply to second show cause notice Monday. More MPO orders were issued on the source report of same na-

ture despite court's observation.

We suspended their powers and then they stopped issuing MPO orders. Not only this bench but also other benches nullified about 40 MPO orders.

The contempt of court case against DC Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, SSP operations and others came up for hearing before Justice Babar Sattar of IHC Wednesday.

DC Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, SSP, operations Jamil Zafar, SP Farooq Butt and prosecutor Qaisar Imam appeared in the court.

Justice Babar Sattar inquired from DC Islamabad "Mr Memon did you not know about the order of the court."

Irfan Nawaz Memon said I cannot even think of disobeying court's orders.

Justice Babar Sattar while addressing DC Islamabad said you issue 69 MPOs orders. Had they not parents. Were they not to proceed for Umrah. Will the benches be formed on your sweet will.

Raja Rizwan Abbasi counsel for DC Islamabad said if you are in angry mood then please hear the case after some time.

Mineral sector achieving new development goals under SIFC: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday said Pakistan's mineral sector, valued in billions of dollars, was achieving new heights of development under Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

He was talking to a delegation of Miracle Salt Collective Inc which called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar here.

During the meeting, the prime minister hoped that salt export from the country would increase after the signing of joint venture between Pakistan Mineral Development Cooperation (PMDC) and Miracle Salt.

He said it would also further strengthen the trade

ties with the U.S.

"This joint venture is a manifestation of the fact that Pakistan has the most suitable destination for foreign investment," he added.

He said Himalayan pink salt was the identity of Pakistan in all over the world and its export in international markets would be a welcome sign.

He said during its short tenure, the caretaker government took several steps to promote foreign direct investment and to facilitate the businesses in the country which yielded positive results.

The delegation of Miracle Salt thanked the government, especially the Special Investment Facilitation Council for its cooperation with the company.

PTI demands 'constitutional right' to form govts in Centre, Punjab and KP

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Wednesday demanded its 'constitutional right' to form governments in Centre, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) due to public mandate given to Imran Khan-led party in general elections 2024.

Taking to Twitter, PTI leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said that the country's future was linked with 'complete supremacy' of the Constitution. "The country always engulfed in crisis whenever it derailed from Constitution," he added.

He pointed out Imran Khan-led party emerged single largest party in the elections despite the challenges it faced, which included the "snatching" of iconic symbol bat. "We weren't allowed to conduct an election campaign," he regretted.

"Daylight robbery of public mandate is a desecration of votes," he said, stressing the need for political stability and put Pakistan on the path of development.

Barrister Gohar also demanded the election commission issue election results in sync with Form-45. "The seats that are robbed should be returned to PTI," he said, adding that his party would fulfill the responsibility of safeguarding the public mandate.

The presser came after PML-N and PPP reached an agreement on forming a government in Centre as both parties have agreed on a "power-sharing formula" following days of negotiations.

"PPP and PML-N have achieved the required number and [now] we are in a position to form the government in Centre," PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said while addressing a joint press conference at Zardari House in Islamabad.

of votes," he said, stressing the need for political stability and put Pakistan on the path of development.

Barrister Gohar also demanded the election commission issue election results in sync with Form-45. "The seats that are robbed should be returned to PTI," he said, adding that his party would fulfill the responsibility of safeguarding the public mandate.

The presser came after PML-N and PPP reached an agreement on forming a government in Centre as both parties have agreed on a "power-sharing formula" following days of negotiations.

"PPP and PML-N have achieved the required number and [now] we are in a position to form the government in Centre," PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said while addressing a joint press conference at Zardari House in Islamabad.

Coalition govt Pakistan's internal matter: US

WASHINGTON (INP): Reacting to a new political situation in the country following announcement of a coalition government by PPP, PMLN and their allies, the United States Tuesday said efforts for the formation of an allied government was an internal matter of Pakistan.

Expressing his thoughts, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said the new development in the form an alliance was the internal matter of Pakistan and the US did not want to interfere in these political affairs.

He said, "We want to see a transparent investigation of rigging and fraud according to Pakistani law."

"Hopefully, the process of forming a government in Pakistan is underway," he added.

Few days back, Miller expressed readiness to work with the new Pakistani government. Expressing his thoughts, Miller said: "Millions of Pakistanis had heard their voice by using the power of vote. Pakistani youth and women were registered in large numbers in the elections," Miller said.

Maryam Nawaz unveils plans for Punjab as Pak first woman CM

LAHORE (INP): PML-N senior vice-president Maryam Nawaz, who is set to become Pakistan's first-ever woman chief minister (CM), vowed to set 'new records' in Punjab while fulfilling her duties as the provincial chief executive.

Maryam Nawaz, the political scion of PML-N supreme leader Nawaz Sharif, was nominated as the party's candidate for the coveted position of the chief minister of the country's most populous province, Punjab.

Addressing PML-N's first parliamentary party meeting in Punjab, the CM nominee said there is a "clear majority" of the party in the provincial assembly as she congratulated the MPAs on their successful election and praised the inclusion of young MPAs among the lot.

From today, Maryam said, a "new era" will begin for Punjab, as per the traditions and examples laid down by Nawaz Sharif and party president Shehbaz Sharif during their terms as chief ministers. "We will set new records of development in the province," she added.

Addressing PML-N's first parliamentary party meeting in Punjab, the CM nominee said there is a "clear majority" of the party in the provincial assembly as she congratulated the MPAs on their successful election and praised the inclusion of young MPAs among the lot.

From today, Maryam said, a "new era" will begin for Punjab, as per the traditions and examples laid down by Nawaz Sharif and party president Shehbaz Sharif during their terms as chief ministers. "We will set new records of development in the province," she added.

ECP completes probe into alleged rigging in election 2024

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) high-level committee completed probe into allegations of the former Rawalpindi Commissioner regarding the alleged rigging in general elections 2024, sources said on Wednesday.

According to sources, the committee's last meeting will be held in Islamabad where the report on Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chattha's election rigging allegations will be finalized and the report will be submitted to the ECP.

Sources further said that the recorded statements of DROs and RO of 13 National Assembly constituen-

cies and 26 provincial assembly constituencies of Rawalpindi division will be included in the committee report. Earlier, the high-level committee of ECP recorded statements of District Returning Officers (DROs) and Returning Officers (ROs) of concerned constituencies.

The sources privy to the development said that Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) also submitted the transcript of former Rawalpindi Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chattha's presser, accusing ECP and Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa of involvement in the "election rigging".

Govt constitutes JIT to probe 'malicious campaign' against ECP, gov officials

ISLAMABAD (INP): The caretaker federal government has formed a joint investigation team (JIT) to conduct an investigation into the ongoing malicious campaign on social media against the government officials, including Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

The JIT is headed by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Wing additional director general and includes Grade-19 officers of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and Inter-Services Intelligence, Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and NADRA.

The JIT is headed by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Wing additional director general and includes Grade-19 officers of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and Inter-Services Intelligence, Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and NADRA.



ROMANIA: Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami in a group photo with Pakistan Navy and M/s DAMEN Shipyard Galati officials during launching ceremony of state-of-the-art 4th Offshore Patrol Vessel, PNS YAMAMA (Desig) being built for Pakistan Navy was held at M/s DAMEN Shipyard Galati, Romania.

PNS Yamama launching ceremony held at Romania's DAMEN Shipyard Galati

RAWALPINDI (APP): The launching ceremony of state-of-the-art 4th Offshore Patrol Vessel, PNS YAMAMA (Desig) being built for Pakistan Navy was held at DAMEN Shipyard Galati, Romania.

Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami attended the occasion as Chief Guest, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff underscored the importance of maritime security under the prevailing conventional and non-conventional maritime threats to energy and trade highways passing through Indian Ocean Region.

In this context, he highlighted that Pakistan Navy had tremendous contribution in maintaining safe and secure sea environment for maritime trade. The Admiral expressed his confidence that induction of these multi-purpose and highly adaptive platforms; equipped with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors will further strengthen combat capability of PN Fleet in safeguarding maritime frontiers while ensuring Maritim Security in the Indian Ocean Region, especially in the Arabian Sea. Earlier during his welcome address, Chief Operations Officer of DAMEN Group Netherlands highlighted that DAMEN Shipyard.

PPP finalises three names for Punjab governor slot

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) on Wednesday finalised three nominees for the esteemed position of Governor of Punjab.

Sources within the party revealed that the frontrunners for the coveted role include seasoned political figures Makhdoom Ahmed Mehmood, Qamar Zaman Kaira, and Nadeem Afzal Chan.

However, it is Makhdoom Ahmed Mehmood who emerges as the top priority for the party's leadership.

Sources added that Mehmood's candidacy is not only endorsed by the PPP but also enjoys acceptance from other political parties including Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N).

SHC orders govt to restore social media platforms

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Wednesday directed the federal government and the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) to restore services of social media platforms including X, formerly known as Twitter, across Pakistan.

The order was issued by SHC bench, headed by SHC Chief Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, on a petition against the "unconstitutional" internet outages across the country in recent days.

The court also summoned report from PTA for suspending internet services on election day and issued notice to federal government.

The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Wednesday directed the federal government and the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) to restore services of social media platforms including X, formerly known as Twitter, across Pakistan.

The order was issued by SHC bench, headed by SHC Chief Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, on a petition against the "unconstitutional" internet outages across the country in recent days.

The court also summoned report from PTA for suspending internet services on election day and issued notice to federal government.

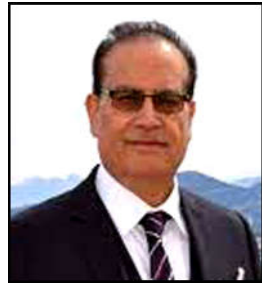


ISLAMABAD: Feb21- Leader of Jamaat-e-Islami Siraj-ul-Haq addressing press conference at Al-Falah Hall sector F-8, in the Federal Capital.

How to end the scourge of missing persons?

By Qamar Bashir

Former Press Secretary to the President; Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France; Former MD, SRBC



Silencing the public

The stench of desperation hangs heavy over Islamabad. The powerful have had a lot of trouble lately keeping the public under their thumb. Short of ideas, they have decided to block Pakistan's access to X (formerly Twitter), one of the most popular digital mediums for self-expression.

The authorities are seemingly so afraid of the public setting the narrative agenda that they have decided to simply pull the plug. Such repressive actions are a shame in this day and age: millions of opinion-makers and citizens around the world converge virtually each day on the platform to exchange important news and views — why can Pakistanis not be among them?

There has been no word from the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority or the IT ministry, which would previously issue at least a mealy-mouthed explanation when denying the citizenry access to mainstream internet services. Even they have not figured out how to justify what is being done.

One marvels at the hypocrisy of some of our caretaker ministers, who have ostensibly been using VPN services to continue posting on X even as their own people are being denied the same privilege.

The IT minister's behaviour, in particular, is galling: during this latest blockage, he has celebrated the 'take-off' of Pakistan's IT industry and achieving 13 items on his agenda, while also announcing two new schemes for the industry — all while not saying a word about why Pakistani users suddenly cannot access one of the world's most popular social mediums.

It seems he is more interested in self-promotion while the state is busy broadcasting its abject disregard for the digital economy. He should be asked: why would any entrepreneur bother investing in Pakistan, especially when the country's internet access and telecom policies always seem subject to change without notice?

As for the PTA, the less said the better. In suspending mobile phone services without any prior warning throughout election day and well after, it had already wreaked immeasurable damage on Pakistan this month.

Many citizens were left unable to exercise their constitutional rights due to the communications blackout, which also contributed towards worsening the political instability by providing a convenient cover for the alleged irregularities that occurred later that night. And yet, the authority refuses to learn. Acting as if it is unaccountable, it is now curtailing citizens' digital rights without even bothering to come up with a justification. It seems that the PTA has quietly become just another tool in the hands of our habitually oppressive state, to be used against the people of Pakistan whenever they start inconveniencing the powers that be. It is important that it be checked immediately. With precedents available thanks to prior court rulings on internet bans, it should be sued for its actions.

The Islamabad High Court's response to the disappearance of 12 Baloch students from Islamabad reveals a profound frustration with the violation of their fundamental human rights, as guaranteed by the constitution and the law. The court expressed dismay over the failure to recover the missing individuals even after two years, attributing responsibility to state institutions. In a stern warning, the judge highlighted the paradox of citizens needing protection from their own security agencies, which are mandated to ensure their safety. The court's summons of high-ranking officials, including the caretaker prime minister, reflects a commitment to accountability, with the judge cautioning that future disappearances could lead to legal action against top government officials. The judge's assertion that if those in power are unable to control the institutions under their purview, they should resign underscores the gravity of the situation and the need for effective governance and oversight.

The statements made by the High Court judge during the hearing reveal a deep-seated frustration with the issue of enforced disappearances. The judge's remarks underscore the failure of state institutions, including security agencies, to safeguard citizens as mandated by the constitution and the law. The formation of the committee comprising heads of top spy agencies and summoning the caretaker

prime minister, the court aims to ensure a thorough investigation and provide answers regarding the missing persons, regardless of political considerations. The judge's warning to state officials about potential consequences if such issues persist reflects the urgency and seriousness with which the court views the matter, emphasizing accountability and the judiciary's role in upholding human rights and the rule of law.

Ironically, the interim prime minister's inability to enforce authority on the powerful spy agency likely stems from a combination of factors, including institutional resistance, complex power dynamics, and political constraints. The spy agency operates with a degree of autonomy and influence that may make it challenging for the prime minister to compel them to release the missing persons. Additionally, the sensitive nature of intelligence operations and national security concerns may further limit the prime minister's ability to intervene directly.

The issue of missing persons has drawn condemnation from various quarters, both domestically and internationally, which are tarnishing the soft image of the country. International bodies such as the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International have extensively documented and criticized the human rights abuses in Balochistan, including enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings. Additionally, the European Parliament has passed resolutions urging the Pakistani government to address these issues.

Within Pakistan, organizations like the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and Baloch political leaders have been vocal in condemning the actions of security forces in

Balochistan and advocating for justice for the victims.

Despite these condemnations, the situation in Balochistan remains dire, with ongoing human rights abuses continuing to affect the lives of the Baloch people. Pakistani civil society organizations have also joined the chorus of voices calling for an end to these violations and for accountability for those responsible. International leaders and activists have echoed these sentiments, urging the Pakistani government to respect human rights and address the grievances of the Baloch people and restore their fundamental human rights such as the right to liberty, fair trial, and protection from enforced disappearance, as guaranteed by the UN Charter and the Constitution of Pakistan.

Enforced disappearances, a global phenomenon, extend far beyond the borders of Pakistan. Numerous countries grapple with this issue, where individuals vanish without explanation, often with impunity.

Mexico contends with tens of thousands of missing persons, primarily linked to organized crime and drug cartels, while Syria's civil war has led to widespread disappearances attributed to government forces and armed factions.

Colombia's history of enforced disappearances, though improving, remains a concern, particularly regarding paramilitary groups and drug trafficking. Similarly, Sri Lanka's civil war aftermath includes ongoing cases, often involving state security forces.

Unlike the examples quoted above, established democracies distinguish themselves by their robust systems, where occurrences of missing persons are exceptionally rare. This is

attributed to optimized institutions with high levels of accountability, including law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Transparency is a cornerstone, ensuring adherence to constitutional and legal frameworks, thus resolving political intricacies. Non-state actors are brought within legal bounds, eradicating covert operations. Parliament, judiciary, and government operate independently, devoid of coercion or intimidation, and are subject to rigorous accountability measures for any lapses in fulfilling their mandates. This unwavering commitment ensures the effective functioning of democratic processes, fostering public trust and stability.

The unrest and insurgencies, like in Balochistan primarily stem from a combination of historical grievances, political marginalization, economic disparities, and cultural identity issues. Historically, Balochistan has faced marginalization and exploitation of its natural resources by the central government, leading to feelings of neglect and resentment among the Baloch population.

Additionally, the lack of political representation and autonomy, coupled with human rights abuses and military operations in the region, have fueled grievances and resistance. Resultantly, during ensuing struggles individuals vanish into a void of uncertainty and fear. The lack of accountability for those responsible perpetuates a cycle of anguish and injustice, echoing the urgent need for international cooperation and concerted efforts to address this pressing human rights concern.

However, everything's not lost, there are examples of

countries, which were facing the abhorrent phenomenon but they resolved this curse. One such country is Argentina. Following the return to democracy in 1983, the government of Argentina established the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP) to investigate human rights abuses. The report documented the atrocities committed by the military regime, laying the foundation for accountability.

In parallel, the Argentine parliament repealed amnesty laws that shielded military officials from prosecution for human rights abuses. This legislative action enabled the judiciary to prosecute and convict numerous perpetrators through landmark trials like the Trial of the Junta in 1985. These legal proceedings underscored the importance of judicial independence and accountability in addressing state-sponsored violence.

Civil society organizations, notably the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, played a pivotal role in advocating for justice for the victims of disappearances. Their tireless activism, alongside broader societal pressure and international scrutiny, contributed to the dismantling of impunity and the pursuit of truth, justice, and accountability.

Together, these short-term, medium-term, and long-term measures exemplify a multifaceted approach that can serve as a model for addressing the issue of missing persons and promoting human rights worldwide.

In light of Argentina's example, there are several actions that parliament, judi-

ciary, government, and civil society in Balochistan could take to resolve the issue of missing persons once and for all.

Firstly, parliament could enact legislation to establish a commission or task force dedicated to investigating cases of enforced disappearances in Balochistan. This body should be granted sufficient powers and resources to conduct thorough and impartial investigations into each case.

Secondly, the judiciary should prioritize cases of missing persons and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions. This may involve repealing any laws or policies that hinder prosecution or provide immunity to state actors involved in enforced disappearances.

Additionally, the government should actively cooperate with investigative bodies and provide support to families of missing persons. This includes facilitating access to information, legal assistance, and psychological support for affected families.

Lastly, civil society organizations play a crucial role in advocating for justice and raising awareness about the issue of missing persons. They should continue their efforts to pressure the government and hold authorities accountable for their actions. Moreover, international scrutiny and support can also be instrumental in addressing human rights abuses and promoting accountability in Balochistan.

By implementing these measures and adopting a collaborative approach, parliament, judiciary, government, and civil society can work together to bring an end to the scourge of missing persons in Balochistan.

Commerce News

Pak focusing on increasing exports to improve economic situation: Alvi

ISLAMABAD (Online): President Dr. Arif Alvi has said Pakistan is focusing on increasing exports to improve its economic situation.

Talking to a delegation of Miracle Saltworks Collective, a USA-based salt mining and processing company, in Islamabad Wednesday he said Pakistan wants to promote foreign investment and joint ventures in various sectors. He said we want mutually beneficial business partnerships with foreign companies.

The President noted that better processing, packaging and marketing can add value to our salt. He said Pakistani salt can be obtained with high quality and very low

investment.

The delegation apprised the President about the potential of Pakistani salt mines in earning foreign exchange, saying that quality and mineral rich rock salt is found only in Pakistan.

The delegation acknowledged that Pakistani salt is of low cost and high quality, emphasizing that the country can benefit from the largest salt market in the world.

It noted that the quality of Pakistani salt in terms of mineral content is the best in the world, and responsible mining, better processing and marketing can increase the value of Pakistani salt.

The delegation

informed the President that Miracle Salt Works Collective will invest in Pakistan's salt sector. The company will mine and process Pakistani salt using high-quality technology. APP add: President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday said that Pakistan desired to build mutually beneficial partnerships with foreign firms by building joint ventures and attracting foreign investment in multiple sectors.

He in a meeting with a delegation of Miracle Saltworks Collective Inc, a USA-based salt mining and processing company here, said Pakistan was fully focused on boosting its exports to improve its economic condition.

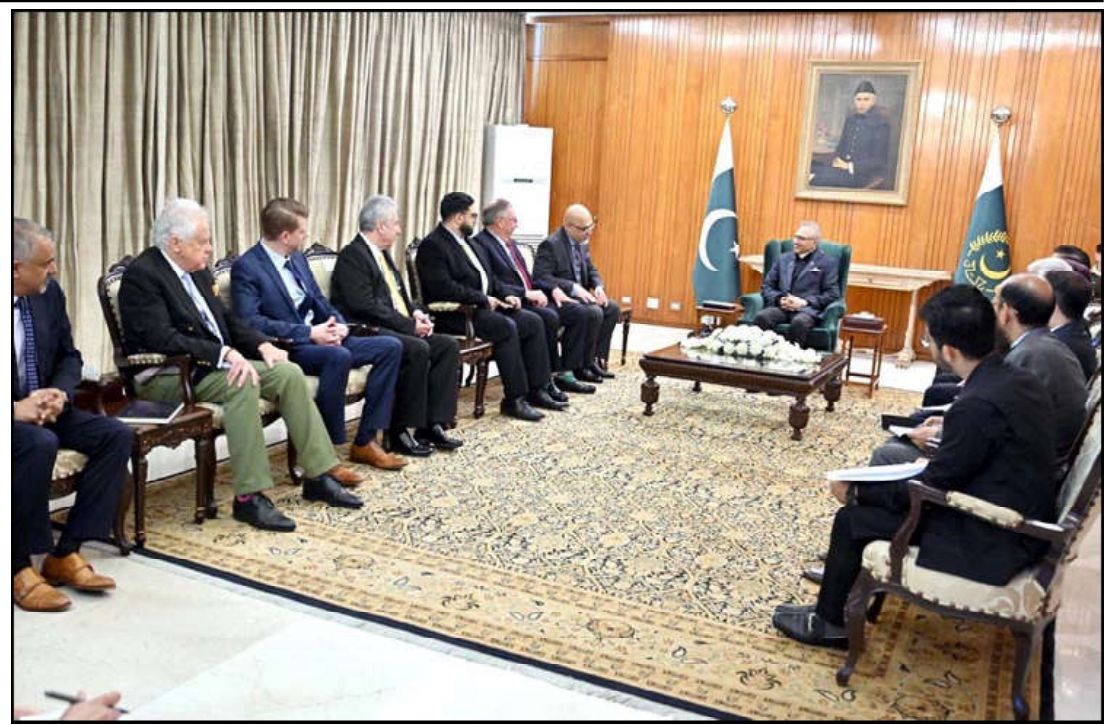
In the meeting, the

president was briefed about the company's performance in salt mining, processing and marketing.

President Alvi said that Pakistan could make value addition to its salt products through better processing, packaging and marketing.

Reaffirming the government's commitment to facilitate the investors, he appreciated Miracle Saltworks Collective Inc for its investment in Pakistan as well as its joint venture agreement with Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation.

The delegation members apprised the president of the potential of Pakistan's salt mines to earn foreign exchange, adding that Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Miracle Saltworks Collective Inc, a USA-based salt mining and processing company, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.



Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif chairing meeting regarding Spectrum Availability in Islamabad.

Sudanese envoy, LCCI chief want more trade between his country, Pakistan

LAHORE (APP): Ambassador of Sudan Salih Mohamed Ahmed Mohamed Siddig has said that Sudan and Pakistan have very good relations but the economic ties are below the ambitions. Sudan is very rich in natural resources, agriculture, mining and livestock, and is keen to make mutual trade and economic ties stronger.

He expressed these views in a meeting with President of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and

Industry, Kashif Anwar, here at LCCI Wednesday. Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry and Executive Committee Members were also present.

The ambassador said that Pakistan and Sudan have very good relations since the establishment of diplomatic ties. Besides good diplomatic relations, both countries have very good cultural ties and many Sudanese students are studying here in Pakistan, he added.

SCCI donates office equipment to BFC manager

SIALKOT (APP): President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Abdul Ghafoor Malik hosted a delegation from the Business Facilitation Centre (BFC) Sialkot, marking a significant occasion wherein essential office supplies and equipment were formally handed over. During the meeting, the SCCI president stressed the need to bolster awareness of the facilitation centre among the business community to enable a larger number of businesses to reap the benefits of the transformative initiative.

IT exports up by 39% in January: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Dr Umar Saif has said that IT exports in January witnessed an increase of 39.4 per cent to \$265 million compared to \$190 million in the same month of the last fiscal year.

"Pakistan's IT industry continues to grow and sets new records. IT exports in January are up

by 39.4 per cent to \$265 million, compared to \$190 million in the same month in 2023," the minister posted on X.

Additionally, the minister disclosed that IT exports during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (July-January) reached \$1.7 billion, marking a 13 per cent increase from \$1.5 billion in the corresponding period of the last year.

Saqib Fayyaz says: Industry demands implementation of 9 cents/kwh power tariff

INDEPENDENT REPORT KARACHI: Mr. Saqib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, has apprised that the industries in general, and industries in SMEs sector in particular, are on the verge of total collapse and shut down due to the unbearable and unsustainable financial losses emanating from unprecedented cost of doing business; primarily caused by prices of

electricity and gas — which has made Pakistani exporters uncompetitive in the export markets by a large margin. Mr. Saqib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, categorically stated that FPCCI unequivocally demands that the announced 9 cents / kWh power tariff by the government should be implemented with immediate effect.

FBR working on extension of EFS to whole textile value chain: chief collector

LAHORE (APP): Punjab's Chief Collector Customs (A p p r a i s e m e n t) Muhammad Sadiq has said that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is working on extension of Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) to the whole textile value chain.

Talking to members of APTMA [All Pakistan Textile Mills Association] during an interactive session on exports and

other Customs related issues here on Wednesday, he said that a committee of stakeholders had already been constituted in this regard. Ms. Azmat Tahira, Collector Customs (Appraisal-East) Lahore, Ms. Nazia Saleem, Additional Collector Customs, and Ms. Irum Sohail, Additional Collector Customs also accompanied the Chief Collector, while APTMA

(North) Chairman Kamran Arshad, senior members Anjum Zafar, Faisal Perviz and APTMA Secretary General Raza Baqir were also present.

The Chief Collector assured APTMA of removing all irritants in the EFS and other customs procedures, formalities to facilitate exporters by helping them in focusing on how to boost exports.

Gold rates up by Rs 750 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of per tola 24 karat gold increased by Rs 750 and was sold at Rs 215,200 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs 214,450 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24karat gold also increased by Rs 644 to Rs 184,500 from Rs 183,856 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs 169,124 from Rs 168,535, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

Zong 4G to promote urban farming/Agri Tech in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Zong 4G Pakistan's leading telecommunication organization Zong 4G, has collaborated with BaKhabar Kisan to facilitate seamless communication between the Farmers and Agri Experts to make informed and timely decisions, maximize yield and financial benefits to their

livelihoods. BaKhabar Kisan is a comprehensive agricultural knowledge platform for farmers throughout Pakistan offering expert guidance on weather, crop and livestock advisory, modern agricultural practices, and disaster management, said a news release issued here on Wednesday.

Punjab Governor says: Government fully focused on providing Intl standard medical services in provincial hospitals

Independent Report
LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman today inaugurated the 16th Pak Pharma and Healthcare Exhibition and Conference organized by Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PPMA) at Expo Center Lahore.

Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman while speaking to the media on this occasion, said that Pakistan's pharmaceutical industry is not only playing a positive role in the country's economy, but it is also providing employment opportunities to millions of people.

He said that organising Pak Pharma and Healthcare Exhibition is a good initiative which will give boost to the pharmaceutical industry.

Governor Punjab said that it is encouraging to see that 115 foreign and local exhibitors are participating in this exhibition.

He said that he appreciates the organizers of the exhibition for their efforts in arranging this exhibition regarding pharmaceuticals manufacturing and associated health related products and services. Governor Punjab said that this exhibition will provide an excellent opportunity to all those who are interested in promoting their products and services.

Governor Punjab further said that the Punjab government is fully focused on providing international standard medical services in the provincial hospitals.

Governor Punjab said that it is a good sign that Pakistani pharmaceutical companies are exporting medicines to different countries of the world, which is increasing the country's foreign exchange.

In response to a question, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that it is the responsibility of the government to maintain balance in the regulation of drug prices.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur-Rehman inaugurates 16th Pak Pharma and Health Care Exhibition at Expo Center Lahore.

Punjab govt trying to bring more improvement in Children's Hospital Lahore: Minister

Independent Report
LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Professor Dr. Javed Akram has said that the provincial government is trying its best to bring more improvement in Children's Hospital Lahore.

Addressing the 10th syndicate meeting of the University of Child Health Sciences held under the chairmanship of the caretaker provincial health minister here on

Wednesday, he said that fundamental steps are being taken to make the University of Child Health Sciences paperless. He said that under the leadership of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Syed Mohsin Naqvi, the revamping project has been successfully completed in the hospital.

The minister said that Children's Hospital Lahore is the second largest hospital in the

Chinese, Iranian CC call on CM Naqvi

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi held separate meetings with the Consul General of China Mr. Zhao Shiren and the Consul General of Iran Mehran Mowahid Far, here on Wednesday.

The Chinese and the Iranian Consul Generals felicitated CM Mohsin Naqvi on being elected as the Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). Mohsin Naqvi extended an invitation to the Chinese and Iranian Consul Generals to witness a PSL match. Both of them accepted the invitation and thanked the CM.

The Chinese and the Iranian Consul Generals lauded the performance of CM for extending



LARKANA: Mayor of Municipal Corporation Adv. Anwar Ali Lohur along with Principal Government Girls Degree College Professor Nafees Akhtar Ansari and other visiting the Department of Geography at GGD College.



LAHORE: Australian High Commissioner, H.E. Neil Hawkins with Embassy delegation visiting stall during visit to the shrine of Bibi Pakdaman.

PSC schedules ability test in various departments

PESHAWAR (APP): 17 Forestry, Environment and Wildlife Department, Bio-Chemist (BPS-17) Forestry, Environment and Wildlife Department, Senior Research Officer (BPS-18) Agriculture, Livestock and Dairy Development Department, Biomedical Engineer (BPS-17) Agriculture and Dairy Development Department, Librarian (BPS-17) In Law Officer (BPS-16) in Industries, Commerce Technical Education Department, Assistant Forest Economist (BPS-

Life imprisonment for murdering elderly Father

By Adeel Ahmed
SHIKARPUR: First Additional District & Session Judge Shikarpur awarded life imprisonment to accused for murdering the elderly Father here on Wednesday.

According to reports reached here that while hearing the ongoing case by First Additional District & Session Judge Shikarpur Tariq Ahmed Bhatti awarded life imprisonment and 02 lac rupees fine and rupees 05 lac as extra to accused Adam Jaffery who found guilty for murdering his older Father Hairudeen Jaffery who was murdered by him son some five years ago in the jurisdiction of Sultankot police Station.

On the failure of payment in cash the accused would have 06 months more imprisonment. After the verdicts of Court, accused Adam Jaffery was sent to Sukkur Central Jail for imprisonment.

Commissioner reviews upgradation work at Services Hospital

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Divisional Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa has announced significant advancements in the construction of the new collection centre at Services Hospital.

Expressing satisfaction, the commissioner revealed that the state-of-the-art diagnostic and collection lab at Services Hospital is nearing completion.

During a morning visit here on Wednesday, Commissioner Randhawa

PHC Chief stresses rule of law, justice

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Justice Peshawar High Court Ibrahim Khan stated on Wednesday that efforts would be made to ensure the innocent are not punished and the guilty do not escape punishment.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of a bachelor hostel in the Judicial Complex Karak, he emphasized that no one is exempted from accountability, and he presents himself first. The chief justice highlighted that piety is the greatest wealth and emphasized the importance of judges being pious.

South Punjab Secretariat aims to pace development

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Captain (ret) Saqib Zafar on Wednesday said that the South Punjab Secretariat is addressing the gaps of development by enhancing infrastructure in health, education, and other sectors.

Addressed officers undergoing the 39th Mid-Career Management Course at the National Institute of Management in Islamabad during their visit to the South Punjab Secretariat, he said that major projects in

International News

US vetoes Algerian resolution demanding immediate ceasefire in Gaza

NEW YORK (Online): The US has vetoed a UN Security Council draft resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

Thirteen countries on the 15-member body backed Algeria resolution, while the UK abstained.

Washington's ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield said it was not the right time to call for an immediate ceasefire. The UN Security Council met again in emergency session in New York on Gaza Tuesday, where the United States vetoed a resolution put forward on behalf of Arab States by Algeria demanding "an immediate humanitarian ceasefire that must be re-

spected by all parties".

The latest Council meeting on the Middle East crisis spiralling outwards from the war in Gaza has ended, with another US veto and an abstention on the part of the UK, while Algeria's resolution gained support from 13 out of the 15 members around the iconic horseshoe table.

Qatar's Ambassador Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani speaking on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council, called on the UN to assume its responsibilities and condemn the Israeli threat of unleashing its military operation in Rafah. More than a million displaced are sheltering there with nowhere else to run to.

"We are living the worst humanitarian disaster the world has ever seen," she said. "We also condemn the forced displacement of civilians and regret the suspension of the financing of UNRWA," she said.

For its part, Qatar will continue its facilitating efforts to free all hostages, to protect civilians in Gaza and to secure a ceasefire.

Riyad H. Mansour, Ambassador and Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, said the Algerian-led draft resolution was brought to the Council "precisely" because Israel persists with its onslaught "despite near unanimous" calls by the international community for a ceasefire.



US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield is seen alongside Algerian Ambassador Amar Bendjama during a UN Security Council vote calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, at UN Headquarters.

Russia reacts to US vetoing Gaza ceasefire

MOSCOW (Online): By again vetoing a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, the US has shown a disregard for human life, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has claimed.

On Tuesday, Washington blocked a third attempt by UNSC members to pause the fighting in Gaza. The Algerian-drafted resolution, calling for an immediate humanitarian truce, was backed by 13 nations in the 15-member body, including Russia and China. The US was the only country to vote "no," while the UK abstained.

The Americans "are blocking the call for a ceasefire. That's it. This is their attitude towards people, not towards people of a certain nationality, but towards people in general," Zakharova said in an interview with Sputnik Radio on Wednesday. "The solution [to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict], towards which the US is pushing people and regions, does not exist," she stressed, without explaining what she believes Washington is trying to achieve in Gaza. While the Americans continue to obstruct a truce, the situation in Gaza "only deteriorates," the spokeswoman added.

Zakharova also commented on Washington's decision in early February to sanction several Israeli settlers, who were accused of stoking violence in the occupied West Bank.

"Just think about it. Did these settlers come out of nowhere?... They are part of the [Israeli] government system, which was supported by the US in the first place. The US is the guarantor of the well-being of the people who developed these lands," she stated.



Lyudmila Navalnaya, the mother of late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, and lawyer Vasily Dubkov arrive at the regional department of Russia's Investigative Committee in the town of Salekhard in the Yamal-Nenets Region, Russia.

Palestinians to Hague court: Israeli occupation is illegal

Monitoring Desk
PALESTINIAN: Israel has been deliberately violating international law for decades, the Palestinian Authority argued on the first day of an International Court of Justice (ICJ) hearing on Israel's policies in the occupied Palestinian Territories.

"The force of law must prevail," said Riyadh al-Maliki, the foreign minister of the Palestinian Authority (PA) on Monday before the highest court of the United Nations in The Hague.

The PA argues that Israel has been violating international law since 1967, when Israel took control of the areas in the so-called Six Day War, by annexing wide strips of land and not granting Palestinians the right to self-determination.

The UN General Assembly asked the court for an opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's actions towards Palestinians in the occupied territories in late 2022, before the beginning of the latest Gaza war last year.

EU approves 13th round of Russia sanctions ahead of war anniversary

Monitoring Desk
ANTWERP: The European Union agreed on Wednesday to a new round of sanctions on Russia ahead of the second anniversary of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Welcoming the decision, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on X, formerly Twitter, that the latest salvo of sanctions keeps "the pressure high on the Kremlin."

EU representatives in Brussels signed off on the package, which targets persons and organizations

Israeli missile strike on Damascus flat kills two, Syria says

Monitoring Desk
DAMASCUS: At least two people have been killed in a suspected Israeli missile strike in Syria's capital, Damascus, Syrian state media and activists say.

The Syrian military said two civilians died when several missiles hit a block of flats in the Kafr Sousa district. A monitoring group said two foreigners and a Syrian civilian were killed, and that the area was frequented by senior figures from Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

South Africa budget boosts welfare grants ahead of May election

Monitoring Desk
JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's finance minister has boosted welfare payments to more than 18 million people in his last budget ahead of May's general election.

The governing African National Congress (ANC) is facing a tough political challenge as it battles to maintain its outright majority in the 29 May poll.

Left-wing rival the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) has already pledged to double payments to the less well off. But harsh economic conditions leave the government little room for manoeuvre.

Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana was under pressure to curtail the government's growing budget deficit while also maintaining spending, and keeping taxes low, in order to not put voters off.

The ANC won the 2019 election with 57% of the national vote. Opinion polls suggest that for the first time since it took power at the end of apartheid in 1994, the party's share of the vote could fall below 50% in the upcoming election.

To cheer from ANC MPs, Mr Godongwana said monthly payments to the elderly, war veterans and those with disabilities, among others, would go up by 100 rand (\$5.32; £4.22) a month - an increase in line with inflation of nearly 5%.

The minister also announced a rise in grants to others, including those with children.

There had been speculation, in line with what President Cyril Ramaphosa had said earlier this month, that the government would increase monthly payments to low earners and those most in need.

This Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD grant) of 350 rand (\$5.33) is currently paid to nine million people.

Russian agents may be to blame Poland is concerned by pro-Putin slogans at farmers' protests

Monitoring Desk
WARSAW: Polish authorities voiced grave concerns Wednesday after slogans praising Russian President Vladimir Putin and his war against Ukraine appeared at Polish farmers' protests.

The Foreign Ministry said it believed that extreme groups were trying to take over the farmers' protest movement "perhaps under the influence of Russian agents."

On Tuesday, one tractor at a protest in the southern region of Silesia carried a Soviet flag and a banner that said: "Putin, put things in order with Ukraine, Brussels, and our rulers." Interior Minister Marcin Kierwinski called the banner "scandalous," and said that it was immediately secured by police, and that prosecutors were also investigating.

Ukraine outnumbered, outgunned, ground down by relentless Russia

KRAMATORSK as old age or illness.

Heavy casualties at the hands of Russian forces have been compounded by dreadful conditions on the eastern front, with frozen soil turning into thick mud in unseasonably warm temperatures, playing havoc with soldiers' health. "The weather is rain, snow, rain, snow. People get ill with simple flu or angina as a result. They're out of action for some time, and there is nobody to replace them."

Resignation to not annul SJC's proceeding against judge: SC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Wednesday ruled that the resignation or retirement of a judge would not stop the underway proceeding of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) against him.

The court announced the verdict with the majority of 4/1 as Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi gave disagreement.

A five-member bench of the top court headed by Justice Amin ud Din Khan announced the verdict which was earlier reserved after hearing arguments from respondents in the intra court appeal (ICA).

Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Musarrat Hilali and Justice Irfan Saadat Khan were also part of the bench.

The written order said, "For the reasons to be recorded later, the delay in filing both the appeals is condoned.

Both the appeals are partially allowed to the extent that if the proceedings have already been initiated by the Supreme Judicial Council ('SJC') against a Judge, same shall not abate on his resignation or retirement, as the case may be, during such proceedings.

It is the prerogative of the SJC to proceed with the matter accordingly. The impugned judgment is modified to that extent.

This order is with the majority of four by one disagreeing (Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, J.) on the point of limitation as well as on merits."



DUBAI: Muhammad Zubair Motiwala, Chief Executive, Trade Development Authority of Pakistan exchanges views with an exporter at the Pakistan Pavilion during his visit to the Gulf Food Exhibition, Dubai World Trade Centre.

Pakistani food items exports sets o cross \$7 bn by year's end: Motiwala

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Executive Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Muhammad Zubair Motiwala on Wednesday said that considering the ongoing trends, it was projected that Pakistani food items exports would cross \$7 billion by the end of this financial year.

He said the projection was in sharp contrast to about \$4 billion in previous annual exports in this sector.

The TDAP chief executive expressed these views during his visit to the Pakistan Pavilion at the ongoing Gulf Food Exhibition, Dubai Trade Centre, the Consulate General of Pakistan in Dubai, said in a press release.

Motiwala also interacted with exhibitors at various stalls showcasing Pakistani products.

A total of 100 Pakistani exhibitors are taking part in the ongoing Gulf Food festival of which 45 are sponsored by TDAP while others are participating on a self-sponsorship basis.

The chief executive was also accompanied by the Commercial Counsel-

or, Director General TDAP and other senior officials of Pakistan's diplomatic mission in the UAE. On the occasion, Motiwala said that they had specifically focused on enhancing the food and food allied items which was paying dividends in the form of substantial increase in their exports in this sector.

The chief executive said that enhancing exports of Pakistani products was the way forward to achieve economic prosperity and TDAP was contributing substantially towards this national objective.

"It is extremely encouraging to share that there is remarkable increase of 300 to 400% in the exports of sesame seeds this year. Exports of Pakistani rice will cross \$3 billion in comparison to about \$1.5 billion", Motiwala highlighted.

He said that exporters with the assistance of TDAP had been participating in Gulf Food for the last few years and it was heartening to share that the number of Pakistani exhibitors was increasing each year.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers are busy installing new water pipeline at sector F-5 in the Federal Capital.

COMSTECH, PEC ink MoU upscale engineering capacity of OIC states

ISLAMABAD (APP): OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH) and Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Wednesday at COMSTECH Secretariat to upscale engineering capacity of OIC states.

The MoU was signed by the Coordinator General COMSTECH Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary and Secretary/Registrar of the Council, Engr. Dr. Nasir M. Khan.

Chairman PEC, Engr. Muhammad Najeeb Haroon, and the senior officials of the two organizations were also present in the signing ceremony.

COMSTECH and PEC agreed to collaborate in organizing workshops and training programs to enhance the knowledge and skills of professionals in science and technology with a focus on engineering, healthcare sectors and innovations.

They agreed to transform information to knowl-

edge and apply scientific and statistical principles in medical and engineering practices.

They agreed to promote and develop policies with special emphasis on applied technology through OIC allied platforms to develop and transfer technology for industrial, medical and agricultural products and services, create linkages of OIC bodies to local competitiveness, promote the mutual trade of indigenously developed products, software and services, and encourage mobility and exchange of talent.

Training of OIC engineers at various PEC institutions and starting the COMSTECH-PEC Africa program for promotion of engineering for socio-economic development is part of this MoU.

Both parties agreed to promote training, adoption, development and deployment of digital products, software, and services across OIC states with focus on applied artificial intelligence.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindhi chaired the steering committee meeting of NAVTTC.

Madad Sindhi directs NAVTTC to increase quota for disables, transgenders

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi on Wednesday directed the chairperson NAVTTC to increase the quota for disables and transgenders in all programs.

He was chairing Steering Committee meeting of the Prime Minister's Youth Skill Development Program (PMYSDP) at Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training.

The caretaker minister said that the meeting played a pivotal role in facilitating essential discussions to propel the program's objectives forward. He further said that this was the second meeting of NAVTTC steering committee under his tenure as minister. He pointed out that this is also the second meeting in five years. He highlighted the importance of this commit-

tee meeting. The caretaker minister said that in the last meeting, he had increased the quota for women which has been implemented in letter and spirit.

Madad Ali said that domain of NAVTTC should be expanded to provinces to achieve the progress. He was of view that it would be prudent to include universities for increasing scope of NAVTTC in future. He took notice of the absence of Secretary Education Punjab and Sindh. Meanwhile, the Executive Director NAVTTC/Secretary of the Committee, Muhammad Amir Jan briefed the committee on the current status and progress of PMYSDP 2023-24 project, achievements and outlining future goals. A significant decision was made regarding the High-Tech IT and High-End IT Training Components.

The committee endorsed the consolidation and strategic reallocation of seats, not only to enrich industrial training opportunities but also to lay the groundwork for a groundbreaking collaboration with esteemed universities like COMSATS, NUST, NUML, and NSU to facilitate the pilot project being implemented with the Federal Directorate of Education. This collaborative effort is crafted to launch High-Impact IT Training with 16 FDE Colleges, intending to bridge the gap between academia and industry. The initiative aims to provide cutting-edge IT skills to the youth, ensuring their relevance in the ever-evolving job market, he told. Waseem Ajmal, Secretary Ministry of Federal Education, endorsed the pilot program and emphasized that the modalities may be formulated with the

help of Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) and Pakistan IT Industry Association (P@SHA).

In a bid to streamline implementation, the committee sanctioned the exemption of Bank/Insurance Guarantee for TEVTA, PVTC, PWDS, and other public institutes excluding public sector universities.

Furthermore, various courses under the program, spanning High-Tech IT, High-End IT Training Component, Hospitality, Languages, Care Workers, and Gym/Sports Trainer, will now confer international certification, thereby enhancing the global recognition of the program.

Ms. Gulmina Bilal Ahmad, chairperson NAVTTC, expressed optimism about the program, and said, "We aspire for these 56,000 youth to become valuable assets for the country."

Punjab Police reaches Peshawar to arrest PTI's Mian Aslam

By M.Ilyas

PESHAWAR - The Punjab Police reached Peshawar to arrest Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Punjab nominee Chief Minister Mian Aslam.

According to sources, the Punjab Police tried to arrest Mian Aslam from outside the Speaker's House Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Sources said that during the arrest of Mian Aslam, PTI workers resisted and brought him back to the Speaker House.

Earlier, the Peshawar High Court granted PTI leader Mian Aslam Iqbal bail till March 4. The court ordered that the petitioners should appear before the Lahore High Court or relevant courts by March 4, failing which the order will be reversed.

ICT admin launches anti encroachment operation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration on Wednesday carried out an anti-encroachment operation in Aabpara market to ensure its smooth functioning.

According to a spokesman of ICT, the operation was conducted to enhance traffic flow and curb illegal encroachments under the directions of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad.

The accused involved in collecting extortion from roadside vendors, cart pullers, fruit shop owners, and hotels were also arrested. Cases have been registered against them.

Court cancels Faisal Javid's arrest warrants

ISLAMABAD (APP): A local court of Islamabad on Wednesday cancelled the arrest warrants of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's Senator Faisal Javid in the case of threatening a journalist.

Senator Faisal Javed along with his lawyer Sardar Masroof appeared before the court of Senior Civil Judge Quadrat Ullah.

The court sought the case record and adjourned the hearing till March 13.

The case of threatening a journalist was lodged against Faisal Javed at the Federal Capital's Bani Galla Police Station in 2022.

AIOU to send degrees automatically to students

ISLAMABAD (APP): Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood has said that the university would send degrees automatically to the students from the autumn semester 2024.

While addressing the meeting of Faculty of Social Sciences, he said that there would be no need to apply for degree separately. He said that there was special focus on improving the examinations and admissions system. The VC directed the controller of examinations to clear the pending cases of degrees and issue the de-

grees as soon as possible.

Dr. Nasir further said that facilities for the students would be improved to boost their confidence, adding, that the dropout rate would be minimized.

Dr. Nasir added that faculty members were playing an important role due to which our institution was among the best institutions of the country. He said that we were all engaged in our respective jurisdictions for the betterment of the students and the institution. Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Prof. Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir gave a detailed briefing about the faculty of social sciences department.

Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Media

ISLAMABAD (APP): Executive Director Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr Zia Ul Qayyum on Wednesday attended the International Media Conference at the University of Sargodha as chief guest to facilitate discussions among academia, media experts, and researchers on the role of Artificial Intelligence in Media. The International Media Conference, held jointly by the Association of Media & Communication Academic Professionals and Sargodha University. The conference, titled "Artificial Intelligence and Media: A Force of Colonisation or Empowerment," aimed to facilitate discussions.

Admin MCI assures to address issues of business community

ISLAMABAD (APP): Administrator, Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) Rana Waqas Anwar on Wednesday said that MCI wanted to move forward with the consensus of the business community to address their issues and facilitate them in business promotion.

The administrator along with his team visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and interacted with the business community to learn about their issues.

He said that he would visit markets to see the situation of encroachments and take measures to remove them in coordination with ICCI and concerned market associations.

He said that MCI was making a uniform policy to remove all billboards in Islamabad as they were affecting the beauty of the city.

He said that vending zones were being considered for shifting pushcarts

from markets.

He said that law-abiding citizens would get some rebate in property tax.

He said that board tax and trade license fees should be paid to only one entity from MCI or UC.

He said that open spaces would be allotted only to the shopkeepers.

He said that no brand would be damaged and only violations would be removed from markets.

He said that if anyone gives notice to traders using the name of the Punjab Government, he should be handed to the police for appropriate action.

Speaking on the occasion, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari briefed the MCI delegation about the key issues of the business community.

He said that encroachments should be removed in consultation with ICCI and concerned market associations.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Taj Haider, Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Parliamentary Affairs presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament Lodges.

Political parties urged to forge national accord to steer country out of crises

ISLAMABAD (APP): Religious scholars and leaders on Wednesday urged political parties to forge a national accord requiring collective efforts to steer the country out of crises.

In the joint declaration adopted at the "Convention for Pakistan Accord", the scholars and leaders from all religious schools of thoughts emphasized the necessity for all stakeholders, including state institutions, and political and religious parties to jointly formulate a covenant for the betterment of the nation.

The covenant, named the Pakistan Accord, should outline the trajectory of the country's next 25 years addressing both internal and external challenges and finding effective solutions for economic crisis and combating extremism, terrorism, and youth radicalization, they added.

The convention organized by the Pakistan Ulama Council (PUC) was chaired by its Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi.

The religious scholars and leaders stressed the importance of fostering an environment of tolerance and mutual respect among all political leaders, aiming to eliminate past animosities. They proposed that Pakistan's foreign policy, along with improving relations with friendly countries, should also focus on alleviating poverty and unemployment through a plan for youth rehabilitation, aiming to eliminate extremism and terrorism.

They said it should outline a unified plan for steering beloved country for the next 25 years.

The Ulama and scholars urged the political parties to accept one another's mandate and resolve their electoral disputes as per the Constitution and law.

They emphasized that economic stability was intricately linked with political stability. "As Pakistan faces several challenges, which can be addressed through cooperation from all democratic forces," they added.

The religious scholars and leaders stressed the importance of fostering an environment of tolerance and mutual respect among all political leaders, aiming to eliminate past animosities. They proposed that Pakistan's foreign policy, along with improving relations with friendly countries, should also focus on alleviating poverty and unemployment through a plan for youth rehabilitation, aiming to eliminate extremism and terrorism.

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Ulama Council & Special Assistant for interfaith Harmony, Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi addressing a Press conference during the Misaq-e-Pakistan Convention.

BISP partners with six banks to expand payment system; serve 9.3 mln beneficiaries

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a landmark development, the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) signed an agreement with six banks for disbursement of funds among its 9.3 Million beneficiary households in a ceremony held here Wednesday.

The agreement was signed in an impressive ceremony that was witnessed by the Chairperson, Dr Muhammad Amjad Saqib, Secretary BISP, Amer Ali Ahmed, Heads of partner banks and development partners of the programme.

The secretary BISP speaking at the event explained that initially, the programme was utilizing the services of only two banks and the contracts of the same had expired some years back.

However, this expansion signifies the introduction of wider service provider banks thus leading to greater transparency.

The BISP will annually save Rs 2 billion on account of competition introduced through this new



ISLAMABAD: A group photo of the private school children who visited Islamabad Capital Police Traffic Office, Faizabad.

Delegation of NIM Karachi visits Safe City Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the SSP Safe City welcomed the Mid-Career Management Course delegation from National Institute of Management (NIM) Karachi at the Safe City Islamabad, a public relations officer said.

He said that the delegation visits the command and control center, the data hub unit, modern technology-equipped cameras, and the Police operations center hall. They were fully briefed about the procedures and advantages of this project.

Furthermore, the delegation was informed that Safe City Islamabad is playing a significant role in various departments through modern techniques, including the Police Operations Center, Emergency Control Center, Data Hub Unit, Dispatch Control Center, E-Challan

Saudi Embassy marks 'Founding Day' with show of cultural festivity

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Cultural Mission of the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia on Wednesday celebrated the Founding Day of Kingdom, with the show of cultural festivity.

The event witnessed a congregation of foreign dignitaries and individuals hailing from diverse backgrounds. A focal point of the celebration was the customary cake-cutting ceremony, emblematic of unity and jubilation, a news release said.

A lavish luncheon offering an array of delectable traditional Saudi Arabian dishes was also served. The guests savored the intricate flavours and culinary marvels that epitomize the cultural richness of Saudi Arabia. Cultural Attaché Khalid Bin Modhi Al Toom, in his welcome address, accentuated the profound historical bonds between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Conferece on Artificial Intelligence and Media

ISLAMABAD (APP): Executive Director Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr Zia Ul Qayyum on Wednesday attended the International Media Conference at the University of Sargodha as chief guest to facilitate discussions among academia, media experts, and researchers on the role of Artificial Intelligence in Media. The International Media Conference, held jointly by the Association of Media & Communication Academic Professionals and Sargodha University. The conference, titled "Artificial Intelligence and Media: A Force of Colonisation or Empowerment," aimed to facilitate discussions.

Admin MCI assures to address issues of business community

ISLAMABAD (APP): Administrator, Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) Rana Waqas Anwar on Wednesday said that MCI wanted to move forward with the consensus of the business community to address their issues and facilitate them in business promotion.

The administrator along with his team visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and interacted with the business community to learn about their issues.

He said that he would visit markets to see the situation of encroachments and take measures to remove them in coordination with ICCI and concerned market associations.

He said that MCI was making a uniform policy to remove all billboards in Islamabad as they were affecting the beauty of the city.

He said that vending zones were being considered for shifting pushcarts



ISLAMABAD: A group photo of the private school children who visited Islamabad Capital Police Traffic Office, Faizabad.

Conferece on Artificial Intelligence and Media

ISLAMABAD (APP): Executive Director Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr Zia Ul Qayyum on Wednesday attended the International Media Conference at the University of Sargodha as chief guest to facilitate discussions among academia, media experts, and researchers on the role of Artificial Intelligence in Media. The International Media Conference, held jointly by the Association of Media & Communication Academic Professionals and Sargodha University. The conference, titled "Artificial Intelligence and Media: A Force of Colonisation or Empowerment," aimed to facilitate discussions.

Admin MCI assures to address issues of business community

ISLAMABAD (APP): Administrator, Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) Rana Waqas Anwar on Wednesday said that MCI wanted to move forward with the consensus of the business community to address their issues and facilitate them in business promotion.

The administrator along with his team visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and interacted with the business community to learn about their issues.

He said that he would visit markets to see the situation of encroachments and take measures to remove them in coordination with ICCI and concerned market associations.

He said that MCI was making a uniform policy to remove all billboards in Islamabad as they were affecting the beauty of the city.

He said that vending zones were being considered for shifting pushcarts

from markets.

He said that law-abiding citizens would get some rebate in property tax.

He said that board tax and trade license fees should be paid to only one entity from MCI or UC.

He said that open spaces would be allotted only to the shopkeepers.

He said that no brand would be damaged and only violations would be removed from markets.

He said that if anyone gives notice to traders using the name of the Punjab Government, he should be handed to the police for appropriate action.

Speaking on the occasion, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari briefed the MCI delegation about the key issues of the business community.

He said that encroachments should be removed in consultation with ICCI and concerned market associations.